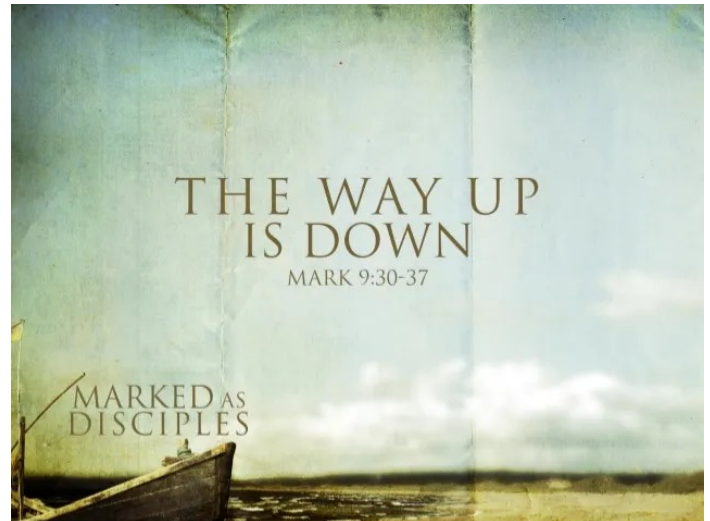




*This week's Revd. Morris' message: **What are your 'hard' questions for Jesus?***

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus spending time with the Disciples and teaching them important lessons concerning His coming death and resurrection, servant leadership and humility. *But they just don't seem to 'get it'.* Importantly, scholars have highlighted that this entire section in Mark's gospel is framed at the beginning and end by accounts of blind people who are given sight (8:22-26, 10:46-52). This stark image of going from blindness to sight is a big literary clue. As the blind man is given sight, however gradually, so the disciples, who are initially blind to Jesus' mission and identity, come to understand more, albeit gradually. But here is the big question ... ***why don't the disciples simply ask Jesus to explain something they don't understand?***



Perhaps they don't want to appear as lost and confused? Perhaps their distress at his teaching is so deep they fear addressing it. Besides, the closer we are to Jesus, the more we are supposed to **know** about God, about prayer, about the Bible, about all this religious stuff right? If we ask questions, mightn't we upset Jesus or lose face with the others? But verse 34 reveals *when the disciples avoid asking hard questions, they start to focus on posturing about who is right, better or greater than the others.*

How would this story be different if the disciples *had asked Jesus their hard questions?* What kind of conversation might have ensued between Jesus and the disciples? What kind of relationship would it have engendered with each other?

***So what does this all mean for us today?***

No one wants to look lost, confused or clueless. It punctures our pride and sense of self sufficiency and sagacity. We may even withhold our toughest questions within our own churches, Christian fellowship and Bible Studies. We can even pretend *we don't have hard questions* ... that we have pretty well have it all worked out! Yet the deepest mysteries of life do indeed elude every one of us. *Why do good people suffer? Why are humans so brutal to one another? Why does evil succeed? If God's own Son is betrayed and killed, then no one is safe. Why did God set up a world like this? Etc.*

*Why is it vital to ask our authentic hard questions?* Because we withhold these questions at our own peril. How would our own stories be different if *we did ask Jesus our hard questions?* What kind of conversations might we pursue with Jesus? How would our life as disciples together in our church be different as a result? What freedom do we forfeit when we refuse to simply say *'I don't know ... help me!'*

I wonder what hard question you may be wrestling with right now? Will you take it to Him who promises :*'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened'* [ Matthew 7:7-8]

The good news is that Jesus always welcomes us ...even when we do not understand or do not know. The reading closes with Jesus embracing a child, the ultimate symbol of not knowing, not understanding, being immature and undeveloped. *Don't children simply seem to ask 'Why?' endlessly?* Perhaps we need to do likewise of our heavenly Father. We need not fear our questions, our misunderstandings, our confusion or our curiosity in the presence of One whose *'perfect love casts out all fear'* [1 John 4:18].

**Gospel reading:** Mark 9:30-37.

**Some resources to dig deeper:** <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-25-2/commentary-on-mark-930-37-3> ; <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-25-2/commentary-on-mark-930-37-2>; <https://lcrwtvl.org/2018/09/pentecost-18-the-greatest-mark-930-37/>

**Upcoming Parish Activities: Midweek service :** Wednesday 10:30 a.m Meditation 6:30 p.m ; **Every Sunday Guitars and Ukulele lessons** at 3 p.m; **Bible Study** Wednesday at 7 pm and Friday at 10:30 am;

**Next Sunday:** *St Michael and All Angels Messy Church.*

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**Parish website :** <https://www.stmatthewshollandpark.com/>

**Parish Private Facebook site :** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/292308270851142> ;

**Public Site:** <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556418523933> ;

**Tipper's Treasure's Facebook site:** <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559040358754>

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:**

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.

