In our last study we learned that Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptic gospels. That means the three books contain many of the same stories, told in a similar time sequence. John, as we shall see next week, is a different concept.

Mark is a most interesting character. He rebounded from a rather abysmal beginning in ministry to achieve the accolade of the Apostle Paul himself: 2 Tim. 4:11 *Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* That most certainly was not Paul’s first impression after Mark had abandoned him and Barnabas in their first missions journey. That “abandonment of ministry” caused the break-up of Paul and Barnabas, with Barnabas returning to Cyprus with Mark (his relative), and Paul being joined by Silas (the two took the Gospel into Europe for the first time). *Mark proves that anyone can rebound from failure!*

Mark was a Jew (named John) with the Roman surname of Marcus - or Mark. He lived in Jerusalem where his mother (Mary), a woman of wealth and prestige, had great influence in the early church. She had a home atop Mount Zion where Jesus hosted the Last Supper and where the 120 early believers were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost Acts 2:1-2 *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* [2] And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

You can readily understand then how Mark was personally acquainted with the people and the places of Jesus’ earthly ministry.

- We read, for example, that when Jesus was arrested by the Temple guards in the Garden of Gethsemane, that someone fled, clad with a linen cloth. Many are convinced that “someone” was Mark.
- The afore-mentioned Barnabas, the generous Levite from Cyprus and co-hort of Paul, was Mark’s cousin.
- Peter referred to Mark as “my son.” Mark’s gospel was strongly influenced by Peter.

*"This relationship (Peter and Mark) explains the peculiar vividness and reality of his
narrative (the Gospel of Mark). It is easy to imagine how often the long hours of the
ejourneys of Mark and Peter were lightened by the stirring stories which Peter again
and again would be asked to repeat to his eager young comrade, until Mark would
actually see the scenes that he afterward pictured in his Gospel. It is not strange that
he wrote with all the graphic distinctiveness and vividness of an eyewitness and could
give such complete details as to time and circumstance.

GOSPEL OF MARK / CHARLES ERDMAN / PP 8 AND 9 / WESTMINSTER PRESS

Mark gave us some details of Jesus’ earthly life that were not mentioned in the other three
Gospels:

- Jesus was a carpenter
- During Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness he was with the wild beasts
- When the disciples saw him calm the sea they “f feared exceedingly”
- When they saw Jesus turn for Jerusalem and the cross “they were amazed and
  afraid
- The angel in the empty tomb gave the joyful message, “But go, and tell his
disciples and Peter.”

They key verse to Mark is 10:45: For even the Son of man came not to be ministered
unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. We who are followers
of Jesus should take heed as to His purpose in this world. Our divinely-assigned task is
to minister to the lost and hurting of the world.

Mark’s Gospel was chronologically the first gospel written – probably in Rome about 63
A.D. It was written with a Roman reader in mind. It is filled with action - activity.

While Matthew, in writing for the Jewish mind, accentuated “Jesus the King,” Mark takes
a different tack and addresses Jesus as “the servant.” This fulfills the prophet’s
prediction: Isaiah 42:1-2 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom
my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the
Gentiles. [2] He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

Matthew spent time on a genealogy for a King needs such a thing. Mark spent no time
on a genealogy for a “servant” has no need of one.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MARK

It is sometimes said of Chapter One that it contains more information than perhaps any
other single chapter in God’s Word. Let’s take a look at it:

1. Verses 1 - 8 Mark introduces us to the man who will introduce the Christ, John the
1. Baptist.

2. Mark 1:1-8
   The good news of Jesus Christ—the Message!—begins here, [2] following to the
   letter the scroll of the prophet Isaiah.
   "Watch closely: I'm sending my preacher ahead of you;
   He'll make the road smooth for you.
   Prepare for God's arrival!
   Make the road smooth and straight!"
   that leads to forgiveness of sins. [5] People thronged to him from Judea and
   Jerusalem and, as they confessed their sins, were baptized by him in the Jordan
   River into a changed life. [6] John wore a camel-hair habit, tied at the waist with a
   leather belt. He ate locusts and wild field honey.
   [7] As he preached he said, "The real action comes next: The star in this drama, to
   whom I'm a mere stagehand, will change your life. [8] I'm baptizing you here in the
   river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. His baptism—a holy baptism by the
   Holy Spirit—will change you from the inside out."

   You will remember that this is the first time God has spoken to humanity since He spoke
   to Malachi nearly 400 years earlier. It was time for a spiritual awakening in Judea and
   Galilee. John the Baptist was therefore the first preacher to speak the good news (the
gospel) concerning Jesus.


3. The reader/student will catch a strong inference to the teaching on the Trinity - God the
   Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in this passage: Jesus in the baptismal
   water, God the Father speaking an accolade from heaven and the Holy Spirit descending
   (like a dove) upon the Son.

   The wilderness where Jesus was tested is believed the impossibly rugged area just north
   of Jericho.


4. Mark 1:16-20
   Passing along the beach of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew
   net-fishing. Fishing was their regular work. [17] Jesus said to them, "Come with me.
I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and
women instead of perch and bass." [18] They didn't ask questions. They dropped
their nets and followed.

[19] A dozen yards or so down the beach, he saw the brothers [James and John],
Zebedee's sons. They were in the boat, mending their fishnets. [20] Right off, he
made the same offer. Immediately, they left their father Zebedee, the boat, and the
hired hands, and followed.

Obedience to God's call! What a premise! What a necessity for all of us today.

4. Jesus begins healing the sick and delivering demonically influenced victims of Satan -
verses 21 to 45.

Are demons real? Absolutely! They are spirit beings who have personality and
intelligence. They are evil, malicious and organized with different levels of rank and
delegated authority under Satanic rule. Demons are the power behind idol gods, so that
to worship false gods is essentially to worship demons.

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT STUDY NOTES / PAGE 1492 / ZONDERVAN

CAN CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS BE DEMON POSSESSED? No! The Holy Spirit
Who indwells you and demons can never co-exist in the same body. Demons may,
however influence the thoughts, emotions and actions of Christians who have not been
delivered from strongholds or who fail to 'walk in the Spirit'.

Continuing in this same first chapter of Mark we find Christ making His ministry
headquarters in Galilee - in the little town of Capernaum, located on the northwest shores
of the Sea of Galilee.

The action in Mark's Gospel is non-stop:

1. The palsied man let down through the roof - 2:1-12
2. Jesus heals the man with the withered hand - 3:1-5
3. The healing of the woman with the issue of blood - 5:21-34
4. Miracles in the Decapolis - the cities on the other side of Jordan
5. The blind man in Bethsaida and yet another, blind Bartimaeus

Jesus deals with Nature

1. Still the storm - 4:35-41
2. Feeds the 5,000 - 6:32-44
3. Jesus walks on the Sea  6:45-41
4. The 4,000 fed - 8:1-9
5. The fig tree cursed - 11:12-14

Parables

1. New cloth on the old garment 2:21
2. New wine in old bottles  2-22
3. The sower  4:1-20
4. The candle and the bushel  4:21-25
5. Mustard seed - 4:30-34

These are only a few of the miracles and the teachings of Jesus. Mark goes through them at break-neck speed; hence the moniker, Mark, the Gospel of Action.

THE DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

At chapter 14 (the longest of his chapters) Mark begins the saga of the Passion of the Christ. Our Lord’s earthly ministry draws near to a close. As Isaiah prophesied centuries earlier, Jesus “is brought as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isa 53:7). Next week we will read John’s recollection of the miracle at the marriage in Cana when Jesus said to His mother, “Mine hour is not yet come.” Well, beginning with chapter 14 of Mark....THE HOUR HAS COME!

While the Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John take us on divergent paths in their retelling of the greatest story ever told, they all end at an empty tomb. He is risen!

LUKE

Hidden deeply under the ruins of ancient Rome, the searcher finds a deep dungeon known 2,000 years ago as the Mamertine Prison. Here Rome sent its capital prisoners those who were going to be executed in one form or another. I have occupied that dungeon several times as an intrigued tourist and found it damp, cold and moldy. Today a doorway has been cut through a wall, giving easy access to the place. But 2000 years ago the only access was the hole cut in the ceiling, through which a prisoner was lowered into the smelly pit until the day he would be hoisted out and killed. Any visitor the condemned would have received could be seen only by looking up to the ceiling and the round access hole. As often as he was allowed, a Greek medical doctor named LUKE came to the Mamertine to visit his old friend and traveling companion, the great Apostle Paul. As Paul himself wrote, in his last will and testament (2 Timothy, chapter 4), “Only
Luke is with me.” Everyone else had cut and run or had assignments away from the “Eternal City.” Only Luke was there, the faithful medic and convert of the Apostle. So - what kind of man was this doctor?

We frankly don’t know a whole lot about him. “We do know that he was a Gentile. Paul speaks of him as a ‘beloved physician.’ Luke must have been a man of some wealth, otherwise he could not have traveled with Paul as his friend and useful companion. He was a man of learning and knowledge, an exact observer and faithful recorder. His medical training taught him to be exact. He is in the first rank as a reliable historian, scholarly, skillful and sympathetic. His gospel is the most literary of the four. With his Greek mind he had a sense of form, a beautiful style - studied and elaborate. Luke’s qualifications for his great ministry were manifold. Above and beyond all else, he had the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

ALL THE MEN OF THE BIBLE / DR. HERBERT LOCKYER / ZONDERVAN / P 220

Paul wrote 13 New Testament books (14, if your count Hebrews among his writings) while Luke wrote but two: the Gospel of Luke and Acts. However, Paul’s books were not very long while Luke’s two works are longer than all of Paul’s combined. Luke addressed both of his books to an apparent high official in the Roman government, a fellow named Theophilus. We know virtually nothing of this fellow but his name is easy to remember if we think, “Theophilus is ‘the-awfulllest’ name any man ever had!”

Luke was a doctor. Dr. William Barclay observed, “A minister sees men at their best; a lawyer sees men at their worst; and a doctor sees men as they are. Luke saw men and loved them all.”

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE / DR. WILLIAM BARCLAY / WESTMINSTER PRESS / PAGE 1)

But Luke was also a careful custodian of history. Note, for example, how he places John the Baptist in time: “In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (29 A.D.); Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea; Herod being tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis; in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.” This is only one instance of he care with which Luke dealt with history.

It is of interest to me as a “missions” advocate that Luke allowed no barriers to arise in Christ’s earthly ministry. Note his references to the ‘hated Samaritans,’

- Heaven is not off-limits to them - Luke 9:51-56
- Luke alone tells the story of the Good Samaritan - 10:30-37
- The grateful leper, a Samaritan - Luke 17:11-19

Luke noted Jesus’ ministry to the gentiles: Jesus is seen speaking to the widow of Zarephath - 4:25-27; the Roman Centurion is praised for his great faith - 7:9; and Luke’s
classic reminder of Jesus over-arching love: Luke 13:29 And they shall come from
the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit
down in the kingdom of God.

Luke helps us see Jesus’ interest in the poor: Mary’s offering following Jesus’ birth is
the offering of the poor - 2:24; he notes in 7:27 that ‘the poor have good news preached to
them;’ only Luke records the parable of the rich man and the poor man - 16:19-31;
opening the Sermon on the Mount, in the Beatitudes, Jesus teaches, “Blessed are you

Luke portrays Jesus as “the friend of outcasts and sinners: He alone tell of the woman
who anointed Jesus’ feet and bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair in
the house of Simon the Pharisee - 7:36-50; of Zachaeus, the loathed tax collector whom
Jesus found lodged in a sycamore tree - 19:1-10 and the immortal story of the prodigal
son and his loving father - 15:11-32.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke - the DOCTOR Luke - gave us a lot of information about our Lord’s coming to
Earth in the form of a baby. He prefaces that information by telling us of the birth of
John the Baptist to a priest named Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth - both elderly. They
were both righteous people, but childless. They had wanted a baby - and even prayed
for one. But their prayers did not seem to be answered - til now:

Luke 1:8-17 [The Message]
It so happened that as Zachariah was carrying out his priestly duties before God,
working the shift assigned to his regiment, [9] it came his one turn in life to enter the
sanctuary of God and burn incense. [10] The congregation was gathered and
praying outside the Temple at the hour of the incense offering. [11] Unannounced,
an angel of God appeared just to the right of the altar of incense. [12] Zachariah was
paralyzed in fear.

[13] But the angel reassured him, "Don't fear, Zachariah. Your prayer has been
heard. Elizabeth, your wife, will bear a son by you. You are to name him John. [14]
You're going to leap like a gazelle for joy, and not only you—many will delight in his

"He'll drink neither wine nor beer. He'll be filled with the Holy Spirit from the
moment he leaves his mother's womb. [16] He will turn many sons and daughters of
Israel back to their God. [17] He will herald God's arrival in the style and strength
of Elijah, soften the hearts of parents to children, and kindle devout understanding
among hardened skeptics—he'll get the people ready for God."
But Luke gave us far more than that: He gave us the story of the enunciation by the angel Gabriel to the virgin girl Mary that she would be the mother of the Christ of God. 
Luke 1:35  And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.  (New American Standard)

Why is Jesus called “The Son of God?” Because HE IS THE SON OF GOD!

In chapter 2, Luke tells the story of the taxing decree issued by Caesar Augustus. He wanted all the Roman world - that is, the nations controlled by Rome - to be properly taxed. Actually, Caesar Augustus was not that bad a ruler, compared to the other eleven Caesars who came along. His decree brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem where our Lord was born. In this chapter we also learn about the shepherds who, after seeing the angels, “....came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:16)

In this marvelous second chapter, Luke also told us of old Simeon who had waited all his life for the Christ....and another elderly person, Anna, who was fulfilled in life when she saw the Babe.

Luke tells of the TESTING of Jesus in the wilderness. There He went on a 40 day fast and Satan appeared to Him to cause Him to fail.


Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wild. [2] For forty wilderness days and nights he was tested by the Devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when the time was up he was hungry.

But Jesus would not be deterred in His divine mission “to seek and save the lost.” Following Satan’s abortive attempt, (Luke 4:14) Jesus returned to Galilee powerful in the Spirit. News that he was back spread through the countryside.

JESUS MOVES HIS HEADQUARTERS FROM DETROIT TO FORT MYERS, FL.

Well....not really. But “weather-wise” it’s close. Nazareth was - and is - a pit, situated in the hills of Galilee where it gets cold and rainy - and can even snow. Capernaum, on the other hand, is located at the north end of the Sea of Galilee, 700 feet below sea level, and is generally always warm and sunny - with palm trees, bougainvillea, and St. Augustine grass. And it’s situated by water. Now you tell me - doesn’t that sound like Ft. Myers to you?
This picture of tourists was taken at the main gate of Capernaum (word taken from Kfar - Village and Naum - Nahum - Village of Nahum ... not the one in the Old Testament.

Both Matthew and Mark also reminded us that Jesus moved His headquarters from His hometown of Nazareth to Capernaum. He did this because the people of Nazareth rejected Him and His message. The villagers in Capernaum received Him for a time but later there came a day when Jesus told the people there, Luke 10:15) "And you, Capernaum! Do you think you're about to be promoted to heaven? Think again. You're on a mud slide to hell."

Today, there are three places that Jesus knew so well, situated around the north end of the Sea of Galilee, that are just ruins: Capernaum, Chorazim and Bethsaida.

The Publican At The Gates of Capernaum


After this he went out and saw a man named Levi at his work collecting taxes. Jesus said, "Come along with me." [28] And he did—walked away from everything and went with Him.

[29] Levi gave a large dinner at his home for Jesus. Everybody was there, tax men
and other disreputable characters as guests at the dinner.

I love that line in verse 29: Matthew (Levi) gave a large dinner at his home FOR JESUS. He invited his friends and former associates to meet Jesus. This is our calling today - to infiltrate our town and win people to Christ.

LUKE’S VERSION OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Basically this is a condensed version of Matthew 5, 6 and 7. It fits here because Luke is retelling the stories of Jesus around the town of Capernaum. The “mount” is the rather impressive hill just west of the town, overlooking the Sea of Galilee. It is beautiful there.

In chapter 7 we have the stories of our Lord’s healing the servant of a Roman centurion. Then He and His disciples made their way from Capernaum south of the Sea of Galilee where they made a right turn up the steep hill to the village of NAIN. There Jesus raised a young man who had died - right in the funeral procession to the grave. (I am very impressed at the physical stamina of Jesus and His men who could walk those 15 or 20 miles up rugged terrain and still have strength for effective ministry.)

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND DEPRESSION

For months, John the Baptist had been languishing in the prison in the palace of Herod Antipas (Machareus). This is a poignant story:

Luke 7:19-22

He sent two of them to the Master to ask the question, "Are you the One we’ve been expecting, or are we still waiting?"

[20] The men showed up before Jesus and said, "John the Baptizer sent us to ask you, 'Are you the One we've been expecting, or are we still waiting?' "

[21] In the next two or three hours Jesus healed many from diseases, distress, and evil spirits. To many of the blind he gave the gift of sight. [22] Then he gave his answer: "Go back and tell John what you have just seen and heard:

The blind see,
The lame walk,
Lepers are cleansed,
The deaf hear,
The dead are raised,
The wretched of the earth
have God’s salvation hospitality extended to them.
Sometimes even the stalwart saints have “down times.” Remember, Jesus called John the Baptist the “greatest prophet of them all.”

Through these middle chapters, Luke tells us the parables and miracles of Jesus, some of them contained in other Gospels and some not. In Chapter 9 Jesus commissioned the twelve disciples to traverse the area and, in His Name, continue and expand His ministry. In this chapter Jesus also fed the 5,000 men (plus women and children - perhaps as many as 20,000 in all) with five loaves and two fish. His transfiguration is also included in this remarkable chapter. IT IS IN THIS CHAPTER (9) THAT JESUS FINISHES HIS MINISTRY IN THE GALILEE AND HEADS BACK TO JERUSALEM WHERE A ROMAN CROSS AWAITS HIM.

The marvelous story of THE GOOD SAMARITAN is found in chapter 10. Jesus continued to teach, heal and deliver on His way south to the Holy City. Luke 13:22 He went on teaching from town to village, village to town, but keeping on a steady course toward Jerusalem.

Chapter 13 contains one of the most poignant moments of Jesus’ short earthly life. Upon arriving from Jericho - up the steep climb of the eastern side of the Mount of Olives - Jesus arrives at the summit. OH, WHAT A VIEW FROM THERE! Upon seeing His beloved city, and knowing what awaited them just four decades down the road, Jesus wept over the city: Luke 13:34-35 [The Message] Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killer of prophets, abuser of the messengers of God! How often I've longed to gather your children, gather your children like a hen, Her brood safe under her wings—but you refused and turned away! 35] And now it's too late: You won't see me again until the day you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of God.' "

LOST

The 15th chapter of Luke contains three stories that Jesus told. All three have to do with being “lost.”

Story # 1 Luke 15:3-7 The parable of the lost sheep has that marvelous hero, the good shepherd who missed one of the 100 under his care. He found it and brought it back to the fold, rejoicing. Jesus concluded: Luke 15:7 [The Message] Count on it—there's more joy in heaven over one sinner's rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue.

That lost sheep didn’t mean to be lost - it just wandered away, as do so many around us today.
Story # 2  Luke 15:8-10, The Lost Coin.  The coin apparently got caught in the grasp of gravity and fell to the floor and disappeared somewhere. The lady who lost it searched “diligently” till she found it. And again the summation: Luke 15:10  [The Message] Count on it—that’s the kind of party God’s angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God."

Story # 3  The Parable of the Prodigal Son.  Is there a greater story ever told than this one? The son took everything he thought he had coming and left home for a far city where “he wasted everything on riotous living.”  He came to himself alone, broke and hungry in a pig pen. He said, “I’ll go home and just be a servant to my father.”  But when he arose, Luke 15:20  [The Message] He got right up and went home to his father. When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him.

Three stories of being lost: The sheep didn’t mean to be lost - it just wandered off. The coin could not help being lost as it was caught in the grip of something stronger than itself (as many are today with drugs, booze, etc.) The son was lost because he wanted to be. But he came to himself an experienced a glorious redemption.

In Chapter 16, Jesus told the story of the poor fellow Lazarus and the rich man in hell. Jesus never pulled any punches about the subject. He taught that there was a real hell with real people in it.

Beginning with Chapter 22 Luke gives the story of the passion of the Christ, beginning with the unpardened treachery of Judas. Luke recounts the story of Peter’s denial in this chapter and then the drama of Gethsemane. Remember that Luke was a medical doctor. He tells us of Jesus’ mental and spiritual agony: Luke 22:44  KJV And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Why? Because the cup God held before Him contained the sins of the world. He Who knew no sin became sin for us. At 9 the next morning when Jesus was nailed to the cross, it was my sin and yours that was nailed there.

Remember the story of the shepherd in Luke 15? Jesus becomes the Shepherd who painstakingly finds the lost sheep:

But none of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

Elizabeth C. Clephane from “The Ninety and Nine”

Luke closes his gospel with the story of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. And he
relates the story of the two broken-hearted followers of Jesus who were on their way home to Emmaus (a suburb in NW Jerusalem). They had no knowledge that Jesus had been resurrected that morning. Jesus joined them in their walk. It was not until later it dawned on them that they had been with the Lord:


They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on [29] but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. [30] And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. [31] At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

[32] Back and forth they talked. "Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?"

[33] They didn't waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together....

Luke closes his account with Jesus reunited with His disciples, His great commission and His ascension. LUKE CONTINUES HIS ACCOUNT IN THE BOOK OF ACTS.

Next week: The Gospel of John