

New Testament

Interpreting the Gospels

- **What are they?**
 - Formally-a narrative account concerning the public life and teaching of a significant person that is composed of traditional units placed in the context of Scriptures
 - Materially-the message that God was at work in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection effecting his promises found in the Scriptures. (Guelich, "The Gospel Genre" in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. P.Stuhlmacher)
- **Some thoughts on Historical Trustworthiness**
 - Questions posed
 - Some differences explained
 - God's proclamation at Jesus' Baptism (Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22) and (Mt 3:17)
 - Order of Jesus' temptations (Mt 4:1-11) and (Lk 4:1-13)
 - Question of allegiance (Mt 10:37) and (Lk 14:26)
 - Raising Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:21-43) and (Mt 9:18-26)
- **Reading and Thinking Horizontally**
 - Many teachings and actions of Jesus are recorded in more than one Gospel
 - Look at synopsis or harmony of the Gospels. Read across the page and compare how the different Gospel accounts treat a certain passage.
 - Some examples of emerging themes
 - Matthew
 - Mark
 - Luke
- **Reading and Thinking Vertically**
 - This is the priority
 - Any passage in the Gospels should be interpreted in light of the overall structure and themes of the Gospel without regardless of the nature of the parallel accounts that appear in other Gospel accounts.
 - Topical, Thematic, or Chronological? Be Ye Careful!
 - Lk 4:16-30 and Mk 6:1-6a; Mt 13:53-58
 - Lk 5:1-11 and Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20

- Even chronological patterns are purposefully thematic
 - Mk 8:31-9:32
 - Mt 24:43-25:13
 - Mt 1-2
- **The Gospels' first audience and us**
- **Key Theological Issues**
 - The Kingdom of God
 - Already...not yet (inaugurated eschatology)
 - Realm (rule) into which we enter
 - Ethical Demands of this Kingdom-consider Sermon on the Mount
 - Traditional Catholics-only select disciples are expected to follow the more stringent rules
 - Lutherans-often viewed Jesus' ethical statements as "law" rather than "gospel" which pointed to our sinful condition and would point us also to our need for faith and repentance in Christ.
 - Anabaptists-often took these commands as seriously applying to public life and to all people on earth, so they renounced all violence and became pacifists.
 - 19th century liberals-preached a "social gospel" of human progress and moral evolution apart from personal transformation of conversion in and to Christ. 20th century wars pretty much destroyed this vision for many.
 - Existentialists- see in Jesus' teaching precedent for decisive calls to ethical action although none of his teaching is viewed as absolute.
 - Classical dispensationalists-traditionally (this is a brief tradition) reserve Jesus' Kingdom for the millennial age and do not find it directly relevant for Christians now.
 - Back to Reality
- **The Forms within the Gospels**
 - Parables
 - About 2/3 are triadic (have three main parties involved)
 - Bridegroom and two very different groups of bridesmaids (Mt 25:1-13)
 - Shepherd with one lost sheep and 99 safe sheep (Lk 15:3-7)
 - Sower with three portions of unfruitful seeds/soil verses his one fruitful section (Mk 4:3-9)
 - Man robbed and beaten-two clergy members who passed by-the Samaritan who helps (Lk 10:29-37)

- King-servant who is forgiven a large debt-the poor putz under that servant who does not even receive forgiveness for a small amount (Mt 18:23-35)
 - About 1/3 are shorter and more simple
 - Wise and foolish builders (Mt 7:24-27)
 - Pharisee and tax-collector (Lk 18:9-14)
 - Mustard seed and leaven (Lk 13:18-21)
 - Tower-builder and warring king (Lk 14:28-33)
 - Contextually (both historical and literary) what is the point?
 - Sometimes it is good to recast in light of current realities (Good Samaritan)
- Miracle Stories
 - Christologically-these miracles demonstrate who Jesus is
 - Salvation-historically- these miracles support his claims that the kingship of God was breaking into human history
- Pronouncement Stories
 - Introduces a key climactic saying (pronouncement) of Jesus
 - Many times in proverb form (refer to Proverbs studies)
 - Mark 2:13-17 (17)
 - Recognize the radical challenge to the religious status quo
- Others

HOMEWORK

Parable: Luke 15:11-32

Miracle Story: Mt 8:27; Mk 4:41; Lk 8:25 (calming of the seas) (cf. Jonah 1-2; Psa 107:23-32)

John 2:11; 7:31; 10:25; 20:31

Pronouncement Story: Mark presents pronouncement/conflict stories in a series of five early

On. Mk 2:1-12, 13-17, 18-22, 23-28; 3:1-6 (3:6)...What's the point?

Another series. Mk 11:27-33; 12:13-17, 18-27, 28-34, 35-37.