

Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Atwood

Times: Wednesdays 7:15pm–8:15pm in the Fellowship Hall

Purpose

The purpose of this class is to introduce students to the Gospel of Mark. Each lecture “stands alone” but the real benefit will be grasping the Gospel of Mark as whole. A person who attends this class regularly will be able to: (1) understand what makes the Gospel of Mark unique vis-a-vis the other gospels and appreciate Mark’s nuances, (2) interpret Biblical texts in a way that understands the original context and authorial intent, (3) familiarize oneself with the Gospel of Mark as whole as one narrative story and not simply a gathering of short stories, (4) become familiar with different interpretive approaches to Mark and how this affects our view of the Gospel, and (5) appreciate the beauty of the text and the God that it points to.

Practical Details:

- Each class begins *promptly* at 7:15pm and will go for one hour. Snacks will be provided and folks are encouraged to come at 7:00pm in order to grab food/drink and get settled.
- Free parking is available in the back.
- The class meets in the Fellowship Hall and you can enter through the doors facing the water.
- There’s no need to make it to all the lectures. Just come when you are in town...
- There’s no need to “prepare” for class—just come.

9/27 Lecture #1: The Calling of the Disciples

Mark 1:1–20

This lecture will introduce students to the author *as distinct* from other Gospels by comparing how each Gospel begins and how John the Baptist is treated. We will also see how Mark 1:14-15 functions as a summary/outline of the book, how Mark understood Jesus’s call to discipleship as effectual, and we will look at several key terms that show up throughout the Gospel.

10/4 Lecture #2: Questioning Jesus

Mark 2:1–3:6

As soon as Jesus declares his mission and announces His kingdom, it is immediately questioned and tension mounts. This lecture looks at how Jesus’s kingdom appeared as a threat many and examines the ways in which Jesus’s enemies were fearful of his claims and power.

10/11 Lecture #3: A Kingdom Divided

Mark 3:20–34

Jesus challenges our notion of “family” and immediately accused of being demon-possessed. This lecture examines Jesus’s new definition of family, the unity of God, and takes a close look at the difficult text: “...whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven...”

10/18 Lecture #4: A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman

Mark 5:21–43

This set of stories, set together, illustrate what interpreters call a “Markan sandwich.” The purpose of the lecture is to show how the way Mark’s structure his content illumines the meaning of the text. We will also examine how this text foreshadows Jesus’s death and resurrection and the unique nature of Jesus’s authority.

10/25 Lecture #5: The Failure of Faith and the Sending of the Twelve

Mark 6:1–13

Why was it that those who knew Jesus the best often doubted him the most? What was it about Jesus’s hometown that wouldn’t allow him to do miracles there? This lecture also examines the nature of evangelism and discipleship by exploring how Jesus sent out his disciples to do ministry.

11/1 Lecture #6: The Feeding of the Five & Four Thousands

Mark 6:30–44, 8:1–13

What are the different ways to interpret these texts and how do they influence historic and current understandings of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper? This lecture will also explore the concept of miracles or “signs” and how Mark understood them to function in relation to establishing Jesus’s authority.

11/8 Lecture #7: Impending Death and the Transfiguration

Mark 9:1–13

How did Jesus understand his own divinity and how did Jesus’s disciples respond to those claims? This lecture explores those themes and examines the relationship between the Old and New Testaments by examining Jesus’s self-identity as “Son of Man” over and against previous prophets.

11/15 Lecture #8: Jesus’s Teaching on Divorce

Mark 10:1–12, 12:13–27

Who were the Pharisees and what was their unique challenge to Jesus concerning divorce? How was Jesus’s response a unique interpretation of Old Testament and can this be a way for us to interpret the Old Testament as well? We will also look at current divorce law in the United States and compare it to Jesus’s teaching.

*****Week off for Thanksgiving*****

11/29 Lecture #9: Jesus Enters Jerusalem...Angry

Mark 11:1–33

Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly, but immediately curses a tree, starts a fight in the temple, and refuses to answer any more questions of the Pharisees. This lecture looks at the way Jesus begins to understand his impending death and highlights the differences between Jesus's kingdom and the one He will overcome.

12/6 Lecture 10: Jesus's Teaching on End Times

Mark 13:1–37

Jesus had some strong words for those who thought the things of this world would last forever. Instead, Jesus prophesied impending doom and some very dark things for those who followed him. This lecture looks at Jesus's teaching at what the end times will look like, when they will come, and how Christ-followers should live in light of these teachings.

12/13 Lecture 11: Jesus's Death and Burial

Mark 15:33–47

Mark provides a different view of Jesus's death and burial than the other Gospels and this lecture will examine what those differences are. Additionally, basic terms will be examined like, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" and "Preparation Day." This lecture will help those understand the nature of crucifixion and how 1st century Jewish burial customs played a role in Jesus's entombment.

12/20 Lecture 12: Emotions and the Resurrection

Mark 16:1–8

The purpose of this lecture is twofold. First, it will examine Mark's very unusual ending to the Gospel by demonstrating how it is different from the other synoptics and John. Second, it will look at the "other" half of the chapter, whose canonicity is highly doubted by scholars and often set in italics in most Bibles. How do we know if it is "Scripture" or not?