

Dear Sojourners in Faith,

It has been a slow and fast Lent as we approach Holy Week and Passover on the way to Easter, the holy, hope-joy-filled season of resurrection. I pray that you are well.

On the heels of a very significant chapter in Mark 4 as well as a strange story about an exorcism in the beginning of Mark 5, we have been invited into a masterfully interwoven narrative with a nested story within it (Mark 5.21–43). Please come ready with your observations and questions, which I still consider the best parts of our class, beside prayer and fellowship.

What might we think about Jesus as we watch and hear what unfolds?

What do you think of the disciples? And of particularly named disciples?

What spiritual—or if permitted to suggest, *theological*—insights could we gain for *our* journey of (fear-)faith, especially during Lent?

If we are so blessed, we may even begin Mark 6.1–6, which deals with the undergirding and overriding meta-question in Mark of who Jesus is. For larger context, I am including some notes below from previous emails.

As always, I look forward to **your observations and questions**, and please never hesitate to **suggest any biblical, theological, or life topics** along the way, even if they are only tangentially related. We can be flexible and take detours on our journey through the Bible. Remember that the unofficial title of our Bible study thus far is “**Anything and everything you always wanted to ask about the Bible but were too afraid or busy to ask.**”

Please see the “syllabus” online for where we are headed: Bible intro 2021-04 Ann’s Choice (also attached; printed copies available in front of my office in Resident Life, Liberty Commons).

For Zoomers, here are the instructions:

Zoom (online or using an app):

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82395191045?pwd=TTRiQklwR2RhRzZkNFNlU2RRbGRoUT09>

Meeting ID: 823 9519 1045

Meeting Password: annschoice

Dial in by telephone: nearest phone access in New York City

Dial 1 (929) 205 6099

Enter Meeting ID: 823 9519 1045, followed by “#”

Enter Passcode: 394871 if requested

See you in class or via Zoom. Have a wonderful evening.

With prayer and best wishes,

*The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.*

Numbers 6.24–26

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Please remember the Marcan theme of the secrecy of Jesus' true identity and how that relates to the main theme of Jesus as the suffering Son of God, a mystery that the disciples never grasp but only the Roman centurion utters (Mark 15.39), out ignorance yet speaking a profound insight and truth about Jesus. Please keep rereading Mark for new insights about Jesus and how Mark wants to present the story of Jesus. Perhaps it would help to review what I sent before:

From all that we have read, asked, and learned since April 2021, when we began our sojourn through the Bible, see what you think of the themes and language of Mark, e.g.:

How does Mark begin? What might that indicate?
What are Mark's main points or arguments?
What is it trying to argue or demonstrate? How does it do that—what words and ideas does it present?
What portrait of Jesus emerges in Mark? How about the of the disciples, the so-called Twelve?
What does Jesus do and say?
Who is the intended audience?
At what verse does the Gospel end? How many endings to Mark are there? Which ending do you prefer?
What do you find inspiring in Mark? Or helpful? Curious? Disappointing? Annoying? Troublesome?
After all the myriad questions and attempted answers, so what? What could we learn from Mark for our faith journey?

Please review below the information I sent last year (!) on the canon.

As we trek through the Gospels, we will learn about the new empire in charge of the world, viz., that of the Romans, as we review the empire-culture-world built by the Greeks—especially Alexander the Great—after their victory over the Persians, who in turn had replaced, the Babylonians, who replaced the Assyrians, and before that the Egyptians in the time of the Exodus.

consider the Greeks:
www.pbs.org/empires/thegreeks/htmlver

If you are adventurous, read about the "Synoptic Problem," which I will cover slowly and repeatedly enough for us to find it helpful in our interpretation of the synoptic Gospels, i.e., Matthew, Mark, and Luke—*synoptic* is from the Greek word meaning to *see together* or *to be seen together*. I will say more on this in class, but feel free to ask your questions any time.

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Bibles & canons

Roman Catholic Bible (46 HB/OT + 27 NT)

73 books + 2 in appendix to Vulgate (Latin translation of the Bible)

Greek Orthodox Bible (52 HB/OT + 27 NT)

79 books, including all the books in the Roman Catholic Bible and appendix, plus Psalm 151 and 3 Maccabees
also includes 4 Maccabees in an appendix

Ethiopian Orthodox Bible includes 86 books, including all the books in the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Bibles, plus Jubilees, Enoch, Synodicon, Diddascalica Apostolorum, Testament of the Lord, Qalementus, and 4 Baruch.

Protestant Apocrypha

Tobit, Judith, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom of Solomon, and Baruch

The books of Esther and Daniel include additional chapters which were excluded in Protestant Bibles.

The Latin appendix also includes 3 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh.

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review from previous emails re exilic and post-exilic world in and of the Bible:

Some helpful dates to keep in mind, especially in the light of the Deuteronomistic History (= Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings):

- ca. 930 BC split of the united kingdom
- 722 BC destruction of northern kingdom Israel
- 586 BC destruction of southern kingdom Judah (& Temple; rebuilt 515 BC)