



St Marys
Anglican

since 1840

Christian Life



1. What is Christianity all about?
2. What is your life all about?
3. What are we about at SMAC?
4. How are we going to get there?
5. How can you be a part of Jesus work?

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Life @SMAC

Aims:

During our 5-times together we aim to move from coming to know Jesus Christ to what it looks like to love, worship and serve him with our entire lives. Each of our times together is aimed at encouraging and fostering Jesus' mission for your life and therefore the aims of each gathering are listed below,

Week 1: Introduce congregation members to the love of Jesus Christ.

Week 2: Then ask for a response to the claims of Jesus love.

Week 3: To present a clear mission and vision for SMAC.

Week 4: To seek God's will for our lives as Christians who are part of SMAC.

Week 5: To seek opportunities to love and serve Jesus through ministries at SMAC.

Details:

Week 1: What is Christianity all about?

How Jesus Christ's mission to rescue humanity is the shape and definer of life.

Week 2: What is your life all about?

To respond in faith to the loving mission of Jesus Christ.

Week 3: What are we about at SMAC?

To reach St Marys with the love of Jesus resulting in people becoming disciples of Jesus Christ.

Week 4: How are we going to get there?

Present pathways of integration and service which promote Jesus' mission.

Week 5: How can you be a part of Jesus work?

Become engaged and use your God-given gifts to serve Jesus Christ's mission to make and grow disciples.

What is Christianity all about?

Christianity is about coming to know, feel, and understand how Jesus Christ is God disclosing himself to humanity. He rescues us from our selfish rebellion against God and the Holy Spirit enables us to love, worship and serve him.

To gain a clear picture of Jesus we're journeying through Mark's Gospel. Mark presents Jesus as God who has come to save his people and he does this by asking us to see his power and love.

But first, as this is our first time together, it is good to find out a bit about each other's journey to faith and what brings us here today.

Video: Identity from Christianity Explored

Freely jot down some notes or ideas you thought need some explanation.

Journeying through Mark's Gospel

Today we're going to quickly move through five key ideas which shape what Christianity is all about, they are

- ❖ Jesus power and authority to teach (Mark 1:21-28, 11:18)
- ❖ Jesus power, authority and love in regards to sickness (Mark 1:29-34)
- ❖ Jesus power and authority over nature (Mark 4:35-41)
- ❖ Jesus power, authority and love to forgive sin (Mark 2:1-12)
- ❖ Jesus power and authority over death (Mark 5:35-43 & 16:5-7)

❖ Jesus power and authority to teach

Mark 1:21-28

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ²⁴ "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" ²⁵ "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" ²⁶ The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. ²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching--and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Mark 11:18

¹⁸ The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

1. What is amazing about the teaching of Jesus?

2. Why is Jesus' power and authority important to his identity?

❖ Jesus power, authority and love in regards to sickness

Mark 1:29-34

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. ³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

3. Sickness and death are something we face, why did Jesus heal people?

4. What does healing people communicate about the character of Jesus? Also, how does it help people have confidence in the teaching of Jesus?

❖ Jesus power and authority over nature

Mark 4:35-41

³⁵ That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" ³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. ⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

5. What do you think are Jesus' reasons for allowing the storm to occur and then to calm it down?

6. What is the implied answer to the questions in verses 40-41? And are they our answers?

❖ Jesus' power, authority and love to forgive sin

Mark 2:1-12

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.² So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves,⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was

what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic,¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

7. Why did Jesus after seeing their faith say your sins are forgiven rather than you are healed?

8. Why is the power to forgive sins critical to anyone becoming a Christian?

❖ Jesus power and authority over death

Mark 5:35-41

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly.³⁹ He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep."⁴⁰ But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was.⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").

Mark 16:5-7

⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'

9.How is Jesus power to defeat death different from the other miracles?

10.Why is Jesus death and resurrection the critical event in human history?
Combined with forgiveness of sin, how do they combine to define and shape your life?

Resources

The main two resources used this week were

- i. Christianity Explored @ www.ceministries.org
- ii. Christianity Explained @ <http://www.christianityexplained.com/>

What is your life about?

Your life is about growing in spiritual maturity resulting in becoming increasingly effective in helping people know about Jesus Christ.

So, the simple aim of today is to see ourselves clearly in light of Jesus' loving power and authority from last week and begin to see how his vision for us is our purpose in life.

We'll begin with a discussion question about the meaning and purpose of life. How would you describe your purpose for living?

Video: Come & Die from Christianity Explored

Freely jot down some notes or ideas you thought need some explanation.

1. How would Jesus answer the question, what is the meaning of life? Is your answer different, why/why not?

Engagement in the meaning of life and its purposes are driven by three life changing decisions,

- i. The desire to follow Jesus and therefore being his disciple
- ii. The want and need to spiritually grow in knowledge of Jesus
- iii. Knowing, feeling and understanding the power of the Holy Spirit

❖ Meaning of Life: Discipleship

Mark 8:34-37

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.³⁶ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1. How could we explain Jesus' phrase, "he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me?" How does it help explain discipleship?

2. An ambassador is a representative of a person in authority, how can we be Jesus' ambassadors in his world?

❖ Meaning of Life: The Holy Spirit

Titus 3:4-7

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour,⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

3. How has the Holy Spirit helped save us? How does he begin to shape the true meaning of life in each disciple of Jesus?

❖ Meaning of Life: Spiritual Growth

Titus 2:11-15

¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.¹⁵ These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

4. How can we grow in spiritual knowledge? What would it look like in practice?

Personal Meaning of Life Inventory

5. Write 5 things you think Jesus wants you to change about your life

- i.
- ii.
- iii.
- iv.
- v.

7. Now list one idea about how you can bring about that change

- i.
- ii.
- iii.
- iv.
- v.

What are we about here at SMAC?

To love everyone with the same love we have received from Jesus Christ. Our purpose comes from Jesus and his purpose is for everyone to hear the great news Jesus brings. Therefore, our purpose is two-fold, first, to tell others about the love we have received from Jesus and prayerfully depend on God's power for them to accept Jesus Christ as their only way to be saved. Second, we engage in missional activities which promote the cause of Jesus in the wider St. Marys community.

The mission of Jesus is incredibly simple to know and beautiful to be engaged in.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

1. What is the mission of Jesus?

2. What must be the mission of the church? How would a person visiting SMAC know this is our mission?

3. Why is 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,' stated as the name people are baptized into?

4. How is teaching important to Jesus' mission?

5. What is important about Jesus' last line, 'I am with you always, to the very end of the age?'

Christianity is not a private religion or faith; this means it is not merely personal. This is because Jesus is God and gives us God's only way to know him. His main desire is for everyone to know his love, a love we have felt and known personally and therefore this involves us telling others about Jesus.

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

John 13:34-35

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

6. How is the mission of Jesus brightened because we are like a light? How might the reverse be also true, namely if we are dim then the mission of Jesus is dark in our church?

7. How might Jesus' definition of loving one another be different from most people you know?

Summarize

8. In one sentence, according to Jesus what must a church be about? And therefore, what must each of our lives be about?

How are we going to get there?

This week is about how we intend to implement the mission of Jesus from last week. Since people are at different stages in coming to faith in Jesus we must present different pathways for people to engage the Christian faith. We want to present opportunities for people to investigate Jesus' claims as well as opportunities for people to be actively engaged in ministry. In between those two pathways we want to train and equip people to be active in sharing their faith, raising their children, learning to read the bible, learn door to door evangelism and actively participating in Sunday services plus stacks of ideas we've not even dreamt of yet.

1. What are the critical aspects of a churches DNA?

2. What should a church be doing from Monday to Saturday to help implement the mission of Jesus from last week?

3. What are some of the mistakes you have seen churches make in your experience? What have been some of the positive things you have seen?

Ephesians 4:11-16

¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

4. What are the purposes of having a variety of ministries and ministers in a church?

5. What are the characteristics of a united church?

How are we going to get there?

The 'there' above is loving people with the love Jesus has loved us with and expecting him to bring them to faith. Then, presenting pathways whereby people can grow in their spiritual maturity and actively participate in ministry (more on that next week).

The way we are going to do this is,

- i. Relational Impact: to make sure all events and ministry endeavors have at their core a relational framework. For example, if there is a sermon series on, like the Christian Life Series than we will run in conjunction with that series our Local Area Visitation and subsequent to that series run our Christian Life Group which you are a part of.
- ii. Cradle to Heaven: to dedicate money and resources to significant aspects of life's transitional stages. For example, to have a dedicated children's minister coupled with a dedicated children's' space. This is additionally true for youth, families, singles and seniors and involves opportunities for relational impact from Monday to Saturday.
- iii. Equipping: For both of the above two ideas to succeed a church needs people who both love Jesus and want to be equipped and trained to serve him. Therefore, a significant part of our process of bringing people to faith and having them engaged in our community is training current members to be active in ministry and relational impact. For example, Local Area Visitation requires people who are keen to get alongside people in our community whilst Crèche and a Playgroup require people who can get alongside children and mother's. And this is true for a raft of ministries like bible study, Scripture in Schools, music team and youth work.
- iv. Welcoming and Integration: Believing in Jesus' power to bring people into our lives; we want to be better equipped to welcome and integrate people into our community. For example, to continue to train our welcoming team on Sunday

mornings, but also to increasingly enable our welcoming team to become active in integration.

- v. Mission to Grow: We firmly believe the harvest is plentiful which means there are many people in our community who will relish an opportunity to hear about Jesus. Therefore, as we grow we must develop strategies to integrate and grow. Whether this means more bible studies, more services, different services, alternate ministries from Monday to Saturday, we must be open-minded to how God leads us and be open to growing beyond our initial capacity to feel comfortable.

How can you be a part of Jesus work?

Become engaged and use your God-given gifts to serve Jesus Christ's mission to make and grow disciples. Hopefully, you recognise the necessity of the above steps and therefore see that your salvation in Christ, in part, helps shape your participation. To be simple and obvious, people who hate Jesus are not likely to be invited to preach nor would they likely want to. However, churches are about integrating people into a church community and we lovingly do this as your spiritual maturity demonstrates. Even, if a person is at the beginning of seeing who Jesus is, but has not totally committed there a raft of ways they can participate in the life of the church.

Discussion and Activity

1. Write down all of the things you are either good at or enjoy doing (minimum 5).

2. Can God enable people to do great things for him? Why does he like to engage people in his work?

Romans 12:4-8

⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

1 Peter 4:10-11

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

3. What is the purpose of using the gifts God has given us? How might be test if we have a gift from God that can be used for his purposes?

4. Why do you think people don't want to use the gifts God has given them?

5. How could this be prevented from occurring both in your life and at SMAC?

An important part of today's study is to spend time in prayer asking God to,

- i. Reveal the ways he has gifted you already for his service.
 - ii. Give him thanks for the way he has created you and gifted you to serve him.
 - iii. Seek opportunities to serve him with your life.
6. Spend a few minutes in prayer, praying about those three points.

