

EXCERPT FROM THE MARK CHAPTER 4

I felt like I was in a fog as I stepped out my front door to walk over to my parents' house for Sunday dinner.

"We missed you in church this morning" Grandma called from her garden. She was busy cutting some of her prized bluebonnets and stacking them in a basket. I noticed a second basket, that could barely contain some just picked fruits and vegetables.

"Hi Grandma" was my response. "I'm looking forward to one of your amazing salads at dinner." Then I hurried off in the direction of the house, not wanting to continue a discussion about missing church, again.

Grandpa was standing next to the barn with his hand held over his eyes, to shade them from the fiercely beating sun. "Hey Grandpa" I said as I came up beside him. "What are you looking at?"

"Kelly is off riding Peanut and I was just watching them go, they are so in sync with each other. It's a beautiful thing to see" he mused.

I patted him on the back and continued my walk. I noticed Jon and James sheering their sheep. "Oops, you missed a spot" I joked. They both stopped and stood back to inspect their work. "I don't see it" they said in unison. I chuckled and they both gave me an angry look, and then returned to sheering.

I waved to Dad, as I caught a glimpse of him out in the field. Then I stepped inside the house. The smell of roast beef cooking always permeated the whole house. It was my favorite meal. I headed straight for the kitchen and, just as expected, found Mom peeling potatoes. I gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"I'm guessing you slept in" she quizzed me, glancing in my direction as she tapped away my hand when I reached for a chocolate chip cookie? "Grandma made those for later" she smiled, "you don't want to ruin your appetite."

"I'm not 10 Mom" was my annoyed response. Then I headed into my Dad's office and plopped down into his comfy chair. I pulled out my laptop and started to check my e-mails and social media accounts.

I could hear Grandma's voice as she came inside. She was humming the tune of "How great thou art." I couldn't help but smile listening to her sweet sound as she worked at setting the dining room table. Then Grandpa came in and she sent him off to wash his hands.

Jon and James came in from their work and ran upstairs to clean up for dinner.

Kelly flew past me, rushing to beat the twins to the bathroom. I heard her groan when she made it to the top of the stairs. She yelled down "Mom, I'm going to use your shower really quick." She wasn't kidding, less than 5 minutes later she was standing in front of me wearing her favorite yellow sundress. "Jason, do you think you could help me with Tony? He just won't leave me alone and I've made it pretty clear to him that I'm not interested in continuing a relationship if he won't even consider coming to church with me."

"Sure I'll talk to him, but I was against this relationship from the beginning, if you recall" I responded.

"Thanks bro, I always can count on you" she said, and gave me a big hug. Then she whistled as she headed off to the kitchen.

The sound of my family's voices started to grow as they all began to assemble at the table. Then my mom called, "Jason it's time for dinner". Still not ready for the dreaded discussion about why I wasn't in church this morning, I continued to surf the Internet. Suddenly, there was an eerie silence.

As I passed through the door to the dining room, I headed toward my usual seat. Then I stopped. Time, it seemed, stopped. My family was missing.