



Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: Mark

C. Clifton Black

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Mark's genius lies, not in telling a story about Jesus, but in creating conditions under which the reader may experience the peculiar quality of God's good news. The Evangelist hurries one along breathlessly, "immediately," making sure that the reader lurches with the characters into one pothole after another. "What is this new teaching" that consorts with the flagrantly sinful, turning the pious homicidal, intimates into strangers, and mustard seeds into "the greatest of all ... shrubs"?

Jesus' closest adherents, the Twelve, are among the most muddled. Who can blame them? They ask for an obscure parable's interpretation and receive an answer even more confounding. They are told to feed thousands with next to nothing. Their boat almost capsizes while their teacher sleeps. As they oar in rough waters, the teacher strides the waves intending to bypass them. Putting the reader in the same boat, Mark structures conversations with Jesus that make little sense, if any. The Twelve are craven, stupid, self-serving, and disobedient: meet the average Christian. Besides, "their hearts were hardened." Who hardens hearts? God. Should not God's Messiah lift the burdens of those following him? What kind of Christ heads to a cross, handing his disciples another for themselves. "Do you not yet understand?" *from the Introduction*

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