



Jacob Lawrence
The Great Migration
1941

Resources for Dismantling Racism: the Gospel of Mark

St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Washington, DC

The Rev. Joshua Daniel PhD

Fall 2021

Understanding

- ❖ What is Jesus' message? What is his proclamation?



Understanding

- ❖ The difficulty and importance of understanding the Bible
- ❖ Proverbs 13:24

Those who spare the rod hate their children,
but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.



Understanding

Those who spare the **rod** hate their children,
but those who love them are diligent to discipline
them.

- ❖ שִׁבְטוֹ (shibto) (b̄ə·tōw)
- ❖ *Rod, staff/club*
- ❖ *Rod: the “crook” which gently redirects sheep*
- ❖ *Staff/club: the stick part that shepherds use to beat wolves*



Understanding

- ❖ Similarly, Mark will challenge nearly all our presumptions about faith
- ❖ Messiah, Sin, Demon, Faith



Understanding

- ❖ 30,000 feet (first half of Mark)
- ❖ Old Story: Christianity is about shaming people who do wrong, who don't believe in God (people not in the right tribe)



First Half of Mark

Claim

- ❖ Jesus aligns himself with sinners (the poor)
- ❖ Jesus condemns the religious and political establishment (the powerful)
- ❖ Jesus willfully breaks the law and redefine's holiness

Reference

- ❖ *I have come to call not the righteous but sinners (2:17)*
- ❖ *Jesus is angered and grieved by their "hardness of heart" (3:5)*
- ❖ *The Son of Man (Human One) is lord even of the sabbath (2:27) ... Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother (3:35).*

Themes in First Half of Mark

Claim

- ❖ Jesus aligns himself with sinners (the poor)
Economic Inequality
- ❖ Jesus condemns the religious and political establishment (the powerful)
Religious Nationalism
- ❖ Jesus willfully breaks the law and redefine's holiness
Ethnic / racial prejudice

Reference

- ❖ Radical redistribution of wealth (mass feedings in Chapter 6 and 8; and rejection of wealth in Chapter 10)
- ❖ Fundamental rejection of religious nationalism and the Davidic covenant (especially in Chapter 1 and 12)
- ❖ Reorientation away from tribe to equality before God (especially in Chapter 3, 5, 6, 7)

Movements of Jesus in Mark

Calls Disciples (Chapter 1)



Dismantles systems of oppression (Chapters 2-3)



Teaches (Chapters 4)



Constructs new kingdom (Chapters 5-7)

Calls Disciples (8:27-9:13)



Dismantles systems of oppression (11:1-13:3)



Teaches (13)



Constructs new kingdom (8-10)

Mark 1:1-20

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ,
the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,

who will prepare your way;

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight,’”

Close Reading

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→ “The Beginning”

- ...*In the beginning God created (Genesis 1)*
- Apocalyptic start: a new heaven and new earth
- A regeneration of salvation history
- The 2nd Beginning (a pointer from Mark 16:7)

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→ Aka *The Gospel*

- A technical term for victory (esp military battles)
- At the birth of the emperor: the message is *proclaimed* (a favorite use of Mark to describe the living out of the Gospel)
- Ancient inscription: *The birthday of the god was for the world the beginning of the joyful message which have gone forth because of him*

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→ Aka *the Messiah*

- A continuation of the imperial theme: the one many Judeans believed who was promised to restore the power of Jerusalem / temple and remove by force the Roman colonizers
- A title Jesus does not accept until Mark 15
- Instead Mark has Jesus prefer “the Son of Man” (Human One)
- The Human One is itself an apocalyptic image from the book of Daniel

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- Quotation is actually a supercut from Exodus, Isaiah, and Malachi
- Subtle subversion: Mark’s peers would have assumed that the last prophet from God was Malachi
- Subtext: The Word of God still lives, even now

Close Reading

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- More literally, *See, I am sending my messenger before your face.*
- *Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the land I have prepared for you [Ex 23:20].*
- *Behold I dispatch my messenger to make a way before me [Mal 3:1a].*
- *The Way* is Mark’s favorite form of characterizing the path of discipleship — accepting the call to follow Jesus

Larger Themes

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

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.”

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee...

- Plotted time versus Story-time
- Plotted time can be sped up, slowed down, out of order.
- Story-time a chronological account of events (which may or may not be accounted for)

Larger Themes

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As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee...

- How long was Jesus in the wilderness? Days, months, years?
- John's arrest was on par with Jesus' arrest in terms of the fear and devastation it represented for his movement but we hear none of that

Larger Themes

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As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee...

- Subverting expectations again
- Time is fulfilled and Jesus goes to Galilee!!?!?
- The heavens are torn apart and Jesus goes to the wilderness!?!?

Larger Themes

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.

- Meaning versus facts
- The way in which Mark both uses high symbolism and also gives an ordinary account (grounded in historical fact) of Palestinian life
- *Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children ... who will not receive a hundredfold ... Mark 10:29 (also Mark 3:35)*

Larger Themes

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- Meaning versus facts
- *Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children ... who will not receive a hundredfold ... Mark 10:29 (also Mark 3:35)*
- Consider the ramifications:

Why Dismantling Racism?

- ❖ Resisting Colonial readings of ancient, non-Western texts
- ❖ A history of racism
- ❖ What is faith?
- *See, I am sending my messenger before your face.*



Future Classes

Chapter 2: Socio-economic context of ancient Palestine (especially Galilee), systems of purity and debt culture

Chapter 3: Rival religious traditions: Pharisees, Sadducees, etc.

Chapter 4: Apocalypse as literature

Chapter 5: Mission to the Gentiles

Chapter 6: Mission to the Poor

Chapter 7: What is Faith?



Stuff I Missed

- ❖ Apocalyptic and ordinary
- ❖ A new heaven and a new earth, yes
- ❖ But also: Jesus calls fisherman; Jesus does not remain in the wilderness (in heaven) but jumps in to the chaos with both feet



Palestine



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Judea



Map of Israel in the