

Lenten Reading Plan

From "Meeting God in Mark" by Rowan Williams.

This reading plan outlines readings for every day of the week through Lent except Sundays, on which there is a brief reflection.

Week One

(Ash Wednesday to the First Sunday of Lent)

Feb 14, Ash Wednesday: Mark 1.1–13

Feb 15, Thursday: Mark 1.14–28

Feb 16, Friday: Mark 1.29–45

Feb 17, Saturday: Mark 2.1–17

Sunday reflection (Feb 18, First Sunday in Lent)

Unlike the other Gospels, Mark jumps right into Jesus' adult life and ministry, with his baptism by John, temptation in the wilderness, calling of the first disciples and numerous healings. The 62 verses read this week offer an intense, close-up view of Jesus' early ministry. If these passages were all you knew of the Jesus story, what would your reaction be? Try to imagine yourself hearing this bit of 'good news' for the first time, and encountering Jesus afresh, without the baggage of centuries of conflict and myriad interpretations. Let the story of Jesus surprise and amaze you.

God, grant me fresh eyes to see Jesus like one of those first receiving the good news.
Amen.

Week Two

Feb 19, Monday: Mark 2.18–28

Feb 20, Tuesday: Mark 3.1–12

Feb 21, Wednesday: Mark 3.13–35

Feb 22, Thursday: Mark 4.1–20

Feb 23, Friday: Mark 4.21–34

Feb 24, Saturday: Mark 4.35–41

Sunday reflection (Feb 25, Second Sunday in Lent)

Jesus was a controversial figure, and sometimes a confusing one. He plucked grain on the Sabbath, which was unlawful but not unprecedented. His own family said he was out of his mind and must have a demon. He told cryptic stories but wouldn't explain

them, except to his disciples. He healed without even a touch and calmed a raging storm with a simple rebuke. What is your reaction to these stories? Does it make a difference to you whether these events happened just as Mark says? What impression do these stories give you of Jesus, and how do you experience God through them?

God, let me stand in awe of your power. Give me wonder that goes beyond fact and fiction. Amen.

Week Three

Feb 26, Monday: Mark 5.1–20

Feb 27, Tuesday: Mark 5.21–43

Feb 28, Wednesday: Mark 6.1–13

Feb 29, Thursday: Mark 6.14–29

Mar 1, Friday: Mark 6.30–56

Mar 2, Saturday: Mark 7.1–23

Sunday reflection (Mar 3, Third Sunday in Lent)

Reactions to Jesus (and similarly, John, in the middle of chapter 6) vary widely, from awe and enthusiasm to contempt and violent rejection. What distinctions do you see between those who are eager to see, hear and touch these holy men and those who condemn them? We all like to think we would have embraced Jesus enthusiastically and looked to him for wisdom and healing, but might we have been among his opponents? What do you have in common with those who embraced Jesus, and what do you have in common with those who rejected him?

God, grant me the humility to see my own privilege. Let me see Jesus' challenge as a gift and not a threat. Amen.

Week Four

Mar 4, Monday: Mark 7.24–37

Mar 5, Tuesday: Mark 8.1–21

Mar 6, Wednesday: Mark 8.22—9.1

Mar 7, Thursday: Mark 9.2–29 (Meeting #1 of our Lenten Study at St. James' at 7 pm—Discussing Chapter 1 of "Meeting God in Mark" by Rowan Williams)

Mar 8, Friday: Mark 9.30–50

Mar 9, Saturday: Mark 10.1–16

Sunday reflection (Mar 10, Fourth Sunday in Lent)

The stakes seem to grow higher as Jesus gets deeper into his public ministry. He seems to get easily frustrated, dismissing a Syro-Phoenician woman who asks for help and walking away from Pharisees who ask for a sign. He shames disciples who don't seem to 'get it', but sternly orders those who do proclaim his identity to keep quiet about it. Combined with Jesus' discussion of his coming death, bold display on the mountain top, and affirmation of those outside the disciples' circle, what do you think is behind Jesus' attitude in these chapters? Why do you think Mark portrayed Jesus this way, even if his writing would make readers confused by or concerned about Jesus?

God, help me to walk in Jesus' shoes and experience the world through his eyes as we approach the time of his trial and death. Amen.

Week Five

Mar 11, Monday: Mark 10.17–34

Mar 12, Tuesday: Mark 10.35–52

Mar 13, Wednesday: Mark 11.1–11

Mar 14, Thursday: Mark 11.12–33 (Meeting #2 of our Lenten Study at St. James' at 7 pm—Discussing Chapter 2 of "Meeting God in Mark" by Rowan Williams)

Mar 15, Friday: Mark 12.1–17

Mar 16, Saturday: Mark 12.18–37

Sunday reflection (Mar 17, Fifth Sunday in Lent)

Some people dismiss Lent as a depressing time of unnecessary, self-imposed suffering. Reflect on your own experience of self-denial and also on struggles people endure by sheer accident or misfortune. Consider these things in the light of Jesus' teachings about the blessedness of those who are not rich, who have left home and family to follow him, and who take on the role of servant to others. Do your ideas of who is blessed in the world align with Jesus'? How do these teachings challenge you to live differently, not just during Lent but throughout the year?

God, help me to see my own struggles and those of others through your eyes. Transform my desire for success and satisfaction into a desire to please you. Amen.

Week Six

Mar 18, Monday: Mark 12.38–44

Mar 19, Tuesday: Mark 13.1–23

Mar 20, Wednesday: Mark 13.24-37

Mar 21, Thursday: Mark 14.1–11 (Meeting #3 of our Lenten Study at St. James' at 7 pm—Discussing Chapter 3 of “Meeting God in Mark” by Rowan Williams)

Mar 22, Friday: Mark 14.12–31

Mar 23, Saturday: Mark 14.32–52

Sunday reflection (March 24, Palm/Passion Sunday)

From Jesus' teaching in the Temple to his dramatic arrest in the garden, the tension between Jesus and the authorities is building, as is the reader's sense of agitation. Jesus is becoming more isolated, and even his followers' efforts at faithfulness are found wanting. As readers, our enthusiasm for this climax to Jesus' story is tempered by his unsettling apocalyptic warnings. What do you imagine God is experiencing as the time of the Son's death draws near? How would you feel if you were one of Jesus' disciples at this stage of his ministry?

God, give me insight to experience Jesus' story as it was, not only the beautiful parts, but the difficult as well. Amen.

Week Seven (Holy Week)

Mar 25, Monday: Mark 14.53–72

Mar 26, Tuesday: Mark 15.1–20

Mar 27, Wednesday: Mark 15.21–39

Mar 28, Maundy Thursday: Mark 15.40–47

Mar 29, Good Friday: Mark 16.1–8a

Mar 30, Holy Saturday: Mark 16.8b–20

Sunday reflection (March 31st, Easter Sunday)

The ending of Mark's Gospel is notable largely for what it doesn't say. Jesus' near-total silence during his trial and crucifixion emphasizes the mood of resignation and despair, and the seeming prematurity of the book's original ending adds mystery as well as anticipation. This strikes some readers as powerful and evocative while causing confusion and skepticism in others. Imagine you were alive in the second century and considering conversion to Christianity: what effect would Mark's points of silence have on you? As a modern follower of Jesus celebrating Easter Sunday, what impact do accounts of Jesus' resurrection appearances have on you?

God, thank you for Jesus' triumph over death. Thank you for the writers who passed down the good news of Jesus, each in their own way. Amen.