

# Unexpected Hope

November 1, 2020



## Daily Devotionals Introduction

As you read about Jesus in the Gospels, you might see some things that perhaps you weren't expecting. For this 13-week series, we'll open the Book of Mark together and study the life of Jesus—The Unexpected King. During this series, we will gain a better understanding of who Jesus is and what it really means to be his disciple.

As an individual or as a family, use these daily devotionals and reflection questions to connect with Jesus each day this week.

Each day, there will be a thought stemming from our Scripture passage along with 2-3 questions. Our hope is that as we journey together through the book of Mark, we'll be able to come out the other side knowing more about the life of Jesus.

Be sure to prayerfully consider each day's truth, passages, and each of the questions. If you are a part of a life group, let these devotionals stir your thinking and be the foundation for your group conversation.

Our prayer is that these devotionals, questions, and reflections will help you love God, love people, and make disciples.

## Day One:

This week, we have the privilege of wrapping up our time in the book of Mark. Throughout this 13-week sermon series, we've noticed Jesus' unexpected methods, encounters, and choices during His earthly ministry. And although I don't know what 2020 has been like for you specifically, I can imagine you've become accustomed to navigating the unexpected.

The book of Mark has shown us that Jesus was the unexpected King. And in a season of unexpected circumstances, loss, and division, it's clear we need our King now more than ever.

Reflecting on the past 13 weeks, how would you describe the state of your heart? How have you coped, consciously or subconsciously, with all the changes thrown your way? Are you unsure of how to answer those questions?

Today, we are going to press into the practice of self-examination using a list of questions from theologian John Wesley. Self-examination is a spiritual practice that challenges us to take an objective look at our spiritual condition at any given moment. Many times, we find it's really much easier for us to focus on the character flaws of another, rather than paying attention to and seeing our own. As we continue to navigate life in a season of quarantine, social distancing, and mask mandates, there's no question our hearts are feeling weary and weathered.

From the list of 22 questions, focus on two or three to guide you through a period of self-examination. Don't be overwhelmed by the quantity but allow God to lead you to the questions most relevant to the current state of your heart.

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?
8. Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day?
9. Am I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican (in Biblical times, a publican was a tax collector)?

20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward, or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
22. Is Christ real to me?

Spend some time today reflecting on what God has taught you through these questions. We'll also revisit these questions and your reflections later in the week.

Day Two:

Using a centuries-old practice called Imaginative Prayer, let's look inside Jesus' final encounter with His disciples before ascending to Heaven to see what Jesus might have been teaching and how it might provide clarity.

During this practice, you'll read the story four times, paying particular attention to different things each time. After each time, spend a few minutes to digest through praying, journaling, etc.

### **Read Mark 16:1-13.**

Before reading, take a few breaths to settle yourself, imagining sitting in God's presence in this act of prayer. Understand that there are no right or wrong answers. You're not digging into context but allowing your God-given imagination and the Spirit to reveal the scripture in a new light.

#### *First reading*

Look to the passage for the broad themes: where and when does it take place, who is there, what happens? Take a few moments to reflect.

#### *Second reading*

Listen for more details: who are the major players, who else is there, what are they doing, how do they interact, what is the setting like, what time of day is it, what is the mood, the atmosphere? Reflect for a few moments.

#### *Third reading*

Notice more detail and begin to feel yourself in that place, in that story. Who are you or what are you (you may be an inanimate object, an animal, another tree in the vineyard; you may be a person or thing that is not specially mentioned in the printed story, but that you sense as you hear it read)? What are you doing, thinking, feeling or what is being done to or with you if you are inanimate? What are the sounds, the smells, and the other details about the location that you notice? What are the emotions and the undertones that you notice? Spend a little extra time reflecting on this.

#### *Fourth reading*

Experience the story as the person or object that you are in the story. When you finish reading, let the story continue to unfold within you—in your imagination, mind, and heart—as the person/object you are. Conclude your time with a few more minutes of prayer.

1. What is your response to all you experienced?
2. What are you noticing from your response?
3. What are God's invitations from this story for you?
4. Refer back to your reflections from day one. Do any of the feelings you've mentioned from quarantine align with what the disciples may have been feeling?

Day Three:

Have you ever considered how unusual Jesus was? I mean, describing Him as “unexpected” is quite the understatement in some ways. From breaking cultural norms like eating with sinners (**Mark 2:15**), or fraternizing with social outcasts (**Matthew 8:1-4, John 4:4-26**), to His unconventional birth in a barn (**Luke 2**), to His challenging of typical religious and political ideas (**Matthew 5:38, Luke 3:10-11**)...Jesus had no problem shaking things up in the name of His Father.

Let's take a look at Mark 16 for further evidence of this. **Read Mark 16:1-11.**

Three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, were on their way to care for and attend to Jesus' decomposing remains.

We don't know much about these women, but we know they knew and loved Jesus deeply. They'd seen and witnessed first-hand the wonders of His ministry (Mary Magdalene was on the receiving end of a miracle when Jesus drove out seven demons from her.)

We also know they were there to witness Jesus' brutal crucifixion on the cross (**Matthew 27:55-56**). I imagine they watched in horror, clinging to one another, as Jesus took His final breath.

In the depths of their grief and despair, these women came to bring dignity, honor, and respect to their beloved teacher and Savior...only to be surprised by Jesus once again.

Have you ever considered the significance of these three women being the first to realize Jesus had, indeed, risen from the dead?

Historically, we know these women lived among a patriarchal society and therefore played second fiddle to their male counterparts. They would have been expected to be seen, not heard, their testimonies in court would have been ignored, and their value would have been largely based upon their marital status.

*So, why hinge the good news of Jesus' Christ's resurrection on them?*

It's no accident Jesus chose the unexpected route here--we've watched Him elevate the voiceless countless times before. When the world expected a noble steed and fanfare, He made His arrival on the back of a donkey. When the world anticipated total domination and military upheaval, Jesus preached a Gospel of peace. When the world visualized a political leader kicking butts and taking names, Jesus washed feet instead.

Jesus, our Unexpected King, chose the unconventional route once again, when He later chose sinners like you and me to carry on the Gospel message. We'll unpack the challenge set before us in the last section of Mark, but for now, spend some time unpacking the questions listed below.

1. Have Jesus' actions or choices ever taken you by surprise?
2. What does it say about Jesus' character that the first messengers of His resurrection were three women?
3. Do you consider yourself an unexpected, or maybe unworthy, messenger of the Gospel? In what ways have you disqualified yourself from sharing this good news with others?

Day Four:

Start today's devotional by reading **Mark 16:12-20**.

Have you ever thought about how much Jesus is on His feet? For the first 15 chapters of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus was on the move. He went about Galilee preaching the Gospel, feeding the hungry, and healing the sick. He climbed mountains and He walked on water. He taught the disciples what it means to have faith, and He stood before chief priests as they accused Him.

Suddenly though, this story of Jesus on His feet comes to an abrupt pause. Our unexpected King is led to a cross. He's crucified and He's buried in the ground. One day. Then two. Then three.

But then the stone is rolled away and there He stands, on His feet again. Only this time, everything has changed.

In this final chapter of Mark, there is a pivotal shift: Jesus has completed the work He was sent to do. He healed, taught, died, and now has risen. So then, He commissioned.

In the final moments of this story, Jesus empowered and encouraged His disciples to continue the ministry He began. The same disciples who, even upon hearing eyewitness testimony of Jesus' resurrection, still didn't believe until they saw Him for themselves, were implored to preach the Gospel - to get on their feet. To go and tell.

And just as He called His disciples to stand up and step out, He made the most stunning move of all. He sat down.

"Then after speaking to them, the Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God." – **Mark 16:19**

The best part? Still today Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. He sits because the saving work He came to do here on earth has been done. He declared as much from the cross when He cried out, "It is finished" (**John 19:30**).

And with this assurance, He implored the disciples--the very same men who struggled to believe, publicly denied knowing Him, and went into hiding after His death--to get on their feet and go, too. The best part? We're given the same hope to cling to.

Read **Mark 16:15-20**.

He'll go. Will we?

As you reflect on the call to go and tell, consider these questions.

1. What does it look like for you to get on your feet and go?
2. What does it mean for Jesus to go with you?

3. How can you get on your feet and go this week?



Day Five:

*Whew.* What a journey we have been on through the book of Mark. We started with Jesus being baptized, beginning His early ministry, and calling the first disciples. We followed along as He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and walked on water - all while living fully human and without sin.

These miracles and teachings of Jesus changed us. They pointed us to our unexpected king. They reminded us of His goodness, compassion, and kindness. The beginning of Mark reminded us of the firm foundation and miraculous power we can only find in Christ. A reminder we surely need in the midst of a season that is anything but certain or predictable.

Then, swiftly, the tune changed. We held our breath. Jesus was betrayed by Judas. He was delivered to Pilate. He was sent to a cross. And He was crucified. Then buried.

But praise God Mark doesn't end at chapter 15. Three days later, Jesus was resurrected. The stone was rolled away and He was alive.

But Jesus doesn't stop here. He doesn't just save us from our sins, paying the ultimate price so that we may live in freedom then just say, "I'm done here." He invites us to join Him, continuing His ministry. He commissions us to follow in His way and make disciples. Just as He called His earliest followers, He calls us, too.

Think back to the self-examination questions you worked through earlier this week.

1. Reflecting on our time in the book of Mark, how has the truth that Jesus is King become more real to you?
2. How does that truth affect the way you answer those questions of self-examination?
3. Did this week's message or this week's study bring about a newfound sense of hope in you? If so, how will you live differently this week as a result? If not, what stops you from feeling hopeful?