**The Gospel of Mark: A Disciple’s Mirror**

***Reflections on Following Jesus*** -- From A Handbook on Cross-Bearing

**Mark 7:1–8:30**

***Hard Hearts and Fledgling Faith. . .*** Wake up! Don’t spiritually sleep walk through life.

**What’s (happening in) the story?** Disciples struggle with faith.

Faith is not a static thing, but a living connector between us and God. Jesus accuses the disciples of “hardness of heart,” similar to the Pharisees and Herod. But while the Pharisees and Herod sought Jesus only to see his miracles (all the time questioning His authority), the disciples accepted His lordship, but struggled to apply it in their day to day lives (as do we). Jesus lovingly, but firmly, builds on that foundation, however small and shaky it was. He is honored by faith, and is out to show them that as a kind, gentle, powerful Shepherd, He is worthy of their trust.

**What’s the challenge in the story?** What’s missing in my view of Jesus?

Our faith is under constant attack by our pride, fears, doubts, worries, and distractions of entertainment, money, power, lust, and relationships. To retreat into self-reliance as religion or to give in to sinful temptations are two key ways our faith fails, in that both take our eyes off of Jesus. The same sins (of both flesh and heart) that can separate us from God also cloud our vision of Him.

**What are the key elements in the story?**

Mark arranges these episodes to show that Jesus keeps pointing to the heart, where faith is born. A heart submitted to God trusts Him to keep His promises and is softened. As it resists or doubts Him, it is hardened. In every decision or act, we move either closer to God or further from Him.

Pleasing God is a matter of the heart, not outward ritual. 7:1-23

As illustrated in the humble Gentile the woman. . . 7:24-30

And Jesus lovingly giving “ears to hear.” 7:31-37

Trusting Jesus is a matter of the heart, not outward signs. 8:1-10, 14-21

As illustrated in the sign-seeking Pharisees. . . 8:11-13

And Jesus lovingly giving “eyes to see.” 8:22-26

Even small, imperfect faith recognizes Jesus as Messiah. 8:27-30

**What’s the big idea (main point) of the story?**

Shared intimacy with Jesus enables us to fight the sin which blurs our awareness of His power and blunts the effects of His Word.

***So let’s take a look at ourselves in Mark’s mirror. . .***

Humility vs. Pride: Am I the Gentile woman who sought grace alone, or the Pharisee who judges others by my traditions? Colossians 2:16-23

Faith vs. Doubt: Meeting a trial, do I expect Jesus to act (as He always has), or mourn my lack of resources (as the disciples do)? James 1:2-8

Faith vs. Unbelief: Am I looking and listening to Jesus (disciple), or questioning Him from a safe distance (unbeliever)? John 3:31-36