

SCHOOL OF THE WORD 2017
St Mark's Gospel (5)

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Part 1

- Module 1: The current context of faith
- Module 2: The readings at Mass
- Module 3: What is a gospel?
- Module 4: The Gospel of the current year
- **Module 5: Mark's portrait of Jesus**
- Module 6: Discipleship according to Mark

Sequence

- Importance of the question for our time
- Each Gospel has its own "portrait" of Jesus
- Double approach
- Self-emptying
- Saving power
- Is this helpful?
- Conversation

Importance for today

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.

The primary reason for evangelising is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him. What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known? If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts. We need to implore his grace daily, asking him to open our cold hearts and shake up our lukewarm and superficial existence. Standing before him with open hearts, letting him look at us, we see that gaze of love which Nathaniel glimpsed on the day when Jesus said to him: "I saw you under the fig tree" (Jn 1:48).

- Thinking visually, how would you symbolise your own "picture" of Jesus?
- Has your picture changed over time?
- What has influenced your personal understanding of and faith in Jesus
- Challenge: holding both the human and the divine
- How did you get on reading Mark?
- Any questions?
- What's "missing" in Mark?

NT Portraits

- Paul, as the earliest Christian writer
- The Synoptic Gospels
- John
- Hebrews
- Revelation
- Quite different pictures, reflecting the historical Jesus, the risen Lord, and the spiritual experiences of communities and leaders

Gospel “Portraits”

- Mark: Jesus as abandoned Messiah / Son of God
- Matthew: Jesus the Teacher
- Luke: Jesus the prophet martyr
- John: Jesus as revealer, word made flesh
- *NB all in the light of the resurrection*

Layout of Mark

Prologue	Galilee	The Way	Jerusalem	Epilogue
1:1-15	1:16-8:21	8:22-10:52	11:1-15:47	16:1-8
	Calling, Sending		No calling, no sending	
	Miracles Exorcisms		No miracles, no exorcisms	
	Discourse Kingdom parables		Discourse Apocalyptic	
	Symbols bread, sea, boat		Symbols cup, way, cross	

Double Approach

- Mark offers two conflicting portraits
 - Weakness and true humanity of Jesus
 - Jesus as the saving power of God
- He starts with (ii) and closed with (i)
- The secrecy motif is a key to holding both

Self-emptying

- Already in 1 Cor 1; Phil 2 etc.
- This is Paul’s pattern
- It places enormous emphasis on the birth (= identity) of Jesus and on the outcome of his life (= resurrection)
- This is the Jesus of Mark 11:1-15:47
- Q temptation story in Matthew and Luke
- Jesus’ failure in Nazareth (Mk 6:1-6)

Then the Pharisees came and began to argue with Jesus, asking for a sign from heaven to test him. Sighing deeply in his spirit he said, “Why does this generation look for a sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to this generation.” Then he left them, got back into the boat, and went to the other side. (Mark 8:11–13)

Saving Power

- Embedded chiefly in the miracle stories
- Each story goes beyond the immediate issue and functions as a window on salvation as such
- Examples: hunger, demons, sickness, death
- The stories were told precisely because they pointed beyond the concrete instance to the saving reality of Jesus
- The real point is not that Jesus did wonders *in the past* but that Jesus offers the very same deliverance now.
- E.g. the raising of Jairus’ daughter points to God’s raising of Jesus
- God’s raising of Jesus point to Jesus as the source of our own resurrection

- The multiplication of the loaves
 - Jesus as Moses / Elijah for both Jews and Gentiles
- The walking on the water
 - Jesus has power over the forces of death
- The calming of the storm
 - In the storms of discipleship, Jesus is the centre

Two ways of looking

- Both are present in Mark
- Both are told in the light of the resurrection
- Mark does not attempt to join the perspective but rather juxtaposes them
- Secrecy and misunderstanding were already in the oral traditions
- Mark presents Jesus as a “hidden revelation” which can be grasped only after the resurrection
- Jesus is presented as truly and fully human
- Jesus is presented as the power of God, already in his in lifetime, though he was not recognised
- Jesus himself “promotes” this non-recognition, this hidden revelation
- In this way, Mark seeks to hold the two ways of looking at Jesus in a kind of unresolved, creative tension.
- We today have the very same task but we must do it in our own way
 - We are very aware of the true humanity of Jesus
 - We are also aware of Jesus, the Son of God
- Why would this be of any use to Mark’s community of believers?
 - They are suffering and so they need a Messiah who is like them (cf. Hebrews)
 - They are suffering and so they need a Messiah who can help them (cf. Hebrews)

Is this helpful?

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<i>Passion Prediction 1</i>	<i>Passion Prediction 2</i>	<i>Passion Prediction 3</i>
8:31 Passion Prediction	9:30-31 Passion Prediction	10:33-34 Passion Prediction
8:32-33 Misunderstanding (Peter)	9:32-24 Misunderstanding (The Twelve)	10:32, 35-37 Misunderstanding (James and John)

8:34-38 Discipleship	9:35-50 Discipleship	10:38-44 Discipleship
8:38-9:1 Reason: judgment	9:37-40 Reason: Jesus encountered	10:45 Reason: Son of Man came to serve
Context: Post-Easter persecution	Context: relations outside the community	Context: early church betrayal of service
Focus: the individual	Focus: society	Focus: the church

Mark 8:22 Then they came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to Jesus and asked him to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and brought him outside of the village. Then he spit on his eyes, placed his hands on his eyes and asked, "Do you see anything?" 24 Regaining his sight he said, "I see people, but they look like trees walking." 25 Then Jesus placed his hands on the man's eyes again. And he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Do not even go into the village."

Mark 10:46 They came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many scolded him to get him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man and said to him, "Have courage! Get up! He is calling you." 50 He threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus. 51 Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied, "Rabbi, let me see again." 52 Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has healed you." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the road.

Task for the next day

- Focus: what is a disciple today?
- Read chapters 8:22 to 10:52
- Pay attention to the frames
- Any questions?