

Presentation 6

Mk 3.31-6.11

Jesus' Parables and the nature of Jesus' household



A 1st Century CE Wheat Mill, Capernaum, Galilee

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1. Literary Overview of Mk 3.31-6.11

- The section is prepared for by the scene in which Jesus' natural family seeks him out in his crowded house (3:31-35). This provides the opportunity to identify unambiguously the members of Jesus' household. Similarly, the section concludes with the rejection of Jesus in his hometown, the questioning of his family connections and their disbelief (6:1-11).
- Between these two framing scenes, Mark presents Jesus' ministry in two blocks clearly defined by a *boat/house* setting (4.1-34; 4.35-5.34). Mark does not contrast these two spatial settings through their juxtaposition as happens in previous chapters with the *house-synagogue*. Rather the evangelist aligns them. One ("the boat") speaks to and elucidates the other ("the house").
- What is taught (in the first block, 4.1-34) or done (in the second block, 4.35-5.34) in the boat setting has implications for how the reader is to better appreciate or understand Jesus' household. The boat acts as a spatial symbol for and an extension of Jesus' household. For this reason, what occurs in the boat is important for instructing Mark's householders.

About Jesus' household: affirmation of genuine kin (3:31-35)

Boat setting: The *meta*-parable: the sowing seed (4:1-9)

House setting:

Commentary on Parables (4:10-12)

- Allegory of the sowing seed (4:13-20)
- Other parables (4:21-32)

Final commentary on Jesus' parable ministry (4:33-34)

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Boat context:

- Storm on the lake (4:35-41)
- Healing the Gerasene Demoniac (5:1-20)

House context:

- Healing of synagogue-official's daughter (5:21-24, 35-43)
- Healing of hemorrhaging woman (5:25-34)

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About Jesus' household: rejection by kin (6:1-11)

Summary of Mk 4.1-34-The Parables

- *Mk 4.1-9*: The first section of *boat/house* material focuses on Jesus' teaching (4:1-34); the second explicates this teaching through his miraculous deeds (4:35-5:34). In the first, the opening presentation of the sowing seed is central (4:1-9). This is Mark's meta-parable. It helps to understand the whole of Jesus' ministry in the Gospel. It indicates the opposition that Jesus and his household will suffer, though ultimately God's *basileia* will be fruitful.
- *Mk 4.10-12*: The remainder of this first block (4:10-12) also presents how parables are to be interpreted and forecasts the enigmatic reaction to Jesus' ministry. This depends on the capacity to 'see' and 'hear'. Mark offers a theological basis (from Isaiah) for the difficulty of the Gospel's reception.
- *Mk 4.13-20*: A commentary on how parables are to be interpreted (4:10-12, 33-34) frames the allegory of the sowing seed (4:13-20) and other parables (4:21-32). The frame identifies a private (household) space for Jesus' instruction of his disciples. In the scenes which make up the second block of *boat/house* material, the implications of the parable teaching for the disciples and Mark's community are teased out.



A 1st Century CE Olive Press, Capernaum, Galilee

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- *Mk 4.21-25*-Parable of the lamp—all will be revealed.
- *Mk 4.26-29*: The *Basileia* will grow and bear fruit.

- *Mk 4.30-32*: *Basileia* grows from imperceptible origins: image of fertility.
- *Mk 4.30-34*: Jesus' parabolic ministry: :Enigmatic response to Jesus; different responses to Jesus' ministry.



Grape Design on 4th Cent CE Synagogue Lintel, Capernaum on northern shore of the sea of Galilee.

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Summary of Mk 4.35-6.11

- *Mk 4.35-41*: Storm on the lake and what happens to the 'boat'. Missionary event which becomes challenging. The story unfolds a theology of mission and reflects Mark's Gospel household. This is a healing story, an exorcism, of creation. The disciples are invited to have faith: Who is Jesus with such authority?
- *Mk 5.1-20*: Another exorcism on 'the other side'. Jesus restores the human being to community. Mark reflecting on the presence of the Roman Imperial power, as demonic.
- *Mk 5.21-24, 35-43*: The story of the healing of the 'rulers' daughter. Jesus in the second part moves into the 'household' and restores the domestic, familial relationship. The 'ruler' now becomes the 'father' along with the mother. An historical memory reflected on through

generation, first in oral form, finally in written form in Mark's Gospel. It is a story of 'resurrection' ('arise').

- *Mk 5.25-43*: A woman bleeding for 12 years—she is impure and ostracised. She initiates her own healing, endorsed by Jesus, connected to the deep act of human liberation. She is restored to authentic inner peace and community.
- *Mk 6.1-11*: Jesus in his own country and local synagogue. Spirit of rejection of Jesus, especially over his wisdom. Jesus marvels at the lack of faith (v 6), an anticipation of the passion. Jesus sends the 12 on mission, sharing his authority and healing ministry with them.



Ark of the Covenant on 4th Cent CE Synagogue Lintel, Capernaum, Galilee.

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An Overview Summary of Mk 4-6

- The parable of Mk 4.1-34 offers an insight into interpreting Jesus' ministry and the enigmatic reaction to Jesus.
- The storm on the lake (4:35-41) identifies the faith problems which dog this household. The exorcism of the Gerasene demonic (5:1-20) dramatically illustrates the power of the household to nurture and be evangelized.
- The two scenes of female healing which intercalate each other (5:21-24, 35-43 and 5:25-34) remind the auditor how Jesus' household of disciples is the place of healing and receptive of the socially excluded (a haemorrhaging woman and sick child). Both healings occur in relationship to a household, either as Jesus journeys towards the house or is inside it.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

- What are the stormy experiences that face our world, our church, our own situations? What insights might Mark offer us in these situations?
- The healing of the haemorrhaging woman is a story of inclusion of one who is socially isolated and excluded. Who are the ones in our world that are excluded? Do you know of stories or situations of people being welcomed?

IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT PRESENTATION

- For the next presentation, read Mk 6-8.

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