

A WINTER BIBLE STUDY ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Tuesday March 2, 2021: Session 2 - Readings

Mark 1:14-45 (NRSV)

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.*"

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "*Follow me and I will make you fish for people.*" And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

The Man with an Unclean Spirit

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "*What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.*" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "*Be silent, and come out of him!*" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "*What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.*" At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Peek at the Greek: *kairos* (From the Study Book)

In Mark 1:15, Jesus says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." The term he uses for "time" is *kairos*, which makes his audience think of a divinely appointed moment. For instance, the Greek translators of the Old Testament used *kairos* describe the birth of Isaac, which God promised would happen at an appointed time. Greek has another word that refers more specifically to hours-and-minutes time: *chronos*. By using *kairos*, Jesus's statement is far more significant than, "Hey everyone, it's 5 p.m. so God's kingdom is now here." He's referring to a moment of divine fulfillment, one in which all of the messianic promises in the Old Testament find their target in him.

Describe one significant, life-altering moment from your own life. Were you aware of its significance at the time? In what ways did that moment influence your faith?

Background: What did Jesus mean by "kingdom of God"?

We've already established in Mark 1:15 that Jesus came in into this world to proclaim that the kingdom of God is at hand. His earthly presence signaled that God was done preparing. But what is the kingdom of God, exactly?

During the time of Jesus, the Jewish community anticipated a militaristic kingdom where God would rule over the nations through Israel. However, Jesus flipped that idea on its head. In his gospel, Mark uses the expression "kingdom of God" fourteen times. From the start, in 1:15, Jesus says, "the kingdom of God is at hand." The verb he uses literally means, "has drawn near" and he immediately ties it to repentance and belief. Not once does Mark refer to "the kingdom of God" in terms of an outward militaristic kingdom, like the one anticipated by the Jews. Rather, Jesus declares that the reign of God begins with the internal surrender of his people. (Continued on next page)

Background: What did Jesus mean by “kingdom of God”?

(Continued) In other words, we are no longer waiting. The kingdom of God is spreading even now, and it takes root primarily in the hearts of people. It’s easy for us to get caught up in thinking similar to that of the Jews during Jesus’s time. They longed for power and we do the same today.

We talk a lot about Christianity’s influence in culture. While there’s nothing wrong with that, we have to remember that the kingdom of God begins first of foremost with a transformed heart. God is at work creating a people, which means the focus of discipleship is helping people surrender and follow Jesus. Jesus did not come simply to change our circumstances, but to transform our hearts.

So, what do you come to Jesus looking for? How have you witnessed the kingdom active in your life? What does it look like? Does the idea that God does not always change our circumstances but is more concerned with our hearts frustrate you or comfort you? Explain.

Jesus Heals Many at Simon’s House

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

A Preaching Tour in Galilee

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his

companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “*Everyone is searching for you.*” He answered, “*Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.*” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Peek at the Greek: *katadioko* (From the Study Book)

Francis points out in the video that it didn’t take long for Jesus’s popularity to gain traction. Yet, after attracting one of his first crowds (v. 33) he steals away in solitude to pray (v. 35). Confused by his withdrawal, the disciples “searched for him” (v. 36). Interestingly, Mark uses the verb *katadioko*, which nearly always describes a hostile form of pursuit—like a bounty hunter chasing an escaped prisoner. The disciples are looking for Jesus because they feel like he’s blowing the opportunity to capitalize on his growing fame. Instead, they find him praying in solitude. By using the verb *katadioko*, Mark suggests their misplaced craving for influence through Jesus, which is fundamentally a misunderstanding of the purposes of God.

Jesus’s response to his own fame differs from his disciples’ response. Being honest, how do you think you would have responded to Jesus when you found him praying?

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “*If you choose, you can make me clean.*” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “*I do choose. Be made clean!*” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, “*See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.*” But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

BACKGROUND ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The Synoptic Gospels (From the NIV Study Bible)

A careful comparison of the four Gospels reveals that Matthew, Mark and Luke are noticeably similar, while John is quite different. The first three Gospels agree extensively in language, in the material they include, and in the order in which events and sayings from the life of Christ are recorded. (Chronological order does not appear to have been rigidly followed in any of the Gospels, however.) Because of this agreement, these three books are called the Synoptic Gospels (*syn*, “together with”; *optic*, “seeing”; thus “seeing together”). For an example of agreement in content see [Mt 9:2–8](#); [Mk 2:3–12](#); [Lk 5:18–26](#). An instance of verbatim agreement is found in [Mt 10:22a](#); [Mk 13:13a](#); [Lk 21:17](#). A mathematical comparison shows that 91 percent of Mark’s gospel is contained in Matthew, while 53 percent of Mark is found in Luke. Such agreement raises questions as to the origin of the Synoptic Gospels. Did the authors rely on a common source? Were they interdependent? Questions such as these constitute what is known as the Synoptic Problem. Several suggested solutions have been advanced:

1. **The use of oral tradition.** Some have thought that oral tradition had become so stereotyped that it provided a common source from which all the Synoptic writers drew.
2. **The use of an early Gospel.** Some have postulated that the Synoptic authors all had access to an earlier Gospel, now lost.
3. **The use of written fragments.** Some have assumed that written fragments had been composed concerning various events from the life of Christ and that these were used by the Synoptic authors.
4. **Mutual dependence.** Some have suggested that the Synoptic writers drew from each other with the result that what they wrote was often very similar.
5. **The use of two major sources.** The most common view currently is that the Gospel of Mark and a hypothetical document, called *Quelle* (German for “source”) or *Q*, were

6. used by Matthew and Luke as sources for most of the materials included in their Gospels.
7. **The priority and use of Matthew.** Another view suggests that the other two Synoptics drew from Matthew as their main source.
8. **The priority and use of Luke.** A similar view suggests that the other two Synoptics drew from Luke as their main source.
9. **A combination of the above.** This theory assumes that the authors of the Synoptic Gospels made use of oral tradition, written fragments, mutual dependence on other Synoptic writers or on their Gospels, and the testimony of eyewitnesses.
10. **Complete independence.** Some hold that the Synoptic writers worked independently of each other. According to this view, the similar—sometimes even verbatim—choice and order of words and events are best explained by the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit on the authors.

Dating the Synoptic Gospels

Assumption A: *Matthew and Luke used Mark as a major source*

View No. 1: Mark written in the 50s or early 60s a.d.

- 1) Matthew written in late 50s or the 60s
- 2) Luke written 59–63

View No. 2: Mark written 65–70

- 1) Matthew written in the 70s or later
- 2) Luke written in the 70s or later

Assumption B: *Matthew and Luke did not use Mark as a source*

View No. 1: Mark could have been written between 50 and 70

View No. 2: Mark written 65–70

- 1) Matthew written in the 50s
- 2) Luke written 59–63

Other Perspectives on Synoptic Gospels & “Q”:

Reference Websites:

<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/synoptic-gospels>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synoptic_Gospels

Gospels and Acts

(M. A. P. Making the Bible Meaningful, Accessible, Practical; by Nick Page)

The four Gospels and the Book of Acts record the origins and early history of Christianity. Gospel means “good news” and that is what Christians saw the content of these books to be – good news about Jesus.

Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke Out of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are noticeably similar, covering many of the same events, using broadly similar language, and narrating the history in roughly the same order. This has led them to being dubbed the Synoptic Gospels (‘syn’ = “together” and ‘optic’ = “seeing”). They see things, as it were, with the same eyes. Most experts agree that Mark was the earliest of the Gospels to be written/ both Luke and Matthew used Mark as one of the main ingredients of their own works.

The Gospel of John The fourth Gospel, John, is very different. Written a lot later, it focuses on relatively few events in the life of Jesus, preferring instead to treat each incident in greater depth. We also get far more reported speeches of Jesus.

Acts Or, to give it its full title, the Acts of the Apostles. This is a continuation of Luke’s Gospel, from the resurrection of Jesus through the foundation of the early Church. It focuses on three main characters: Peter, Paul and Jesus, present both after his resurrection and then through the Holy Spirit.

Where did they get it all from?

We have already seen how like and Matthew used Mark for much of their source material. But there were also other key sources for these books.

Memories and Recollections The Gospels draw heavily on firsthand memories and impressions. Acts, also, was written by someone who was actually there, and many times in the book Luke says “then we did this or that...”

Treasured Sayings Christians remembered the words and actions of Jesus. This was not a literate culture and people were used to memorizing facts, stories, important sayings. Some of these sayings

were collected together and circulated among the early Church, Paul may have had one of these sayings in mind when he quotes Jesus in Acts 20:35: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” is a statement of Christ not found in any of the Gospels.

Early “Gospels” Although Mark is the first we have, that doesn’t mean it was the first. There may well have been earlier biographies and accounts.

Inspiration Certainly in the case of John’s Gospel, there is another element: divine inspiration. John knew Jesus worked alongside him and spent many years thinking about and praying over what he had heard. His Gospel, therefore, includes reflections and comments from the writer himself, ideas that came to him direct from God, rather than from other sources.

A Concise Dictionary of Theology

by G. O’Collins S.J. & E. G. Farrugia, S.J.

Synoptic Gospels (Gr: “overview”) the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke which very frequently parallel each other closely in content and phraseology. The term comes from the Protestant NT scholar Jakob Johann Griesbach (1745-1812), who printed the three Gospels in parallel columns, so that one could see at a glance their major convergences and minor divergences. To account for the obvious literary relationship between these Gospels, most contemporary scholars accept the Two-Source Theory, according to which Mark wrote first. Then Matthew and Luke drew on Mark and on a collection of Jesus’ sayings (“Q” or “Quelle”), as well as having some other separate sources.

Two-Source Theory (a) The widely accepted hypothesis that the Gospel of Matthew and Luke had two major sources: Mark’s gospel and “Q” (a collection of Jesus’ sayings). (b) A view commonly held from the “materially” separate and equally valid “sources” of Revelation, one being tradition and the other scripture.

“Quelle” or “Q”: (German: “source”) A hypothetical lost document composed largely of sayings or logia of Jesus and used as a major source by Matthew and Luke. Very many scholars accept this hypothesis which explains numerous close similarities between Matthew and Luke.