



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, June 6, 2010

Wake-Up Call

Senior Sunday (Week 3 of 3)

Acts 15:36-40 — *The Word from the Bible (Today's New International Version)*

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord.

John Mark

Mark — also referred to as John Mark — is one of the most interesting followers of Christ in the New Testament. He was author of our second gospel in the New Testament, probably writing his gospel from Rome under the tutorship of Paul. While he probably is the first to write a gospel from the testimony of Peter and Paul, he was also somewhat controversial in his relationship to Paul. He was the Son of Mary of Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). John was his Jewish and Mark his Roman name (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37).

When we first meet Mark, he is living in Jerusalem, apparently in the home of his mother, Mary (Acts 12:12, 25). She appears to have been a widow of some means, inasmuch as she is described in Acts as the owner of a house spacious enough to accommodate a large Christian gathering and as having the services of a maid (Acts 12:12). It has been suggested that the Last Supper was held in her home, and that Mark as a boy may have witnessed some of the final events of Jesus' life. It is further conjectured that the young man who fled away naked in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:51-52) was Mark, that he was serving as caretaker of the family garden, and that at the time of the arrest of Jesus, he had been sleeping there in the watchtower.

Part of this tradition is contradicted by Mark himself in his gospel when he identifies the owner of the Upper Room to have belonged to a male "householder" (Mark 14:14-15). Other historians believe that Mark had no connection with Jesus until he heard the testimonies of Paul and Peter.

Mark comes clearly before us in Acts 12-15, where he is said to have traveled to Antioch with Barnabas, his cousin (Col. 4:10), and Saul (Paul). He was taken by these men on the so-called first missionary journey as an assistant. Typically, the duties of an assistant was to make travel arrangements, care for food and lodging, carry the baggage, and run assorted errands. Some argue that he also served an instructional function, since the word *hazzan*, is used to describe him. This word is also used to describe a caretaker or instructor in a synagogue school. Because of Mark's young age, I find it difficult to believe that the seasoned Paul would have given him any duties other than the most menial.

For some unknown reason, Mark left Paul and Barnabas at Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13) and returned to Jerusalem. Some assume that because he was a young teen, he was unable to handle the rigors of the strain associated with the travel and the resistance that Paul and Barnabas would sometimes receive. Others believe that he expected to be more than just an “errand boy” for Paul. Therefore Mark believed that in his return to Jerusalem, he could be involved more deeply in spreading the Gospel. Others claim that Mark believed that Paul was too overbearing and left out of protest for the sake of his cousin Barnabas.

Whatever the cause, it was sufficiently serious in Paul’s eyes to lead to his refusal to take Mark on the second missionary journey. This leads us to the passage before us today and the argument between Barnabas and Paul over Mark’s participation (Acts 15:36 -40). It is assumed Barnabas, whose name literally means “son of encouragement,” wants Paul to give Mark the same second chance that Paul had been given by the early church. It was Barnabas who had taken a chance on Paul by accompanying him on the first journey while others still doubted Paul’s fittingness as a preacher and teacher of the Gospel.

Whatever the details of the argument, Barnabas takes a chance on Mark that breaks his relationship with Paul. Barnabas and Mark go to Cyprus, and Paul took Silas into Cilicia and Galatia. Nothing more is heard of Barnabas. It is assumed that he stayed in Cyprus, preaching and teaching the gospel till his death.

Nothing more is heard of Mark until near the end of Paul’s ministry. In Col. 4:10 and Philemon 24, Paul refers to him in such a way as to indicate that reconciliation has taken place. Mark is with him (in Rome or in Ephesus) as a fellow worker, and apparently Mark plans to visit the Colossians soon. In II Tim. 4:11, Paul is represented as instructing Timothy to bring Mark to Rome, “**for he is very useful in serving me.**” Whether Mark returned to Paul is not said. Many believe Mark did return to Paul’s side in Rome while Paul was under house arrest. While there, he cared for Paul’s needs, learned from Paul, and wrote the Gospel bearing Mark’s name.

The Promise of the Next Generation

They are called the ***Millennial Generation***. Born between 1982 and 2000, they are the teens and young adults of today. This generation — like no other we have seen in over a century — is searching for meaning. They want to make a difference. The 2010 census is expected to show this generation more than 80 million in number; making them the largest generation in American history.

In the article, *The M Factor* by Lynne Lancaster and David Stillman, based on the book by the same name and authors, the Millennial generation is “want to know how they are making a difference, both at their companies and in the world. More than 90% of U. S. Millennials said having opportunities to give back through their company was somewhat to very important when considering joining an organization.” This generation is referred to as “tech savvy, creative, energetic and innovative.” In their national study of this generation, Lancaster and Stillman found the following consistent similarities.

- want to make a difference in the world
- want to feel they are contributing
- want to be innovators
- want to be heard
- want to know they’re succeeding
- wants to express who they are through work

This brings us back to Paul, Barnabas and Mark. Mark was a difference maker, but he would have never been given the chance had it not been for the encouragement and acceptance of Barnabas.

Who will be the Barnabas among us for this generation?

Why is John Mark’s story important for us today?

John Mark could have easily gotten lost in the complexities of the first century. Roman occupation was bleeding the economy and cultures of the Mediterranean. Poverty and unrest was growing on the edges of the Roman Empire. The humanistic practices of the Roman and Greek paganism provided no moral compass for the masses. “Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow you may die,” was a cancer eating away the heart of the people.

Barnabas, (the son of encouragement) was willing to take a chance on Mark that no one else would. He saw something in Mark that no one else could see. Mark wanted to make a difference and saw the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the answer. Consequently, Mark is the first to write about Jesus. 90% of his gospel is quoted in Matthew and Luke, as his writing became one of the primary basis for the early church's faith and witness.

In addition, we find Mark returning to Paul to care for his needs. The same Paul who had dismissed him in the early years of his ministries saw the man and witness he had become not only for the early church, but also for him personally.

Why is this story important for us today? There are a host of John Marks out there who are in need of encouragement. Who will be the next Barnabas for that young person waiting to make a difference in our world?

*Next week we start a new series on the life of Joseph.
If you are wondering what our Vacation Bible School will be covering,
this sermon series is using the same scripture and themes
as we explore the providence and promises of God's care.*

***Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.
God is doing great things through the ministry of Trietsch.***

TRIETSCH'S WAKE-UP CALL COVENANT

- I will pray with/for my kids/youth and the kids/youth of this church this week.
- I will bring the community of Christ into my community this week by showing kindness and love to others I encounter in my day to day life.
- I will dedicate an hour this week to spend with my family without the presence of any electronic communications or other distractions.

Daily Readings

On this Graduating Senior Sunday, I thought I might recommend for our reading together some of my favorite scripture passages. Although there are many that I could list, these have had the most influence on me. These passages have provided direction and strength for me through many years of challenge and blessing. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday, June 7 – Read Romans 8. This is my favorite passage in the New Testament. In it we find encouragement and promise. We hear the words, ***“All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to God’s purposes”*** (verse 28). Also, the words, ***“Nothing shall separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus our Lord”*** (verse 39). And, after listing difficult challenges Paul says, ***“No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”*** (verse 37). When you read these passages what challenges come to mind for you? Is there anything that needs to work for good in your life? Are you willing to hand it over to the control of God?

Tuesday, June 8 – Read Psalm 23. This passage is one of the most familiar passages in the Bible. It was probably written by King David as an affirmation that God was the Shepherd of his life. This was the first passage of scripture I remember memorizing as a fifth grader in Sunday school. I am sure there were other passages, but this Psalm became an important prayer for me when I was a teenager. If you were to draw a picture of God’s presence in your life, what would God look like? How would you describe God’s action for you? Are you willing to submit to God’s will?

Wednesday, June 9 – Read Ephesians 2:1-10. The second passage I remember memorizing was Ephesians 2:8, ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith, it is not any of your own doing but a gift from God.”*** This passage continues to remind me that I can not earn God’s love. There is nothing but faith that is needed to bridge the gap between us and God. God has shown God’s love for us and bridged the gap by dying on the cross for our salvation. This passage is our promise of God’s justification by faith. By it, all of us should be sure of our salvation by faith in Christ. Are you sure of your salvation? Is there anything that is missing? Are you trying to earn your way, or have you by faith, submitted yourself to God’s unconditional love?

Thursday, June 10 – Read John 3:1-21. How can anyone leave out John 3:16, ***“For God so loved the world that God gave God’s only Son that who so ever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*** But this whole chapter provides valuable insight into the work of the Holy Spirit and transformation that comes through a spiritual “rebirth.” Do you consider yourself “born again”? Why or why not?

Friday, June 11 – Read Matthew 28:16-20. For me this is one of the most important passages from the words of Jesus. These are the final words of Matthew quoted from Jesus, after the resurrection, just before Jesus’ ascension into heaven. These last words of Jesus are similar in all the Gospels – go into all nations, make disciples, teach, baptize, and remember, I will be with you always. If we take this passage seriously, would it change our behavior? How would it change your behavior? How have you attempted to follow these instructions this week?