

*Presentation 7*

**Mk 6.7-8.26**

**Redefining Membership of Jesus' household**

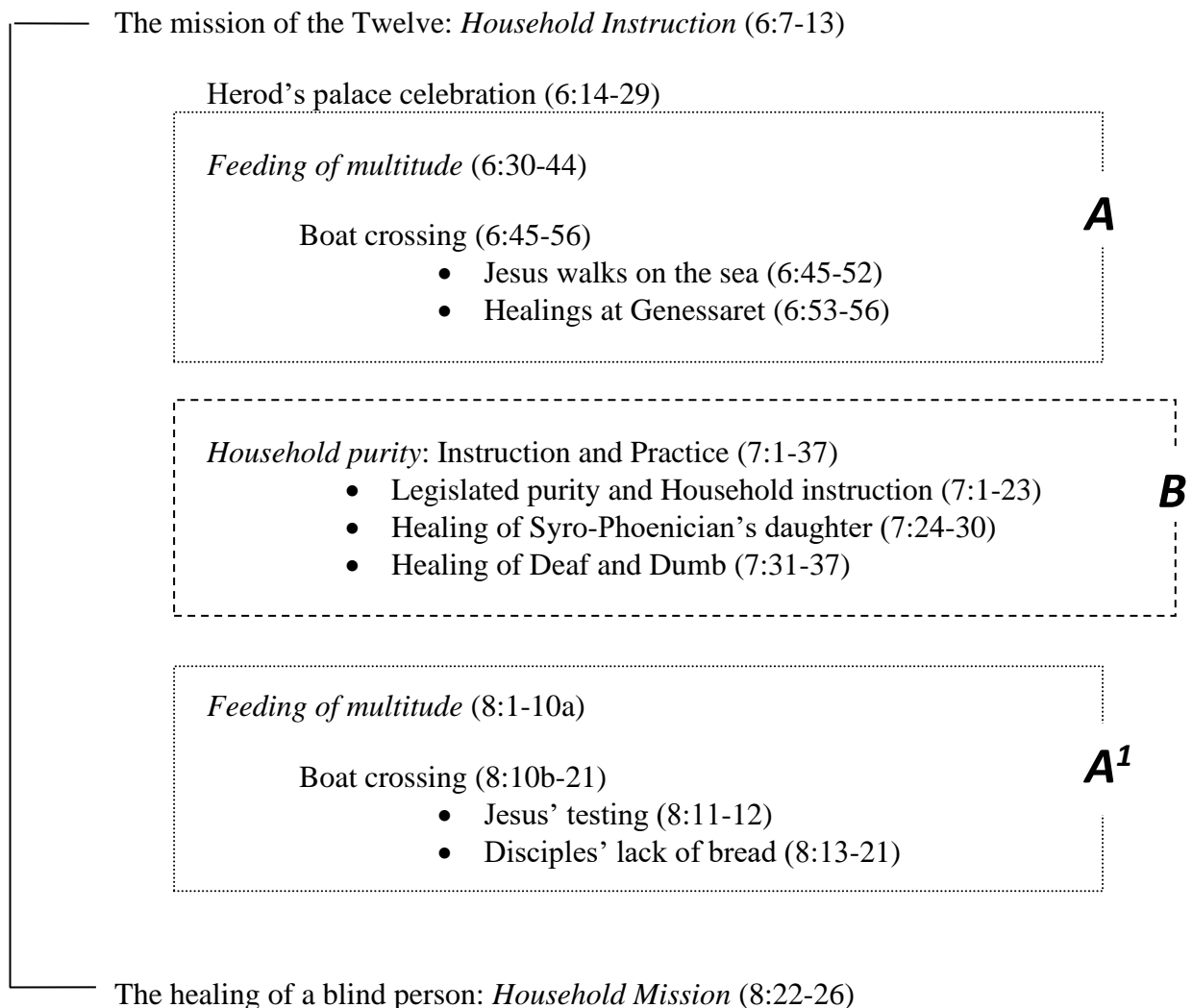


Near Capernaum, Upper Galilee

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1. *Literary Overview of Mk 6.7-8.26*

- This section offers a new moment in the gospel story. It is the gospel's "turn" to the other.
- Mk 6:7-8:26 shows how those who lack the correct or socially defined purity, gender and ethnic credentials are invited to become members of Jesus' household.
- The section is framed by stories concerned about household instruction or mission. The opening scene has Jesus instruct the Twelve for their mission to new households (6:7-13). The final moment of the section's concluding healing of a blind person (8:21-26) has Jesus instruct the healed disciple to return to his household. This healing is paradigmatic of the ongoing healing required in Jesus' disciples and in their house-centered mission.



*Summary of Mk 6.7-8.26*

*Introductory Stories Mk 6.7-29*

- *Mk 6.7-13*: The Twelve are authorised to preach, exorcise and heal. They emulate the mission of Jesus.
- *Mk 6.14-29*: Herod's palace celebration for the elite contrasts to Jesus' feeding of the multitude in the next scene. Reason offered for John the Baptist's martyrdom.



The Jordan River, flowing south towards the Sea of Galilee

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*Podcast Section A: Mk 6.30-56*

- *Mk 6.30-44*: Jesus feeds the crowd. This is a large urban feeding (250000 people?) in a desert place. Economic concerns and a pastoral failure to take responsibility typifies the disciples' approach. Jesus responds. The disciples are to take lead, restoring household eucharistic community.
- *Mk 6.45-52*: Jesus walks on the water, an image of God's presence in a time of upheaval, drawing on First Testament images: Ps 77.16-19; Job 9.8-11; 38.16. Jesus is "Ego Eimi" = I AM = YHWH.
- *Mk 6.53-56*: Healings on the 'other side of the lake'. Jesus heals and his popularity grows.



Archaeological remains of a first century CE fishing vessel from the Sea of Galilee, Kibbutz Ginnosar on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Photo: © Michael Trainor, used with permission.

*Podcast Section B: Mk 7.1-37*

- *Mk 7.1-23*: Authorities gather around Jesus and criticize his disciples for not living according to the elders. Mark reflects on the local situation in which the Gospel is written. Food declared clean and Jesus redefines purity legislation.
- *Mk 7.24-30*: Jesus enacts the reconfigured purity legislation in foreign lands in Tyre and in a Gentile house. His encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman tests and expands his pastoral practice which has implications for Mark's world. The woman's daughter is healed by Jesus, denoting, confirming Mark's missionary focus and the cultural adaptation of eucharistic practice in the non-Jewish world.
- *Mk 7.31-37*: Healing of one who is unable to hear and speak, with deep historical memory ('Ephatha'). This reflects deep issues that will preoccupy the disciples and their ability to articulate the Gospel.

*Podcast Section C: Mk 8.1-21*

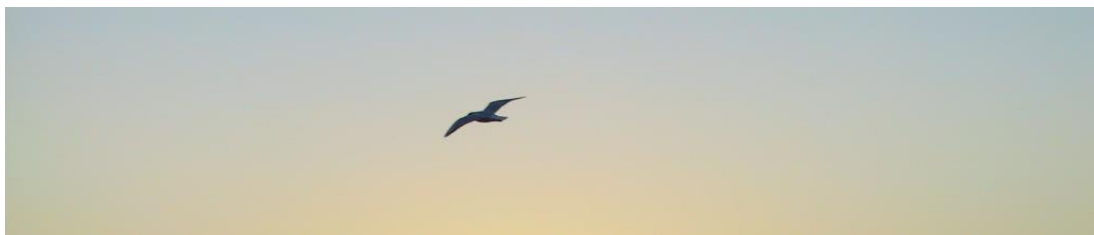
- *Mk 8.1-10*: A second feeding story, on the 'other side', concerns the feeding of the Gentiles who have 'come a long way'. Problems again surface by the disciple-leaders in addressing the issue.
- *Mk 8.11-12*: The testing of Jesus by the authorities.
- *Mk 8.13-21*: The departure back to the Jewish familiar world. The disciples had only 'one loaf' in the boat with them. Jesus cautions his disciples. Their literalism keeps them from understanding Jesus questions despite his reminding them of what they have experienced. The disciples' hardness of heart is starting to emerge. Do they not yet understand?

*Concluding and Transitional Story: Mk 8.22-26*

- *Mk 8.22-26*: This is a transitional healing story that opens up the next section of the Gospel, the ‘catechism on discipleship’. The need for the ‘double healing’ illustrates the chronic need of the disciples’ capacity ‘to see’ spiritually.
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*An Overview Summary of Mk 6.7-8.26*

- In this section of the gospel, Mark alerts the reader to central problems *within* the household. This is revealed also in the two feeding stories and the respective boat crossings which accompany and follow (6:45-52; 8:10b-21).
- The disciples, the members of Jesus’ household and images of Mark’s, are convicted by Jesus for having insensitive or “hardened hearts” (8:17).
- As we near the middle of the Gospel, the disciples appear to be no better than the religious authorities first identified in 3:4 with “hardened hearts.” This comes as a shock to Mark’s householders who would have expected something more from Jesus’ constant companions.
- The questions in 8:17-21 that Jesus directs to his disciples are also posed to each generation of Gospel listeners or auditors. They are posed to us:
  - *Do you still not perceive or understand?*
  - *Are your hearts hardened?*
  - *Do you have eyes, and fail to see?*
  - *Do you have ears, and fail to hear?*
  - *Do you not remember?*
  - *Do you not yet understand?*
- The members of Mark’s *domus* have had the inside story about Jesus. However, it is possible that they, too, are like the disciples, still not perceiving or understanding. Perhaps they are becoming outsiders. No one in Mark’s household that is exempt from suffering and incapable of a lack of real perception or hard heartedness— a sobering insight as the disciples are about to be plunged into Jesus’ struggle, suffering and death.





## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

- How would you respond now to Jesus' questions?
  - *Do you still not perceive or understand?*
  - *Are your hearts hardened?*
  - *Do you have eyes, and fail to see?*
  - *Do you have ears, and fail to hear?*
  - *Do you not remember?*
  - *Do you not yet understand?*
- Jesus redefines who is 'in' and who is 'outside' the household of disciples. Who do you think are the 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in Jesus household today? Why?



Sunrise over the Sea of Galilee  
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## IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT PRESENTATION

- For the next presentation, read Mk 8.27-10.52.

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