

West Valley Presbyterian Church
Rev. Dr. Kim Engelmann
MARKS GOSPEL LAUNCH

A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection, from Rembrandt to Picasso.

They would often sit together and admire these great works of art.

But when war broke out, (and this was during the VietNam era) the son went to fight overseas.

After a few months, the father was notified that his son died in battle, and he grieved deeply for him.

Some time later, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood at the door with a large package in his hands.

“Sir,” he said, “You don’t know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He saved many lives that day, but it was me he was carrying to safety when a bullet struck him in the heart and killed him. He often talked about you, and your love for art.”

The young man held out his package. “I know this isn’t much.

I’m not really a great artist, but I think your son would’ve wanted you to have this.”

The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young man.

He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son in the painting, and his eyes welled up with tears. The father hung the portrait over his mantle, and every time visitors came to his home he would take them to see the portrait of his son before the other great works of art.

When the father died, there was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited over the opportunity to buy one for their own collections or museums.

On the platform sat the painting of the son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. “We will start the bidding with this picture of the son. Who will bid for this picture?” There was utter silence.

Then a voice from the crowd shouted, “We want to see the famous paintings!”

But the auctioneer persisted. “Will someone bid for this painting? \$200? \$100?” Another voice shouted angrily, “We didn’t come to see this painting! We came to see the Van Goghs, the Rembrandts, the Picassos... Get on with the real bids!”

But the auctioneer continued. “The son! The son! Who will take the painting of the son?”

Finally, a tentative voice came from the very back of the room. It was the longtime beloved family gardener.

“Would you take \$10?,” he asked. “It’s all I have.”

“We have \$10,” said the auctioneer. “Who will bid \$20?”

The crowd was becoming impatient. “Give it to him. We want the masters,” someone shouted. “Going once... twice...”

The auctioneer pounded the gavel. “SOLD for \$10!”

A man sitting on the second row shouted. “Now let’s get on with the real collection!”

But the auctioneer laid down his gavel.

“The auction is over.”

“What about the paintings?”

“I’m sorry,” said the auctioneer. “The stipulation in the will was that only one painting would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting was to be granted the entire estate. The man who took the painting of the son receives everything else.”

Today...we launch our all church study of the Gospel of Mark.

The Gospel of Mark is a painting...a masterpiece...an extremely valuable depiction of the person of Jesus Christ, the son of God.

I can’t emphasize enough to you about how valuable this study will be if you engage in it.

Sometimes we're raised with certain images of Jesus, that have been created by culture, by parents, or by church experiences or images that we've had since we have been very young.

We make Jesus over into our own image based upon our upbringing, our own biases and our preconceptions of what we think Jesus ought to have been like.

Usually for us in the West, Jesus is a caucasian Christian, and a relatively nice guy who did nice things for people and who told us all to be nice people too.

But Jesus was not caucasian, and the word nice never appears in Scripture. Jesus wasn't even Christian, which startled someone the other day when I told them. Jesus was a Jew. Christianity came later.

Sometimes we've got to cut through our own biases and preconceptions and get back to the basics and rediscover what scripture tells us about the person of Jesus.

Once you really get who Jesus was..once that picture is painted for you in a new way....and you see Jesus as Mark did...you will never be the same.

You will be astounded and transformed by the person of Jesus Christ

There is nothing more valuable that you can invest in than getting to know him all over again...getting that portrait of the Son of God that Mark paints for us so beautifully in his account....

There are four gospels in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

You may have heard the word gospel before. Its kind of a churchy word. The gospels are the four accounts we have of Jesus' life

The word gospel means "good news"

You may have heard that one before too. But maybe what you didn't know, and what the video we will watch after worship (and that I am going to show you a bit of in a minute) emphasizes...

Is that the word **gospel means...**

THE VERY BEST NEWS WE HAVE EVER HEARD

If someone were to ask you what's the best news you've ever heard, what would you say?

Gospel means the kind of good news like when someone announces that war is finally over!!

The kind of good news that makes complete strangers hug each other, cry and jump up and down with joy!!

Its that wonderful, fantastic, amazing, life transforming news that is the most valuable thing ever...

That's what the word GOSPEL means ...and...if after you study the gospel of Mark you don't think it's the best news you've ever heard...then somewhere along the wayin teaching this we've failed

Because **Mark wrote his gospel with the intention...that we become acquainted with the BEST NEWS WE'VE EVER HEARD**

And this BEST NEWS ...Mark says...is the person of Jesus Christ..and so lets get to know who he is...

I want to play a little snippet from the DVD we will be showing after worship...and RICO the host...tells us a little about his resistance to opening the scripture and learning more about who Jesus was...You can see how his preconceptions about God and Church keep him at a distance for awhile...

We pick it up after RICO does a great explanation of the vastness of creation both in the universe and in the human being...and what a miracle that is...

(DVD – 2:28-4:31)

After this statement from his brother, RICO does explore his faith and is touched by the person of Christ, through the gospel of Mark He encourages us not to miss out

As much as the people in the auction missed out on a fortune because they rejected the portrait of the son – thinking other things were more valuable

So we too will miss out on the richness and joy of our faith if we don't get that picture, that accurate picture, of who Jesus is emblazoned in our hearts and minds

Just a few facts on... **Why Mark's gospel?**

It's the earliest one. Mark was written somewhere 45-60AD... within 20 years of Jesus' life so people who knew Jesus personally were still around as eyewitnesses.

And because it's the earliest gospel, there hasn't been a lot of time yet for theologies and interpretations to grow up around the life of Jesus, so we get in Mark a kind of brass tacks look at who Jesus was.

Mark is raw, unpolished, and real.

Also, **Mark shows us more of the emotional life of Jesus.- his humanness.** Sometimes we get Jesus so holy that we forget he was a human being... Its in Mark that we read that Jesus sighed deeply, or was wrenched with compassion, or was indignant, or was weary. So the humanness of Jesus comes out a little bit more in Mark than in the other gospels.

Mark also was friends and a follower of Peter who was one of the 12 disciples. Mark wasn't but Peter was... And Peters story of who Jesus was and what he did were very valuable because Peter was one of three disciples that Jesus took with him...often leaving the other nine behind.

One interesting document that we have written by **EUSEBIUS** a historian says the following (**260AD**)

“Peter’s hearers (when Peter preached) not satisfied with a single hearing or with the unwritten teaching of the Divine message, pleaded with Mark, whose Gospel we have, to leave them a written summary of the teaching given them verbally, since he was a follower of Peter.”

Why did Peter’s followers plead with Mark to write what he did? Because it was the best news they had ever heard. And they wanted to read it over, and over.

I remember when one my kids got into the college of his choice, he just stood there in the kitchen and read that letter again and again and again.

Can’t you just hear the people saying to Mark, after they’d heard Peter preach...please...please...write this down. We want to savor it, we want to “get it”, we want to bask in this news and allow the life of Christ to shape us.

I think its an act of the Holy Spirit that today we have had three baptisms...and that the gospel of Mark opens with people being baptized, and Jesus himself being baptized.

We didn’t plan it this way. Its just the Holy Spirit orchestrating all of this.

Baptism means that I die to myself and this world, and I live for Christ...to know him better and make him known.

I live to seek the portrait of the Son...the Son of God...above all else...that’s the thing I want the most...and the thing I hold in highest value

Mark begins with Baptism....which is symbolic of death and resurrection....and then the whole gospel is a set up for the death

and resurrection of Jesus himself...everything in Mark point to the cross...that great sacrifice

I still remember what Earl Johns, long time member here said before he died..."Jesus' death was intentional. It wasn't an accident. It wasn't a fluke. Jesus came knowing he would die for the sins of the world..." and then he said, "Kim what a gift. What an amazing gift."

What kind of God would do that? Who would stoop so low, to bring us so high?

Mark tells you all about him in his gospel ...explains how intentional all of this was...If you get to know him...the son...get a handle on that portrait of who Jesus really is... It will end up being the best news you've ever heard and the most valuable portrait you will ever gain...

Let us pray together....