

Surprised by Love: An exploration of Mark's Gospel—part 2

Week 2: Down to Earth (Mark 9:14-10:52)

Sometime before the discussion, take a moment to read through this week's passage: Mark 9:14-10:52

1. Was there anything in the message for this second week of Lent that resonated with you or that seemed timely? What did you find surprising or uncomfortable? Was there anything you disagreed with?
2. Read Mark 9:30-37. Why do you think the disciples didn't understand Jesus, and why would they be afraid to ask him about it? What does welcoming "little children" mean to you, and what does it look like in your own life?
3. Read Mark 9:38-41 and compare it to the story in Mark 9:14-29. What irony do you see here? Can you share an instance when you have perhaps behaved a little like the disciples in this situation? How could we guard against this?
4. In Mark 9:42-50 what do you think Jesus means by "salted with fire" (v 49), and how could this help bring about peace among humanity (v 50)?
5. Read Mark 10:1-12. Why do you think Jesus gives one response to the Pharisees in public and another one to the disciples in private? The speaker on Sunday suggested that Jesus might be using hyperbole in vs 10-12. What are your own thoughts about this saying of Jesus? Given how inclusive and accepting Jesus is (especially in this week's passage as a whole), how would you seek to support, encourage, and affirm someone who has been through or who is going through a divorce?
6. What are the similarities and differences between the stories in Mark 10:13-16 and Mark 10:17-30? What emotions do you see in Jesus here? Have there ever been times when you have felt those emotions and acted on them? Have there ever been times when you have suppressed those emotions and remained passive and/or silent?
7. Break into groups of 2 or 3 and read Mark 10:35-45. Share situations where you are feeling challenged to "drink the cup" at the moment and then spend some time praying for one another.

Practice for the week: Examen

Take some time this week to reflect on your day through the lens of power and control. Center yourself and be consciously aware of God's presence with you. Sit quietly in a comfortable position, close your eyes, and center yourself by focusing on your breathing. As you breathe in, allow God's love to fill you, and as you breathe out, let go of guilt and fear. In this non-judgmental posture, reflect back on your day, looking for moments of power and control. These

could be moments of conflict, opportunities to speak or act on behalf of others, or times when you could empower others. For each situation, contemplate the following questions:

- Did you allow fear of consequences (such as loss of popularity, credibility, or power) to prevent you from speaking out or taking action on behalf of someone with less power?
- Did you use power for your own gain or protection rather than for the interests of others?

End this time by prayerfully asking God to help you see the root causes of the ways you behaved and let them go. Invite the Spirit of Christ to empower you to walk the pathway of servanthood and justice tomorrow.