

Three's Company but Four is a Blessing

Mark Luke John Overview

(preached Pine Grove 2/28/16; Sunday PM)

Introduction

When I was a kid, we often played a game called Rumor where we divided ourselves into 2 groups, and a sentence was given to both groups...

The sentence was then passed around the group one person at a time by whispering it in the next person's ear...

But you could only say the sentence one time...

And it usually contained a lot of words that started with P so that you ending up with an ear of spit...

The object of the game was to get the sentence around to the last person and see which group ended up with a sentence closest to the original one...

It was often funny to hear how different the sentences are at times...

Because no one quite hears ever word the same and then shares it exactly the same either...

Such is the nature of our fallenness as people that prevents us from being able to perfectly pass along a sentence we just heard..

When you consider that fact, it makes the Bible all the more incredible...

Because when it comes to the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you are amazed at how four different men wrote at different times about the life of Jesus...

Yet when the four books that they wrote were put together, you find that many of the same events in the life of Jesus described exactly the same..

And you even find that they quoted the words of Jesus exactly the same as well...

Now that is not to say that the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are exactly the same, but it is to say that have enough in common that it could be considered a miracle for 4 different writers to write the same story...

Today, they would sue each other for copyright infringement much like musicians sue one another if the beat in the background is even close to their song's beat...

Now, for us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not amazed at how similar Mathew, Mark, Luke and John are...

Because we know that all these books actually had the same author, right?

God inspired each of these men as His Spirit carried them all along to retell the same story of life and death and resurrection of Christ..

Yet, He did not make them all robots in how they wrote but allowed their personalities and desires to come through as they wrote as well...

That is why you get the same story about Jesus told in different ways...

We saw that last week in the verses in Mark that describe the resurrection..

Mark doesn't tell us everything about that event..

We had to go to Luke to see that the women actually followed the commands of the angels to tell the disciples...

Then we had to Matthew to see that Jesus actually appeared to these same women on their way to tell the disciples...

That is the beauty of how the gospels are written...

Same truth in each gospel but the best picture comes through as all of them are put together...

The reason for that is this...

God allowed the writers to have their personalities come through as they wrote...

Mark was a man in a hurry to prove his point, so he often left details out...

Matthew was trying to convince Jews, so he included a lot more OT verses that proved Jesus was their long awaited King.

Luke was a very detailed historian...

Therefore, he could describe everything, but what he did write about, he wrote with rich detail...

John came last and was able to take his time and fill in other parts of Jesus ministry that the others had missed...

Every one of these writers had different personalities and gifts from the Lord...

Every one of these men had a concern for different things...

Matthew loved the Jews....

Mark loved Gentiles..

Luke loved history and John loved the amazing Jesus...

And each of those things come out in their gospels...

Tonight, we are going to look at the gospels of these men fairly quickly...

And that is possible because much of the material is a repeat from our overview of Matthew last week..

And so that will speed up the process, but not everything is the same, so we will focus on differences as well tonight...

Therefore, let's begin with the gospel of Mark....

We are going to be very familiar with Mark, since we have been in it for over a year and a half..

It is the shortest of the the gospels because Mark was writing to Gentiles and he left out much of the Jewish background that Matthew included..

Mark was not the historian like Luke, so he didn't care to include every little detail of a scene..

Mark was not someone who reflected much on what he had written like John often did...

Therefore, Mark cuts to the chase real quick in his gospel...

One of his favorite words is the word εὐθὺς which simply means immediately...

And that is the best way to describe his writing style...

Mark saw it, wrote about it and moved on to the next truth about Jesus...

With that said, here is one possible outline of the book of Mark...

I. Getting Started (1:1-7:23)

II. Getting Bigger (7:24-9:50)

III. Getting to Jerusalem (10:1-10:52)

IV. Getting Rejected (11:1-16:20)

I have called Mark the gospel that portrays Jesus as Servant..

Last week, we saw that Matthew painted a picture in his book of Jesus as King..

Mark is going to follow that idea by presenting Jesus as the Son of God but also as a Servant as well...

We will see that in a moment...

For now, let's just turn to Mark 1...

Mark is different from Matthew and Luke; he doesn't give the Christmas story...

That isn't important to him writing to people who aren't Jewish...

They wouldn't know the OT and the promise of a coming Messiah to be born in the family line of David...

They just needed to know that Jesus came into the world as the Son of God to save sinners...

Mark's audience wouldn't necessarily care if Jesus was Jewish or Roman or Egyptian...

And so Mark skips over the background of how Jesus was born and simply starts with his arrival on the scene and his baptism and temptation...

With that out of the way, Mark then hit the ground running beginning in verse 14 with the preaching ministry of Jesus..

Followed by his call of the disciples and then his first display of power in verse 21 with Jesus casting out demons....

And so, Mark pulls us in real quick and begins the journey of presenting Jesus as the Servant and Son of God...

Now, this all happens in and around a little area in northern Israel called Galilee...

And from chapters 1-7:23, Jesus does all of his ministry in that area..

Then in chapter 7, verse 24, Jesus moves out of the area around the sea of Galilee and extends his ministry to other parts of the land...

He goes to Tyre and Decapolis and heals and feeds Gentiles as well as Jews...

Mark is pointing to the fact that Jesus is a servant of all, both Jews and Gentiles..

Then he goes up to a town in the far north of Israel called Caesarea Philippi...

As he prepares to make his final walk down through all of Israel to Jerusalem...

That occurs in Mark 10:1 as Jesus leaves the north and heads south to Jerusalem.

All the along the way, he teaching his disciples, preparing them for ministry without him, even though they have no clue what is about to happen...

In Mark 10:45, we get to what is the key verse of the whole book of Mark....

45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His [p]life a ransom for many."

That is a summary of what has already happened in Jesus' life as he has served many with his teaching and healing ministry...

But this is also a look ahead to the greatest service that Jesus performs as He heads to Jerusalem to die for the sins of His people..

That brings us to chapter 11 as Jesus arrives in Jerusalem with a not-so Triumphal entry...

It wasn't that there weren't people to welcome him to Jerusalem....

They were probably 1000s, but very few of them were truly happy to see him..

They were simply there for the show and to keep up appearances..

In a few days, they would be calling for his death...

And chapters 11-15 become the story of Jesus' rejection and ultimate crucifixion...

Chapter 16 is the story of the resurrection and then Mark closes his gospel in the same abrupt manner in which he started it...

And that brings Mark to a close...

I simply see Mark as a trial lawyer...

Here is my opening statement..

Jesus is the Son of God who died for your sins...

Here's the facts in chapters 1-16..

Here is my closing statement...

It's up to you to see the glorious Christ and to worship him...

With that said, let's move from the lawyer to Dr. Luke, who penned the 3rd gospel...

Luke's gospel is quite a bit longer than Mark's.

However, Luke has something in common with Mark as he too was not an eyewitness to the events of Jesus' life...

Tradition tells us that Mark wrote his gospel with Peter at his side testifying to what He had seen...

Obviously, Matthew and John were disciples and eyewitnesses themselves...

Peter recounted his testimony to Mark...

So, where did Luke get the information for his gospel...

Well, he tells us in the opening verses of his gospel...

Luke 1:1-4...

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things [a]accomplished among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning [b]were eyewitnesses and [c]servants of the [d]word, 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having [e]investigated everything

carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been [f]taught.

Long story short, Luke relied on the eyewitness testimony of many people to write his gospel...

Now, it is important to remember here that God inspired every word but He used these men as well in the process...

Luke was a physician which would fit well with a very detailed person...

So, God in his sovereignty chose Luke the doctor to write a gospel...

Now, Luke most likely was a gentile...

He was Jewish.

Paul seems to indicate that in Colossians 4:11...

If that is true, that would mean that this is the only Gentile author in the whole Bible...

Luke also wrote the book of Acts, so that would mean only 2 books of Scripture were written by a non-Jew...

As we get into Luke, we are going to find a very detailed record...

Though Luke addresses this gospel to a man named Theophilus, who was most likely a Roman dignitary, this gospel was not necessarily addressed to Jews or Gentiles....

Luke just set out to record an accurate history of the life of Christ....

On top of that, Luke was the fanciest of the gospel writers...

That would make sense to us...

Matthew was a tax collector, John was fisherman, Mark was young man, and Luke was likely the most well-educated of the group..

So, he wrote beautifully and flowingly.

When we think about an outline for Luke, it follows much of the same pattern of Matthew and Mark...

Here is one possible outline...

I. Jesus is Born (1-3)

II. Jesus is Sent (4:1-9:50)

III. Jesus is Determined (9:51-19:27)

IV. Jesus is Reviled (19:28-23:56)

IV. Jesus is Rewarded (24)

Let's take a brief look at Luke....

In this gospel, you will find the longest Christmas story of all the gospels detailing the events before, during, and after the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem...

Luke even gives us a picture of Jesus that none of the other gospels give us in chapter 2 when he writes about Jesus being left at the temple by his parents when he was a young boy.

Then like the other gospel, Luke details Jesus's baptism and beginning of his ministry in chapter 3..

Then in chapter 4, Jesus is sent into ministry...

Luke records many of the same teachings and hearings of the other gospel writers in chapters 4-9...

But one thing that Luke seems to do is point out how often Jesus ministered to the worst in society...

This gets back to the theme of Luke...

Jesus as the Son of Man because Jesus lived among men and lived as a man who could identify with the downcast of society..

Luke makes it point to record ministry that Jesus often offered to the worst in Israel...

Lepers, Gentiles, children, tax collectors, sinners of every size and shape are often found in Luke's gospel and often recipients of Jesus' compassion...

Luke also records a number of instances where Jesus honored and served women, who were also at the bottom of Jewish society...

Beginning with Luke's focus of Mary, Elizabeth and even Anna at the beginning of his gospel....

And then ends, like Mark, by focusing on the women who were at the resurrection...

And Luke also includes women in between as well...

In Luke 7:11-17, Luke records Jesus compassion for a widow...

In Luke 7:36-50, Luke records the love of a woman who poured perfume on Jesus' feet...

And he also highlights women in chapter 10, 13, 21, and 23...

This shows Luke's focus on Jesus' humanity and love for common people...

Jesus is not only a king of royalty, he is a king of the downcast as well...

We move from Jesus being sent into ministry to chapter 9, verse 51...

Which serves as the turning point of the gospel of Luke..

Luke 9:51...

51 When the days were approaching for His [ad]ascension, He [ae]was determined to go to Jerusalem;

Like the other gospel writers, Luke makes it point to talk about Jesus being determined to go to Jerusalem...

This gets back to Jesus' mission in life...

Though he came to heal and teach and love, he also came to die...

And since he knew Jerusalem would be the place of that death, Jesus was determined to go there..

In chapters 9-19 of Luke, Jesus works his way to Jerusalem..

Along the way south, he passes through other regions of Israel and does miracles, but all the while he is marching south to his rejection and death in Jerusalem...

It is in this section that we get to meet Zaccheus, the wee little man who climbed in the sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see..

Then in verse 28 of chapter 19, Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, where he is reviled and rejected..

Luke then details the week in Jerusalem up to chapter 23, before recording Jesus being rewarded with a resurrection from the grave and an ascension to the heaven in chapter 24...

This rings us to the final gospel, which is the gospel of John..

If you are familiar with John's gospel, you know that it is different than the other gospels in many respects...

And the reason for that is this...

It was most likely written much later than Matthew, Mark and Luke...

Matthew was written in 50 AD, Mark was written shortly after in 52-55 AD, Luke was written in 60 AD...

But John was written in 80 AD or later...

This would have been 50 years after John had witnessed the events of Jesus life...

And John had grown in his faith in Christ..

He had gained godly wisdom with age...

In some ways, John was able to reflect on the life of Christ and talk about the significance of his life in terms of the big picture of who Jesus was..

For John, it wasn't important to always give the play by play of Jesus' life...

It is like going to a ball game, the day after you can recall every play to describe what went right and what went wrong....

But after a few days or weeks, you just talk about the game in general and the big picture of what went right and wrong...

In some ways, that is a good way to think about John's gospel...

He is an older man far removed from the events of 50 years ago and he has had time to reflect on what happened and he writes his gospel with that in mind.

On top of that, John specifically tells us why he wrote the way he did...

John 20:30-31...

30 Therefore many other [g]signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is [h]the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

John wrote to convince his audience that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah and the Son of God, but not just to convince his readers of that fact....

But to move them from that fact to belief in Jesus and salvation in His name...

And that's a good way to think about the gospel of John...

Jesus is the Son of God...

Here is an outline of John...

I. The Public Ministry of Jesus (1-12)

II. The Private Ministry of Jesus - Upper Room (13-17)

III. The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus (18-21)

John presents Jesus as the Son of God to a world who sees Him as something else.

Let's take a brief look at John's gospel tonight...

The first thing that sticks out is that John doesn't go back to the birth of Jesus to prove his point...

But rather, John goes back to the beginning of time to prove that Jesus is God's Son..

He writes in verse 1...

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 [a]He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

These verse punch holes in every false religion that sees Jesus as something less than God...

Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims who all have Jesus as a great man but someone less than God...

Verses 1-3 of John's gospel teach otherwise..

Jesus was in the beginning with God...

Jesus created everything..

Jesus was and is God...

The story of Jesus being born into the world is important...

But the story of Jesus creating the world is equally important.

Jesus is God.

To reject that is to reject the truth of the Bible and God Himself...

People who claim that false religions worship the same God as Christians are wrong...

Yo cannot worship the Father apart from the Son...

They are one.

If you get the Son wrong, you get the Father wrong...

That is why false religions are false...

You may claim to know God, but you can't know God apart from knowing the Son of God...

Although I am getting ahead of myself...

Listen to John 5:23...

He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

John is going to be very clear in his gospel that Jesus is God...

And he starts out his gospel with that important truth...

Many people say that John doesn't include the Christmas story...

But they are wrong.

John talks about the birth of Jesus...

He just does it with few words....

John 1:14...

14 And the Word became flesh, and [k]dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of [l]the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Though Matthew and Luke spend chapters on the truth of Jesus being born into this world...

Their stories can be summed up with the first 5 words of verse 14...

And the word became flesh..

That is the Christmas story of how Jesus as God took on flesh and was born into the world...

Form there, John moves in chapter 2 to describe Jesus' earthly ministry..

John gives us details of ministry in Jerusalem that the other gospel writers leave out..

This would have been a ministry there before he goes back at the end of his life..

We find the details of this visit to Jerusalem in chapters 2-3...

This is where we meet Nicodemus who was a Jewish religious leader...

Jesus meets him in chapter 3 and describes the new birth to him of how a man can be born a second time from above...

As God works in Him to change his heart and give him new desires...

And then Jesus utters the most famous of all Bible verses in John 3:16...

16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His [e]only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

All of this is simply part of Jesus early and public ministry in Israel...

In chapter 4, Jesus works his way back north to Galilee but makes some stops in Samaria along the way..

This is where he has the famous encounter with the woman at the well in chapter 4...

Where he refers to himself as living water, and invites the woman to believe in Him...

His public ministry continues in chapters 5 and 6....

In chapter 6, he feeds 20000 people with 5 loaves and two fish...

We saw that miracle in Mark...

However, the next day comes and the crowd wants to be fed again...

The crowds were interested in Jesus' words, but they surely loved his hand outs...

So, they come to him in John 6 and want more food...

And Jesus responds by telling that food is not what they need, but rather they need Him...

And then in verse 35 of John 6, Jesus says...

35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

This is an important statement that John is going to focus on in his gospel...

Because John is going to give a number of these “I AM” statements...

In chapter 8, Jesus says “I am the light of the world”

In chapter 10, Jesus says, “I am the door of the sheep”

In chapter 10, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd”

In chapter 11, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

In chapter 14, “I am the way, the truth and the life”

In chapter 15, “I am the true vine.”

Why is this important?

John is trying to convince his readers that Jesus is God...

And what is the personal name of God?

Well, He is the great I AM.

That is how he revealed himself to Moses i the burning bush....

And every Jew knew that their God was the great I AM.

So, when Jesus says it...

It is not an accident or a slip of the tongue...

It is completely true...

Jesus is God, and John uses these statements of Jesus to prove it...

And so the public ministry of Jesus continues through chapter 12...

And then in chapters 13-17, we get all the details of the night before Jesus' coming crucifixion...

None of the other gospel writers give as much to Thursday night and early Friday morning as John..

He begins to describe this Thursday night by showing Jesus as servant...

Washing the disciples feet before the Passover meal.

He then spends the rest of chapter 13 and all of chapters 14, 15 and 16 describing Jesus' instruction to his disciples on this night both in the Upper Room and in the garden before his arrest...

And then John ends this section of his gospel by giving us the prayer that Jesus prays for his disciples in chapter 17...

That leaves us with chapters 18-21 where we go to the cross with Jesus...

Followed by the story of the resurrection in chapters 20 and 21, where John gives us a lot of detail about the appearances of a resurrected Jesus...

This is also where we find the restoration of Peter after his denial...

Peter had denied Jesus 3 times and in John 21:15-19, Jesus gives Peter 3 opportunities to confirm say he loved Christ...

Which he does..

And then John ends the gospels in an interesting way in verse 25...

And this is a good way for us to end our look at the 4 gospels as well....

Conclusion

John 21:25...

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they *were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself *would not contain the books that *would be written.

The final word of John and the final word of the 4 gospels of the life of Jesus Christ is this...

Theses four books only scratch surface of the amazing life of our Lord..

If God had inspired us to write it all down, the number of books it would take would fill up the entire world...

However, the comforting of this...

What God wants you to know about His Son has been presented in His word...

You don't have to read every book about Jesus to be saved...

You just need the Words that God inspired in the Bible to be right with Him...

John is saying that the glory of God can't be contained in a book, but God has graciously allowed it to be contained in the book He inspired..

And that makes your life easier and true salvation possible....

Let us pray tonight...