

## *Presentation 16*

### Looking back over Mark's Gospel



Mark the Evangelist, 16th-century Russian icon.

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#### *The Outline of Mark*

1. The Gospel is a beginning (Mk 1.1) and continues with the women leaving the tomb (16.8).
2. *The Prologue* (1.2-15): The wilderness is the starting point for the Gospel. From the wilderness, Jesus emerges and his first words to the disciples. The 'kin

3. *Mk 1.16-8.21*: Jesus reveals himself, but antagonism grows. Even his disciples struggle with Jesus.
4. *Mk 8.22-10.52*: Catechism of discipleship, framed by healing stories of blindness. The disciples, too, need to have their sight healed.
5. *Mk 11.1-13.37*: Jesus' confrontation from authorities grows. The cross looms large.

*Mk 13.33-37*: Jesus encourages his disciples to 'keep awake', but eventually they fail to do so, symbolised by what happens in Gethsemane.

6. *Mk 14-16*: The disciples flee Jesus—'all of them'. The women remain with Jesus and contemplate the tomb's absence of his body.



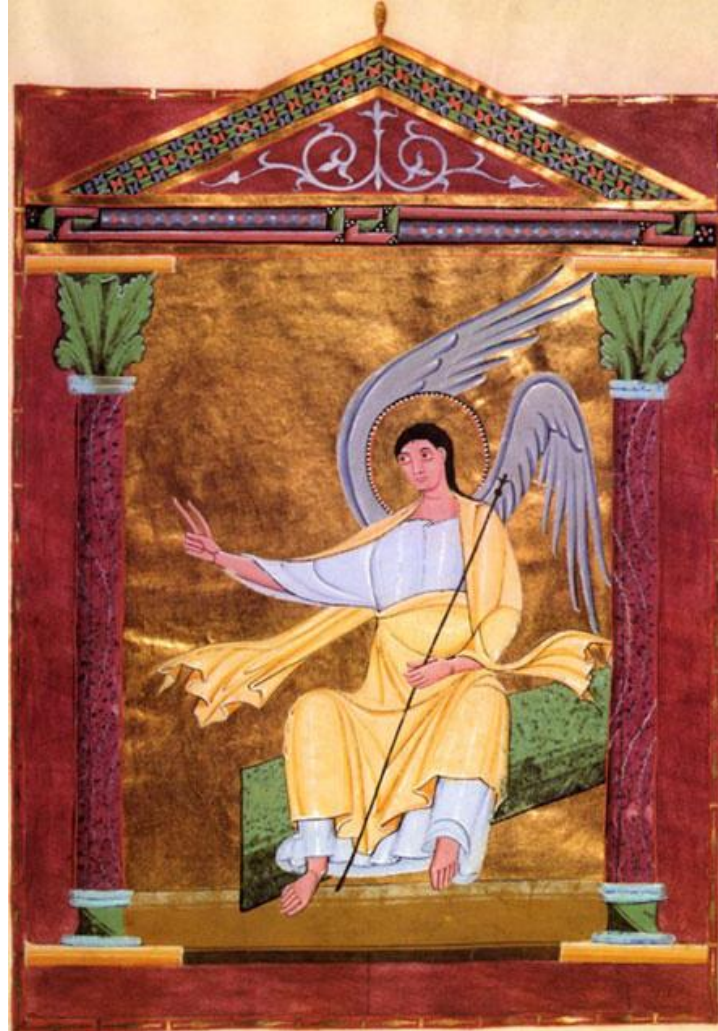
By Unknown author - Minuscule 2427 (Gregory-Aland), alleged 13<sup>th</sup> Century, probably 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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## Summary of Markan Themes

- The Gospel is addressed to an urban community of Jesus followers, around 70sCE, struggling with loneliness, isolation, even God's absence.
- The 'household' of disciples is the place of mutual and reciprocal relationships. The Gospel household discloses the practical meaning of resurrection and its implications for the household members. It is a place of healing and the presence of the *basileia* ('reign') of God—the limited expression of God's presence. It is not a perfect household, and not without its struggles and tensions.
- Jesus' ministry unfolds in the Gospel from the wilderness or desert, expressed in Jesus' treatment and rejection. The tomb, the place of absence ('desert?'), becomes the experience of Easter: The disciple, too, experiences God's absence. This allows the action of God to be revealed—echoing Mark's own world.
- The disciples struggle in understanding Jesus, even welcoming those who are different. The story of Bartimaeus (10.46-52) symbolically expresses the role which the leaders of the household must have to include those who are rejected, perhaps former apostates. Is this Mark's situation in Rome with reconciliation an issue?
- Jesus' missionary forays in Gentile territories in the Gospel—the move to the 'other side' and Jesus journeys to Tyre and Sidon. Mark is concerned about the future missionary agenda of the household which can no longer be exclusivist but must embrace other cultures and traditions. The image of the welcome of the child is a reminder to the disciples to embrace the most fragile and disenfranchised person.
- The eucharistic gathering in Jesus' final meal expresses this inclusivity, despite issues of betrayal and tension. Reflective of Mark's day? The Gospel is a critique of the authority patterns of the Roman world in which hierarchy and hegemony are the typical characteristics of the political authorities. Mark takes a critical stance against this. In the Gospel household lines of authority are reconfigured and the *paterfamilias* ('head of the household') neutralised. God is the household head. Mark suggests an alternative social and domestic structure. The evangelist paints an alternative to the 'golden age' with internal divisions and tensions mirrored in the Gospel's portrait of the disciples.
- Jesus is revealed as a person of hospitality and outreach. This is encouragement to Mark's gospel audience. The Gospel offers a tangible expression of how to live out discipleship.
- Who is Jesus in Mk? He is the revealer of God's compassion and solidarity with all who struggle, including creation. Jesus' death reveals that he alone saves as the revealer of God's *basileia*.

- Who are the disciples? They are frightened, fragile and falter, struggling to follow Jesus to the end. Jesus remains committed to them despite their failures: He will rehabilitate them in Galilee where they will see him after his resurrection.



"Entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment" – Mark's description of the discovery of the empty tomb  
(from the Pericopes of Henry II)

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#### FOR FURTHER REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

- As you look back over your study of Mark's Gospel, what stands out for you?
- How do you think Mark's Gospel might speak into our world and to our Church today? What might the evangelist say to us?

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