

Arthur Larson Stewardship Council presents

Four Gospels



One Stewardship

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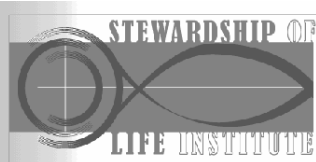
THE GOSPELS

and their accounts of the
teachings and ministry of
Jesus have something to
say about

STEWARDSHIP

Biblical stewardship discussions have often focussed on 'money' passages in the NT, most often on Paul's discussion of the offering he was collecting in 2 Corinthians 8-9. If, however, stewardship is more broadly understood as a way of talking about our life as responsible Christians, the whole Bible, and perhaps the Gospels in particular should have something to say about it.

STEWARDSHIP



www.stewardshipoflife.com

Living every moment with awareness of God's abundant generosity.

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Welcome!

Stewardship is about relationship. First our relationship with God at the very center of our being. With God at the center of our lives, we are able to steward His gifts to us.

Our relationship with our time, talents and treasures on earth. Most people find it easy to think of time in this way, but they aren't entitled to and have no right to hoard.

Our relationship to the earth. The earth is God's, and we are stewards of His resources for keeping warm and building shelter. The earth's resources are finite, so thoughtful consumption of resources so all will have enough.

Our relationship to others. Jesus commanded us to love one another, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. In a world where anger, hatred and selfishness abound, Stewardship calls us to love.

Stewardship is a journey. Like all faith disciplines, Stewardship is an ongoing process of inspiring and equipping Christians to walk that journey.

Relationship

- Time, talents, treasures
- To the earth
- To others

Journey

Look over the resources at <http://www.stewardshipoflife.org/welcome.htm>

The definition of stewardship provided there is a good one for understanding how this course will approach stewardship.



THE GOSPELS

Manuals for the Stewardship of Life



When stewardship is understood this way, then the Gospels can be read in one way as Manuals for the Stewardship of Life.



The Gospel of Mark



Vell, den, Sven and Ole were
pilots, dontcha know...

The joke here is about Sven and Ole landing a plane and having to do all sorts of things because the runway is so short. When they land, Sven notes that it is the shortest runway he has ever seen. Ole agrees, but notes that it is nice and wide!

Jokes work because the listener agrees to enter into a world created by the joke-teller. It is not the parties *in* the joke who are fooled, but we who are listening to the joke.

In a similar fashion, the Gospel of Mark is intended to create a world into which the listener/reader is invited to enter. The Gospel is trying to persuade us to adopt a particular viewpoint regarding its main subject, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Narrative Criticism

Reader Response Criticism

Narrative Criticism is attentive to what we think the author was trying to communicate to the original audience.

Reader Response Criticism takes it a step further to reflect on how the text addresses any reader and make you aware of how you are reading/perceiving the story.

Story

Discourse

We want to distinguish between the story level of the text and the discourse level.

Story

- What is said

Discourse

- How* the story is told

Story

- What is said
- Characters, events, places

Discourse

- How* the story is told
- How* it affects the hearer

Story

- What is said
- Characters, events, places
- Attention to how story turns out

Discourse

- How* the story is told
- How* it affects the hearer
- Attention to temporal experience of reading

In the Gospel of Mark

Point of view of Narrator (Mark) =
Point of view of Jesus =
Point of view of Reader

If we are aware of *how* the story is being told, ie, aware of what is happening at the discourse level, we realize that the point of view of the narrator is the point of view of Jesus in the story. The author tells us things about Jesus that only Jesus knows. What is also happening, however, is that by sharing the author's point of view, it also becomes our point of view. We find ourselves, therefore, more and more aligned with and loyal to Jesus... and this is a powerful way of building faith!

In the Gospel of Mark

The use of
IRONY and **RIDDLES**
brings the
Narrator, Jesus, and the Reader
into even closer relationship

Because we know things that often the characters in the story do not, we have a privileged position, a position that draws us to closer to an identification with Jesus.

The Gospel of Mark

... “does not claim to be history. It is not even referentially oriented. Rather, it is pragmatically or rhetorically oriented. It is not ‘about’ its characters; it is ‘about’ its reader. The Gospel writer’s chief concern is not the fate of either Jesus or the Twelve in the story but the fate of the reader outside the story.”

Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, page 50

I find this to be a very interesting claim. The Gospel is not about Jesus?!? No, it is directed toward how you the reader relate to Jesus.

Is this author
trustworthy?



Whether we are persuaded by this gospel or not ultimately depends on whether we find the author trustworthy or not. Note that 'Mark' makes no external claims to authority: no claim to have been an original disciple or associate or even an eyewitness. The gospel's success ultimately depends on the persuasiveness of the message itself.

Is this teacher
trustworthy?



Same deal!

Mark 1.1

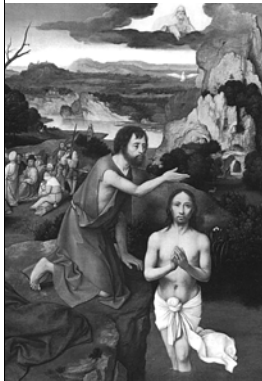
The beginning
of the Gospel of
Jesus Christ,
Son of God...

What is assumed about you the reader with this opening statement?

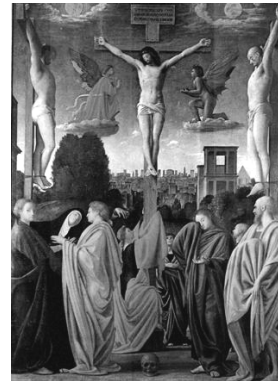
- That you will have the opportunity to read/hear it
- That you can understand the Greek in which it was written
- That you have some recognition of who Jesus is?
- That you understand something about the titles “Christ” and “Son of God”
-

What is meant by the “beginning of the Gospel”? The beginning of the written account? A reference to John the Baptist’s ministry? A reference to Jesus’ earthly ministry?

The Gospel of Mark



the heavens
torn apart

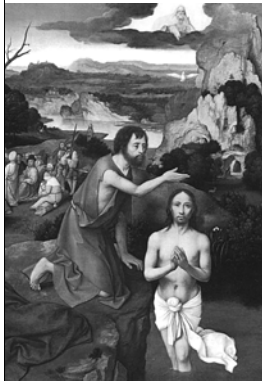


the curtain of
the temple was
torn in two

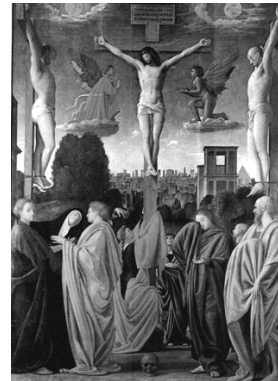
The three scenes of the baptism, transfiguration, and crucifixion provide the primary structure to the gospel.

Note how parallels are created to help you see these three scenes in connection with each other.

The Gospel of Mark



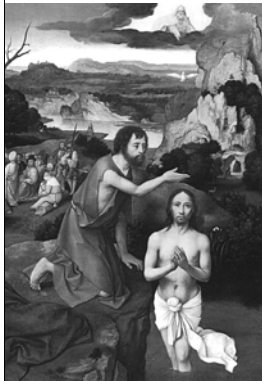
... the Spirit
descended...
into him



... and he
expired

The word for “expire” literally refers to one’s *spirit going out*. If the Spirit descended into (a more literal translation of the Greek) him at baptism, the point is made that he now ‘ex-spirits / expires’, the spirit goes out.

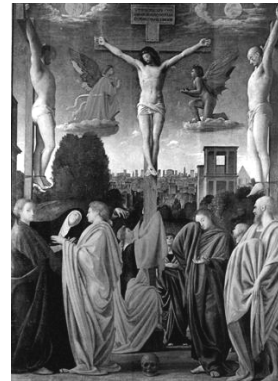
The Gospel of Mark



"You are my
Son, the
Beloved; with
you I am well
pleased."



"This is my Son,
the Beloved;
listen to him!"



"Truly this man
was God's
Son!"

Note carefully who speaks and who hears the voice in each situation.

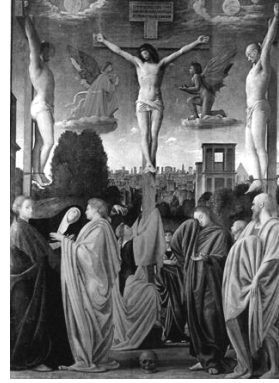
The Gospel of Mark



Baptism



Transfiguration
framed by Passion
predictions



Crucifixion

What do we know from Mark?

Jesus is the Christ
the Son of God

- 1.1 told from outset
- Baptism and Transfiguration
- Teaching
- Healings and other miracles
- CRUCIFIXION
- Resurrection



What “I

The “Messianic Secret” in Mark has long been a source of debate among scholars. The issue revolves around Jesus’ repeated commands that he not be made known, that people and demons not report what he has done, the secretive commands and passion predictions, the disciples inability to understand what Jesus is about, etc. BUT, note that this ‘secret’ is only functioning at the story level. At the discourse level, there is absolutely no secret at all about Jesus’ identity. We’ve been told it from the very first verse!

What do we know from Mark?

Disciples are
“duh-sciples”

- Don't understand parables
- Don't understand miracles
- Have been sent on mission



How do you, as a potential disciple, react and relate to the clueless disciples in the Gospel of Mark?



The Gospel of Mark and Stewardship



Mark 4.1-20

Parable of the Sower and the Seed



As an exercise in seeing how the Gospel of Mark might relate to stewardship, we are going to use the Sower and the Seed parable as an example.

(Sower image by David Hetland. Used with permission. <http://www.hetland.com/>)

Mark 4.1-20

¹Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ²He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them:



Mark 4.1-20

³“Listen!

A sower went out to sow.



Mark 4.1-20

⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell alongside the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil.

⁶And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away.

⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

⁸Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”



Mark 4.1-20

⁹And he said,
“Let anyone with ears to hear
listen!”



Mark 4.1-20

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We do have one fine understanding of the parable given in the allegorical interpretation expressed in Mark 4.14-20. Parables are intended, however, to be experienced on many levels.

For example, instead of trying to figure out what kind of ground you are, put yourself in the place of the sower. What kind of stewardship does the sower display? What is his attitude to life? What is his ultimate goal?

Mark 4.24-25

²⁴ And he said to them,
“Pay attention to what you hear;
the measure you give
will be the measure you get,
and still more will be given you.

²⁵ For to those who have,
more will be given;
and from those who have nothing,
even what they have
will be taken away.”



Now this sounds like pretty straightforward stewardship advice!

It is a hard saying in some ways (especially v. 25), and it does not quite make good sense. (If they have nothing, how can “even what they have” be taken away?) It is probably better to hear it as a descriptive statement of what happens rather than a threat or promise about what might happen.

If you tie it back to the Sower parable, however, it does make better sense. If the goal is the harvest, the Sower has to sow the seed! He cannot just store up seed.

Again, how might this shape your understanding of stewardship?

Mark 4.11

“To you has been given
the secret of the dominion of God,
but for those outside,
everything comes in parables;

In the middle of the parable and its interpretation stands this great verse of promise:
“To you has been given...”

How does God show stewardship? (Connect this verse to verse 24 on the previous slide!)

According to the Gospel of Mark, to be a Steward of Life means:

- Give abundantly and freely
- Give of what you have been given
- To pour out yourself generously
- Trust that something good will happen
- Expect failure >< expect miracle
- Share the secret even w/out understanding it fully
- We live with abundance not scarcity
- Listen! Recognize the source!

These are some conclusions that the group proposed.