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It also had the sense of urgency. Mark was not messing around when he wrote this gospel. He believed that the entrance of Jesus into the world changed the world. There was an urgency to the message of Jesus that Mark wanted people to receive.

Sometimes as main-line Christians we don't have this sense of urgency. Our faith is part of us, but we don't live it with a passion. Most of us have probably had a bad experience with someone who was pushy with their faith. The urgency of Mark was not to be pushy. He wanted to communicate that something very special had happened with Jesus.

As you pray today, think yourself about how special you view Jesus? With what urgency do you live your faith. Mark would want us to center all of our life around our understanding of Jesus. This was urgent!! Talk to God today about the urgency of your own faith. Can you be urgent without being pushy?

Wednesday, February 22

Read Mark 8:27-9:1

This story is the half-way point of Mark. This story divided Mark in half. Up to this point Jesus had healed people and performed many miracles. After this story he didn't heal as many people or perform many miracles.

Suddenly Jesus shared one of his prime missions. He was going to go to the cross, die and be raised. The people who would be disciples would take up their own cross and follow Jesus.

This story shares a different understanding of suffering. Suffering wasn't something to be avoided and prevented at all costs. In fact suffering was something that was part of following Jesus. People weren't called to intentionally hurt themselves, but they shouldn't be surprised if suffering was part of their journey.

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How do you view suffering? Do you think of it as a punishment from God? Do you wonder if you've done something wrong and thus are suffering? Do you think of suffering as a normal part of following Jesus?

This is one of the hardest lessons of following Jesus. As you pray today, pray for a clear understanding of suffering.

Thursday, February 23

Read Mark 9:9-13

Another distinguishing part of Mark was an idea called "The Messianic Secret." In Mark Jesus frequently told his followers not to tell others what they knew and saw. In this passage Jesus didn't want Peter, James and John to know that he was transfigured before them—until Jesus had been raised.

People have written thousands of pages about this idea—so it's impossible to fully capture it in a very short devotion. One of the reasons Jesus did this was a timing issue. Jesus didn't want the world to know he was the Messiah until after he was raised. At that point he wanted the entire world to know. If people knew he was the Messiah before then, it would have ruined his message.

This secret didn't mean that we aren't supposed to be quiet about our faith. Jesus wants us to share our faith with others. The Messianic Secret doesn't mean that we are secret about our own faith and beliefs.

As you pray today pray that you can become comfortable in sharing your faith. Pray that we at Chain of lakes become skilled at sharing our faith.

Friday, February 24

Read Mark 14:53-65

In this passage Jesus finally reveals his identity to others. As he was before the High Priest being accused of blasphemy Jesus was asked if he was the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed one. Jesus replied by

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saying, "I am." This simple declaration was a death sentence for Jesus.

Jesus was no longer silent about his identity.

Many still didn't understand the type of Messiah Jesus was. Jesus didn't come to overthrow the Romans. He came to establish a long-lasting kingdom in the world. Some people tried to overthrow the Romans. As a result Jerusalem was almost destroyed and the Temple was burned. Though that event was memorable it is not remembered like the death and resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus had responded with violence he probably wouldn't have been remembered.

As you did on Monday think about what does it mean to you to say that Jesus is the Messiah. What does it mean for our new congregation? These are important questions for our faith journeys. As you pray today, have a conversation with God about what it means for our community and for you personally to say that Jesus is the Messiah.

Saturday, February 25

Read Mark 16:1-8

The shorter ending of Mark has confused people for centuries. A longer ending was added. The ending has Jesus followers experiencing terror and amazement not saying anything to anyone because they were afraid.

If Jesus' followers had not said anything to anyone, the church would never had been started. It's as if Mark was challenging the people reading this Scripture to speak up.

As you pray today, pray that the church can have an urgency in speaking up about Jesus.