



Reading through the New Testament—Week 9

March 5-11

Reading Plan available on
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Becoming more like Jesus—growing in His Word

In this week's reading, we will finish the gospel of Mark and begin the gospel of Luke. Luke was a physician and part-time missionary companion of the apostle Paul. But Luke was also a researcher and historian. As you begin to read this gospel account, take note of what Luke tells us in the first few verses: "I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, (and) I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." Theophilus was most likely a Roman official and perhaps someone of high position and wealth. Luke confirms here that what he writes has been "carefully investigated."

Keep in mind also that Luke is also the writer of the book of Acts where he writes, "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1). Many of the parables you will read describe God's love for those on the margins of society: sinners, outcasts, the poor. The lesson in the good Samaritan (10:25-37) is that a true neighbor is one who loves others. In the parable of the persistent widow (18:1-8), God is a loving and caring judge responding to the persistent requests of his people. The Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9-14) deals with forgiveness, which is granted to those with a heart of true repentance. The messages of the things that were lost (sheep, coin, prodigal son – chapter 15), is a message about how all of heaven rejoices when lost sinners are found and return to a relationship with God. A theme verse for the gospel of Luke might be 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

This Week's Sermon Outline

The Certainty

Luke 1:1-4

Certainty:

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him,
"King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend
ourselves before you in this matter." Daniel 3:16






"...so that you may know the certainty of the
things you have been taught." Luke 1:4

The Certainty:

How do you stand on The Certainty?

New Testament in a Year—March 5-11

Mark/Luke

Chapter 13  14  15  16  1 

Additional Reflections from this week's reading

Because of the way we are doing our New Testament reading, we find ourselves in the section of Mark this week that covers the events in the life of Jesus during Holy Week. The end of Mark's gospel covers the events such as the Last Supper, the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' arrest and the false accusations about Him by the Sanhedrin, Peter's denial, Pilates verdict, and finally the act of crucifixion, death and resurrection. As you read through each part of the passion narrative in Mark, what verses or details stand out for you here? There are two places at the end of the gospel of Mark that might raise some questions. The first is verse 8: "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid." It may seem odd to us that the women "said nothing." However, we know that they were "trembling and bewildered" so it is very likely that fear kept them from saying anything, at least at first. Filled with fear they would not likely have raced into town shouting to everyone, "He's risen!" More than likely they didn't say anything, until that is, they saw the disciples and shared with them first what they saw. The other thing that may raise some questions is how the book of Mark ends. After verse 8, your Bible may say something like, "The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20." What does that mean? First, the question has to do with whether these verses were actually written by Mark or not. While Bible translators don't have original manuscripts, they only have copies of copies. Therefore, a few manuscripts do not have verses 9-20. However, other manuscripts do include these verses. In summary, it is believed that there is more than likely sufficient verification to include these verses as a part of Mark's gospel account. If you haven't done so before, read through those twelve verses and see if they add anything to what you have read or heard about the resurrection account.

Belonging in Community

Connect groups are communities—a group of Christians who meet together regularly—where we intentionally share in our faith walk. Connection is created through commitment and presence in fellowship, discussion, and prayer.

- Begin your time together by following up on anything that was shared during your last time together.
- Do you have anything to share from your personal studies? Take some time to share any reflections or aha's you had from them.

As we finish the book of Mark this week read Jesus' words about the "end times" in chapter 13. It is easy to do a number of things with this passage. We can try to predict the future and determine if those words are talking about today. We can read some pretty heavy predictions and be caught up in fear or worry. We can do our best to build up our resources and defenses so that we are not as strongly affected by what is to come...or we can grieve. Whether we are in the days Jesus spoke of in Mark or not, we know that there are events happening all the time that are hard to go through and hear about.

- Take some time to share about the things that are heavy for you right now.

As people share don't try to solve or move too quickly to the hope. Just sit with each other and listen well. This is uncomfortable, which is why we often try to move past this quickly. However, because of the hope that we have in Christ we can endure the grief of today.

Mark 16 reminds us that grief is not the end of the story. Even as we begin Luke we are brought again to the power of joy, hope, and peace that accompany the Christmas story.

- What can it mean to us today that we have certainty in the life and promise of Jesus Christ?

Take some time in prayer to lift up the parts of our stories that are heavy and then to ask for the ability to focus on the power of Jesus to bring us through.