



Journey through the Gospel of Mark: Reality Check

July 16, 2023

Speaker: Pastor Mark Batterson

Scripture: Mark 6:14-29, Genesis 39-41, Genesis 50:20, Deuteronomy 29:29, Psalm 46:10

Sermon Overview: We can choose whether to view our challenges and sufferings through worldly eyes or spiritual eyes. Your focus determines your reality, so if you don't add eternity to the picture, and account for God's bigger story, you risk a life filled with bitterness, discouragement, and suffering without purpose. God says in His Word that all things work for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Eternity includes the good and the bad and is now and forever more.

Sermon Series Question:

1. Jesus says all things are working out for your good. How do His words match your perspective on your current challenges and hard places?

Sermon-Specific Questions:

1. Zoom Out: Read Mark 6:17-27. Reflect on how Herod was willing to give up so much for so little. Why do you think Herod was deeply grieved? Why do you think he made the decision to behead John anyway? Can you think of a situation in which you are intensely focusing on the here and now? Have you ever made a decision against your conscience? How can you step back and zoom out to see God's bigger picture/story? How can you pray or praise your way through your situation? How can you imagine your situation from the perspective that God takes your ashes and gives you beauty?
2. Forgive Reality: Read Mark 6:19. Herodias nursed a grudge; and though she may have won the battle, God won the war through His servant, John the Baptist. At the cross, Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." We forgive reality at the foot of the cross. What does it mean to "forgive reality"? Can you think of a time that someone spoke harsh words to you? Pass those words through the filter of God's Word. Are they true? Position yourself as if you are at the foot of the cross, and allow God to soften your heart so that you may forgive those who have hurt you. Now, confess your

sin(s) and seek repentance (change your way of thinking to match how God thinks about the situation).

3. Give Room for God: Read Mark 6:29, Romans 12:9, Deuteronomy 29:29, and Psalm 46:10. There will be suffering, pain, mystery, and paradox in our lives. John's disciples had the arduous and gruesome task of retrieving and burying John's body. How do you imagine they felt? How did they still leave room for God to work, not seeking revenge and repaying evil for evil? The secret things belong to God, and the revealed things are for us to live by His Word. What questions remain unanswered? Humbly ask God to reveal the answers. And now imagine a scenario in which God may keep the answers hidden for His greater purposes. Are you able to trust Him with unanswered questions? Why is it hard to do so?

Digging Deeper:

1. Read Genesis 37:28, Genesis 41:1, and Genesis 50:20. Really take time to imagine what it was like for Joseph to go through 13 years of slavery, imprisonment, and injustice. It only takes a minute to read over his suffering, but he lived through it every day, not knowing if God would really come through for him. How can Joseph's "50:20 perspective" give you hope in your hard places? Examine your thoughts, words, and actions to see if you have allowed negative situations and circumstances to deconstruct your faith because you can't make your hard place make sense. Be challenged to reconstruct your faith. God is running after you, so run to Him. Ask Him who you need to forgive, including yourself. Ask God to reveal the truth of the situation from the perspective of eternity.

Practical Application:

- Where are you planted? In that place – where you live, where you work, where you play – with whom can you share your testimony? Tell them the story of how Jesus' love and power grabbed hold of you.
- Download the NCC app or visit ncc.re/daily to listen to short, daily teachings M-F accompanying this series.
- Make a Bible reading plan and/or gratitude journal a daily discipline and connect with NCC Daily. (Download the [NCC app](#) to find our plan).
- Join a group this summer!!! Check them out at ncc.re/groups.