

April 14, 2019

Greetings to all the Faithful of St. Andrew's,

Christ is among us!

This Wednesday April 17 at 6 pm we will be holding our seventh and final Bible study session: **The Gospel of Mark: The Way of the Cross and the Challenge of the Empty Tomb.**

The subject matter of each Gospel is of course Jesus of Nazareth, with mention of his teaching and healing ministry and especially his suffering, death, burial, and resurrection, which are central to the New Testament as a whole. Though this commonality is easily demonstrated it is also equally true that each one of the New Testament Gospels offers a unique literary portrayal of Jesus with its particular nuances. We have not just one Gospel but four, each one having its own flavor, so to say.

In order to recognize and appreciate the particularities of each Gospel, we should be careful not to conflate them into one and thereby miss the nuances of each. To do so would compromise the distinctive emphasis of each. For example, there is a difference related to Jesus' death relative to Mark and Luke: In Mark, Jesus is portrayed as distressed, abandoned, and forsaken: "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). But in Luke, Jesus is portrayed as having more control. Not only in Luke does Jesus *not* cry from the cross "My God, my God, why . . ." but in 23:46 we read "then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last". Many other examples could be cited to show distinctions between Mark and Luke. Indeed, each of the Gospels can be contrasted with the others to show many details of difference which underscore their unique perspectives. In Mark the emphasis of Jesus as the Suffering and Crucified Messiah is evident. In Luke there is a prophetic determination and deliberateness in Jesus' words and actions. Of course, in all four Gospels Jesus suffers and is crucified and in all four Gospels Jesus has a prophetic role, but no two Gospels are identical in their way or manner of presentation.

Each Gospel has its own individual richness and in our study of the Gospel of Mark we have been focusing on its distinctive portrayal of Jesus and looking at it on its own terms. This coming Wednesday we will wrap up our study of the Gospel with a summary overview with particular emphasis on the death of Christ and the challenge of the empty tomb as presented in Mark's narrative.

This is our last session together but it's not too late to join our devoted Bible study group and learn something about the sacred text of Mark's Gospel. We hope to see you at Church this Wednesday, April 17, at 6 pm!

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Herman