

Bible study: Jesus pattern of life in Mark's Gospel

Purpose to look at the pattern of life Jesus established after being filled with the Spirit and beginning his ministry. Does "fruitfulness" always come from "abiding"?

Marks Gospel pattern of Jesus "abiding"

Mark 1:9-13 Jesus is baptised by John, the Holy Spirit descends on him and leads him into the wilderness

Mark 1:35-37 Jesus prays in a Solitary place

Mark 2:13 Jesus is alone at the lake before preaching

Mark 3:7 Jesus withdraws with his disciples

Mark 3:13 Jesus goes up on the mountainside and calls his disciples

Mark 4:35 Jesus leaves the crowds by getting into a boat

Mark 5:1 Jesus at lake/hillside

Mark 5:21 Jesus crosses lake to other side again

Mark 6:45-46 Jesus sends disciples ahead, dismisses crowd, goes up on mountain to pray

Go through each of the above verses and read the description of what Jesus did in each case. Feel free to use a bit of imagination about the setting, what kind of relationship Jesus was building with his Father and the role of the Holy Spirit in this. Is there anything significant about the places he went?

Mark 1:35-37 as an example

After Jesus baptism and being filled with the Spirit, Mark only gives a very brief description of the Spirit leading him into the desert to be tempted. Then angels tend to him (which could have been in the list above?). From there he preaches about the repentance and the Kingdom of God as John the Baptist has been arrested, calls his first disciples, and heads off the Capernaum to 'sofa surf' with Peter's family. Jesus heals people, drives out evil spirits, teaches with great authority, and word spreads rapidly. Try to picture a modest house backing on to the lake where the family fishing business taking place, and crowds of people arriving over night to take part in the great revival that is suddenly happening in a relatively small place – all centred around a modest extended family home. Family and friends wake up to the great cry of "where is Jesus, we have come to see him to be healed, taught, set free", but Jesus has gone off to a solitary place to abide with his Father while all this is happening. Peter and friends go looking for Jesus, and when they find him they say "everyone is looking for you!".

So is this Jesus recovering from all that he has been doing, or is this Jesus seeking to abide with his Father in preparation for what he is meant to do next in obedience to the Father. It appears that there is a huge clue to this question in Jesus response to Peter. Jesus does not say "great, there is a great crowd to minister to, revival is breaking out, let's build something here". Instead, he takes them off to the surrounding villages and ministers to people in the synagogues there. This would be a little like hearing that a massive crowd of people gathering in the city centre of Derby wanting to hear about Jesus, and us deciding to go and preach in a some churches in small Derbyshire villages in response. Like most things in God's upside-down Kingdom it is not the obvious thing. But Jesus is clear that it is what he has come to do. This seems to imply that his time of abiding in a solitary place with his Father is about preparing for the ministry that is to come. Mark seems to present Jesus ministry consistently in this way. Seek out and abide with Father God, and then be fruitful.

Looking through the pattern

Print out the second page of this document which lists the 'abiding' verses in the Mark. Skim read the passages and/or look at the chapter headings in your bible, and fill in the gaps of what Jesus did between these verses. Look at the number of things and variety of things which Jesus did.

Would you say that Jesus was 'fruitful'?

Looking at the things, what things would say were most important to Jesus?

Who does he spend his time with?

What values do you see in what Jesus did and how he did them?

Based on these answers, what do you think 'fruitfulness' looks like according to Jesus?
(remembering that earlier you looked at what 'abiding' looks)

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