

October 4, 2026

God Revealed in Mark

“Part 3: Jesus’ Death”

Mark 15:37-39

Intro:

This morning we are looking at the last of our three revelations of God in the gospel of Mark. As I have mentioned in the previous sermons, these are not the only revelations of God in Mark’s gospel, but they act as bookends and the mid-point of Mark’s efforts to reveal God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The word “trinity” is not used in Scripture, but there is certainly trinitarian language throughout, as we have seen in the sermon series so far.

We began at Jesus’ baptism where God was revealed in the voice of the Father, speaking to the Jesus the Son, affirmed by the descending of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. This was a moment that revealed Jesus as God’s son, whom he was proud of and who brought joy. This was a moment of affirmation about the work and task that was set before Jesus as he was physically present on earth.

Then we moved to the mount of Transfiguration, where Jesus was revealed again through the voice of the Father, again acknowledging him as the Son and then instructing those present to listen to Jesus – his teaching about the kingdom of heaven, but also the prediction of his ultimate task of dying for the sake of the world. In this moment of revelation, Jesus’ physical self is transformed and we are given a glimpse into his holy splendour. We are also given the opportunity to see him standing in the gap between humanity and Heaven – the veil, as it were, between those who worship and the Holy of Holies where God dwells.

Today we see all that has been previously laid out come to its conclusion, with a final revelation in the completion of Jesus’ task.

Revealed in Death:

The focus today is on the moment of Jesus' death. If we look just a few verses earlier in Mark, we are given a description of the level of pain and suffering that Jesus endured on humanity's behalf – not only to his physical body on that cross, but also in the experience of separation from the Father's presence in those final moments before his body expired. As we will see, this is not an event that goes unnoticed, and the revelation comes from an unexpected source.

"Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last." This is the "It is finished" moment found in John's gospel. It is a raw moment filled with emotion and pain. Mark doesn't try to make it sound like anything less. It is this raw and determined moment that catches the Roman Centurion's attention as he stands on watch and prompts the statement he makes. But we will get to that in a moment.

Two things happen on the heels of Jesus breathing his last breath. The first is that the curtain in the temple is torn in two from top to bottom. There were two curtains in the temple. One which, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, was of Babylonian make and depicted scenes that would remind those looking at it of everything in creation, including the unknown heavens. This was the curtain that separated the outer court of worship from the inner court. The outer court was where women and Gentile believers were permitted to gather to worship. The inner court was where the Jewish men were permitted to worship. The other curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. The Holy of Holies was the area in the temple that housed the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat of God. It was where God's presence was understood to dwell, and only the High Priest was allowed in there, and then only once per year to offer the atonement sacrifices. Peeking beyond that curtain was equivalent to looking on the face of God and dying. Which of those two curtains Mark is referring to is under some debate among scholars, but the significance of the event is mostly agreed upon. The barriers that blocked people in their worship and access to God have been removed. And they have been removed on God's timing and by His power.

In the first sermon in the series, I noted that the word Mark uses for heaven opening up is the word for *torn*. When Jesus was baptised, the heavens were *torn open* for a moment when God descended from Heaven to earth. There wasn't like a window being opened and allowing people a glimpse into heaven. It was God bursting out, a foreshadowing of the barrier to Heaven being removed altogether. At the death of Jesus, Heaven is torn open again, this time represented in the tearing of the temple curtain, and this time it is not a fleeting moment but a permanent removal of the barrier between God's presence and His creation. As mentioned before, Jesus stood in the gap as the veil between us and God. By giving his life, he removed that veil. Now we can stand in the joy and the hope and the knowledge that we can approach God. We can know Him. We can be restored to relationship with Him. And all of that without fear that the finality of his holy wrath will be visited upon us.

The opening of Heaven is the first thing that happened when Jesus breathed his last. The second thing is the confession of the Roman Centurion. There were a number of people in the vicinity of Jesus as he hung on that cross – a few of the disciples along with several of the women who followed him, including his mother, Mary. There were general bystanders who mostly verbally abused Jesus and mocked him as he hung there. And there were the soldiers whose job it was to make sure that the crucifixion went the way it was supposed to. Mark does not give any indication of any special reaction to Jesus' death by anyone except for the one Centurion. Perhaps he was left to guard the condemned people on his own. Perhaps he was just standing off to the side. Whatever his posture, there was something about the way Jesus died that opened his eyes to seeing who he truly was. This would not have been the Centurion's first crucifixion. He knew how it worked and how people died. They lingered in pain and suffering, all defiance having left them. They would have died in silence, the weight of their own exhausted bodies removing any ability to muster the strength or breath to speak.

But not Jesus. He died differently. He died on His terms. No one took his life from him; he gave it willingly. His death was different and the Centurion saw that. He would have known the charges made against Jesus, would have known about the

claims to the title “Son of Man”. His proclamation that Jesus was the Son of God was not just pulled out of thin air. It was an acknowledgement and confirmation of the truth of those statements.

Jesus is revealed, but not by divine voice. He is revealed by the voice of an outsider – a Gentile. It is entirely probable that no one present in that moment actually heard him say the words. They may be words written entirely for the benefit of those who would read them later. However it occurred, the significant point is that experiencing God is no longer only for Jews. The Son of God has made it possible for God to be seen by all. For relationship to be restored for all. For worship to be no longer the exclusive domain of a select group of people.

The veil is torn, and those who were once on the outside are now able to fully experience what had been concealed behind it.

Conclusion:

Sometimes Christians think they have the truth and the direct line to God. This was the attitude of church leaders for much of Christian history – only those who were officially ordained to the ministry (and who had the proper teaching in Latin) were able to understand the Scriptures. Everyone else had to take their word for it. This inequality was one of the issues that drove the Reformation. We see it today in the way some of the divisions within the church, various denominations, treat one another. One denomination thinks they have the right understanding of what God is saying, and call every other denomination heretics. But having different denominations is not about one group being right and the rest wrong. It is about finding a place where we can worship and engage with God in the various ways that we understand. We need to celebrate how others worship differently. The thing that needs to be focused on is not style, but the Word of God, and whatever a church or a group believes, that they are sincerely striving to live in obedience to God’s Word. There is a humility that is needed. There is a listening and learning posture that Christians need to maintain. There is the need for all to submit to the teaching and leadership of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, in our lives.

The veil has been torn. The curtain removed. The Son of God has opened the door for all who wish to enter into God's presence.

Let's pray.