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FBCA: TOGETHER

A Plan for First Baptist Arlington 2024

BIBLICAL CONTEXT: Ephesians

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

-Ephesians 4:11-16

SUMMER 2024

Together . . . in the Gospel

BIBLICAL CONTEXT: MARK

June 2 – August 3, 2034
Preaching Voice: Evangelist

It's summer! What a great time of year! We have just emerged from the Spring of the year --- days marked by graduations, rites of passage, promotions to the next grade, end of year parties, Mother's Day celebrations --- and all that the Spring of the year represents. Now we move to the new rhythms of summer. Vacations. Family activities. Rangers' games! Rest and Relaxation!

This can be a great time of year for spiritual renewal and growth. It can also be a great time of year for evangelism and witness. Often in the summer, we find ourselves spending time outside of our normal patterns of life. This affords us the opportunity to engage in conversations with new people in different settings than perhaps what is normal for us. What a great opportunity! Let's ask God to cultivate an **evangelistic sensitivity** in our individual lives and in our church! This is a great time to invite new friends to church and church activities.

Here at First Baptist Arlington, we are going to be using the Gospel of Mark to enable us to focus on the power, beauty, and magnetism of the Good News of the Gospel! Each Sunday morning, we will focus on a passage from Mark's Gospel that highlights a facet of the Good News. Each week we will have both a Narrative Reading and a Together in Word passage from Mark. The Narrative Readings will lead us through the entire Gospel. The Together in Word passages will offer us all an opportunity to dive more deeply into various truths related to the power of the Good News.

THE COMMANDS TO KEEP SILENT

When reading Mark's Gospel, you will notice several instances where Jesus instructed various ones to "keep silent" or to "tell no one" about what He had done. For example, in Mark 1:25, 34 – Jesus does not allow demons to declare Who He is. In Mark 1:44, He commands the cleansed leper to not tell anyone about the miracle he has just received at the hand of Jesus. We will encounter this kind of thing throughout the Gospel of Mark. Some have referred to this as "the Messianic Secret."

This phrase was coined by William Wrede in 1901 in his attempt to put forth the idea that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah. This view espoused by Wrede is just not believable. His reasoning is faulty and the evidence he presents is lacking. So, I disagree with his conclusions completely.

So, why did Jesus command demons and people to "keep silent" or "tell no one" about what He had done? Here are some reasons to consider (Dr. Garland in his commentary and his work on the theology of Mark offers these insights):

1. Jesus did not want to be *primarily* known as a faith healer or miracle worker. Even though He did heal and perform miracles --- these acts were always purposeful and pointed to a greater reality.
2. Jesus understood our propensity to want to experience the spectacular. This is not the norm.
3. Jesus seemed to prefer to keep the news about His miracles contained so that He would have sufficient time to fulfill His greater task of proclaiming the message of redemption. He needed time to preach and teach. He also needed time to model life in the Kingdom of God. This was His greater goal. He came not just to heal diseases and cast out demons – these were signs of the coming Kingdom of God. He came to redeem all of humanity and inaugurate the Age to Come. This all took time!

So, the command to keep silent was not because Jesus refused to be known as the Messiah. In fact, the exact opposite is true. He was fulfilling His role as the Messiah and He had a plan to do just that!

NOTE ABOUT THE ENDING OF MARK

The most controversial part of Mark's Gospel has to do with its ending. You will notice that in the NIV's translation of Mark 16, there is a note to the reader, "The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9-20." Then, the text continues with verses 9-20 in italics. This is the signal from the translators that this part of Mark 16 was probably added later to the actual Gospel of Mark.

So, what is going on?

We have thousands of copies of the Greek New Testament. We do not have the original autographs. We have copies of copies of copies. When comparing texts, most scholars agree that we are to use the oldest manuscripts as the most authoritative. Here is an example where that seems to be the case. Our two oldest copies of the Greek New Testament (*Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*) end the Gospel in verse 8. The manuscripts that include verses 9-20 are later and this seems to be an ending added by later scribes.

So, I believe the Gospel of Mark ends in verse 8. It is a fascinating way to end. But, remember --- the title of the Gospel is given in Mark 1:1 ---- this is just the *beginning* of the Gospel. In other words, this story is still being written today!!

RESOURCES

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SUMMER 2024
Together . . . in the Gospel
BIBLICAL CONTEXT: MARK

June 2 – August 3, 2024
Preaching Voice: Evangelist

June 2, 2024:

The Good News is About Jesus!

Mark 1:1-8

Did Mark “invent” a new genre of literature now popularly known as “Gospel”? We are not quite sure, but it seems so. We do know that Mark (and other New Testament writers) borrowed the term “Gospel” from the Romans who used this word to proclaim victory from the battlefield. The word itself simply means, “good news.” The New Testament writers use this word to refer to the whole story of Jesus. Perhaps Mark uses it as the title to his book. His book is about Jesus. The essence of the Gospel of Mark is . . . the good news about Jesus!

Narrative Reading: Mark 1:1-2:22

Together in Word: Mark 1:1-8

Mark begins his work by declaring that the life and work of Jesus Christ is *good news!* He connects the story of Jesus to the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah. He also includes a brief testimony about the ministry of John the Baptist. In other words, the *good news* is *new news* rooted in *old news!* The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God’s great plan of redemption that has been in place since the Garden of Eden. God has been redeeming and rescuing human beings for as long as human beings have existed! That is good news!

June 9, 2024:

The Good News: The New Exodus

Mark 1:9-13

Unlike the other Gospel writers, Mark begins his account of the life of Jesus in the wilderness. For those steeped in Old Testament story and imagery, the wilderness calls to mind reflection both narratively and theologically. The wilderness evoked a myriad of powerful memories for the Jewish Christians who would have read Mark’s Gospel. God’s provision for Israel in the wilderness during the Exodus story, crossing over the Jordan, the prophets Isaiah, Micah – and others all were associated with wilderness experiences. Perhaps the Exodus imagery is most prominent. Jesus offers a path for the New Exodus for all who will follow Him. He is *The Way!*

Narrative Reading: Mark 2:23-4:41

Together in Word: Mark 2:23-3:6

In our focal passage for the week, Jesus encounters two different groups of folks who have questions about His actions on the Sabbath. Obviously, the Sabbath was a holy day to the Jews in the first century. However, Jesus was inaugurating a new era through His ministry. He challenged His followers to give thought to why God had instituted rituals and rhythms in the first place. He led His followers to place human needs above legalism and ritualistic rigidity. If we are not careful, we can empty our own rituals of meaning as well.

**June 16, 2024:
Father's Day**

***The Good News: A New Day!*
Mark 1:14-15**

Mark moves rapidly from the Temptation narrative to the announcement of the public ministry of Jesus. Jesus boldly proclaims that the Kingdom of God has now come near. It is time to embrace the New Day --- to repent and believe the Good News of God. This announcement has led many of us to assume a doctrinal belief known as Inaugurated Eschatology. This is the idea that The Age to Come has already been initiated through the ministry of Jesus Christ. The age is yet to be consummated ---- but we now live in the overlap of This Present Evil Age and The Age to Come.

Narrative Reading: Mark 5

Together in Word: Mark 5:21-43

This week we read about two miracles performed by Jesus. A desperate father and a desperate woman both needed the healing touch of Jesus. The power of Jesus was on display as he healed the woman and raised the daughter of the desperate man from the dead! It is a new day, indeed! Jesus was establishing the Kingdom of God as He provided glimpses of life in this new kingdom. Not everything is repaired, restored, renewed . . . *yet!* But we are living today in the reality of the “now and not yet.” We too have evidences of the power of Jesus breaking into the darkness of our world. Take some time this week to reflect on how the power of Jesus is on display in your world. Ask Him in faith to continue to reveal Himself to you and others.

June 23, 2024:

***The Good News: Our Mission*
Mark 1:16-20**

Throughout history God has called people to serve Him in His kingdom endeavors. Sometimes He has used shepherds or workers. His calling to join

His mission is a calling to fish for people. We are called to the ministry of fishing as we join the Mission of God! As we “fish” --- we are to be used by God to call others to a life of complete transformation. Once they are “hooked” --- they will never be the same! What a privilege to be a part of the Mission of God!

Narrative Reading: Mark 6

Together in Word: Mark 6:1-13

This week’s text reveals the calling and the challenges associated with fishing for people. In our first story, Jesus was in Nazareth (His hometown) sharing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. However, many people were just not open to hearing this message. In our next story, Jesus sent His disciples out to share the Good News and they had tremendous success. In these two stories we see both the calling to bear witness to Jesus and the challenges associated with this call. Not everyone will be receptive! However, the call to go into our respective places of influence and give testimony about Jesus is still placed on our lives as followers of Jesus. How is God using you today as a witness to the Good News!

June 30, 2024:

The Good News: Our Ministry

Mark 1:21-45

When we begin to follow Jesus, we embark on a lifetime of service and obedience. As disciples, we are to be engaged in the ministry of Christian witness and service. God uses His people to bring healing, hope, grace, forgiveness, love, care, compassion, and restoration to this broken world. Jesus went about Galilee proclaiming and demonstrating the power of the Good News. We are to go about our world doing the same!

Narrative Reading: Mark 7:1-9:1

Together in Word: Mark 8:31-37

Our text this week is about a man who was deaf and mute. The people begged Jesus to “place his hand on him.” In other words, they were hoping for a miracle. Jesus took him aside privately, away from the man. He touched his deaf ears and his mute tongue. Miraculously, he was healed! This man represents those who suffer with physical maladies ---- as well as those who are spiritually deaf and mute. Jesus brings compassion and healing both physically and spiritually. We trust Him as the Great Physician as well as the Savior of the world. We are his emissaries in this world. We are to be agents of both physical and spiritual compassion. How is God using you to meet the physical and spiritual needs of others?

July 7, 2024:

The Good News is Good Seed!

Mark 4:1-20

This is one of the most famous parables ever told by Jesus. Jesus uses the imagery of a farmer planting seed to teach us about the Kingdom of God. The focus of the parable is on both the seed and the soil. The farmer is faithful in sowing the seed. However, not all of the seed was well-received by the soil. But the seed that was well-received produced a great harvest. There are various images and lines of thought that emerge from this complex parable. However, there is one certain truth ---- faithful sowing using good seed sown in receptive soil will produce amazing results! The seed of the Good News is powerful! We must be faithful in both receiving and sharing the Good News!

Narrative Reading: 9:2-10:52

Together in Word: Mark 10:17-31

This week we will reflect together on the story of the Rich Young Ruler. This young man came to Jesus seeking eternal life. This is a noble quest, and he was right in bringing this desire before Jesus. However, Jesus offered him the opportunity to find the answer to his desire ---- but the young man just could not do it. The seed was sown by Jesus – but the soil was not prepared! Sometimes we can also miss out on great opportunities with Jesus, but we are not ready to receive His invitation. Even as Christians, we must continue to keep our “soil” ready to receive His invitations. As you reflect on this story this week, are there impediments in your life that hinder your obedience to Jesus? If so, what are you going to do?

July 14, 2024:

The Good News: Freedom!

Mark 5:1-20

In our passage today we see Jesus leave the Jewish territory and venture into a predominantly Gentile area. He crosses over the lake of Galilee, thus bringing the message of the Kingdom into alien turf. There he encountered a demon-possessed man who had been tortured for some time. Jesus responded by casting out the demons and demonstrating His power over the spiritual realm. Jesus is demonstrating that He has power to bring freedom to all the captives of the earth. The truth truly does set us free!

Narrative Reading: Mark 11-12

Together in Word: Mark 11:1-17

This week our attention will be given to the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and His authoritative acts on Holy Monday. He was received into Jerusalem on Sunday and hailed as King. On Monday, He cursed the fig tree and demonstrated His authority over the Temple. Even though the people in Jerusalem that week did not really understand the full import of these actions,

Jesus was proclaiming His authority as Messiah, Son of God, and King of Kings! The fig tree represented the fruitless efforts of the legalism of many Jewish leaders. The cleansing of the Temple was actually a prophetic act that signaled the end of the Temple Era and the further establishment of The Age to Come. Just as Jesus had authority over demons and Gentiles, He had ultimate authority over Judaism and its symbols. He is The Way, The Truth, and The Life!

July 21, 2024:

The Good News: Transformation!
Mark 7:1-23

The Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law issued several complaints against Jesus during the course of His earthly ministry. One of their chief concerns was His seeming unwillingness to adhere to many traditions established by these Jewish leaders that had been imposed on the Jewish faithful. In our text today, the main complaint had to do with the ceremonial washing of hands. Jesus responded to this particular complaint by teaching His followers (including us) that the true transformation offered by the Good News is more *internal* and *eternal* than *external*! Jesus is inviting us to a lifetime of transformational living where He changes us from the inside out!

Narrative Reading: Mark 13-14

Together in Word: Mark 14:12-31

This week we reflect together on the celebration of the Passover on the final night of the earthly life of Jesus. It was at this meal that He reinterpreted the Passover celebration and established what we know today as The Lord's Supper. The unleavened bread now represents the very body of our Lord, and the fruit of the vine symbolizes His blood. His sacrifice for us has made it possible for us to be forgiven, cleansed, and transformed! Transformation is a journey and a process. Even disciples like Simon Peter were on this journey! We all will struggle along the way --- Jesus is faithful to continue to lead, empower, and cleanse. This week is an opportune time to reflect on your own journey of transformation. How is God at work within you during this season of your life? Where is He at work within you?

July 28, 2024:

The Good News: Holy Devotion
Mark 8:34-38

Following Jesus is not for the faint of heart. It is not a part-time assignment to be done when convenient. It is not a shallow commitment to be taken lightly. Following Jesus is serious business. Jesus calls us to a life of holy devotion. We are to deny ourselves, take up our own cross, and follow Him! This demands complete and absolute devotion to our Lord. We are to allow Him

access to all areas of our lives and surrender to His Lordship. He is the Example for us! He gave His life for us. His way is The Way! As the people of God, we have been called to . . . *Glorify God by Following The Jesus Way!*

Narrative Reading: Mark 15:1-16:8

Together in Word: Mark 15:33-16:8

We conclude our journey together in Mark by focusing on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Here in this text, we encounter the sacrificial obedience of Jesus through His death on the cross, the holy devotion of Joseph of Arimathea and the women disciples, and the glorious power of God displayed through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Jesus is certainly our example of holy devotion! He lived the perfect life and offered Himself up for our sins. People like Joseph, Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and Salome --- all are examples to us as well. They stayed close to Jesus in His suffering and death. The tremendous power and glory of The Jesus Way is on display through the resurrection! When we choose to follow Jesus, we are called to a life of holiness and sacrifice --- but this is also the path that leads to eternal life! Take some time this week to thank God for the example of Jesus! Thank Him for the examples of devotion that you have witnessed in the lives of people you know who have inspired you! Take some time to commit yourself to a life of holy devotion as a follower of The Jesus Way.