

UNIT 2: JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

THE PROMISED ONE COMES

Lesson 3: THE GOSPELS: Four Portraits of Jesus

CONTENT:

1. Recapitulation of lesson 2.
2. The Gospels were written by the 'evangelists' Matthew, Mark Luke and John, to leave a written record of the life and teachings of Jesus and to pass on the truth of who he is.
3. The word 'Gospel' comes from the Greek 'euangelion' which means 'good news'.
4. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the 'Synoptic Gospels' because they are so similar, and can be studied together.
5. Each of the evangelists stressed a different aspect of Jesus, influenced by the people to whom they were writing:
 - Mark wrote to Gentile Christians, mostly those who were facing persecution in Rome. He stressed the SUFFERING CHRIST.
 - Matthew wrote to 'Jewish' Christians. He showed Christ as a second Moses, a TEACHING CHRIST.
 - Luke wrote to Greek Christians, especially those who were marginalised. He stressed the COMPASSIONATE CHRIST.
 - John wrote to Christians of all backgrounds. He depicted Christ as a 'LIFE-GIVER'
6. Jesus has all these qualities. He is someone we can relate to in every circumstance of our lives, and whatever we are feeling.



ASSIGNMENT: Learn by heart: MARK 8:34-35 and JOHN 6:35 from handouts.

REFERENCES : Luke 1:1-4; & 7:13. Mark 8:34-35. Matthew 5: 1-2 John 6:35
Path Through Scriptures, [Mark Link SJ]

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts; photographs.

I. STARTER:

[The students have been asked to bring 2 or 3 photographs of themselves. They now share them with their partner. Ask:]

- Which photo do you like the best? Why do you prefer it? Why do you think you look different in each of the photos?

Bring out: Though it is the same person, each photo looks a little different, depending on the way it was taken, the angle, the light, the person taking the picture.

[Alternatively, you could show the students 2 or 3 large photographs of the same actress/ actor/ sportsperson and talk about the pictures]

- In the old days, there were no cameras, so those who wanted to get a picture of themselves would get an artist to paint a picture of them. It is known as a 'portrait'. If a rich man got 2 different artists to paint his portrait, he would probably get 2 very different pictures, according to the artist's style.
- Today we are going to look at 4 portraits of the same person, that is, of Jesus. All the portraits are true, yet each person has stressed something different. Can you guess who these 4 'artists' are?
[The Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.]

II. DEVELOPMENT:

1. At our last class we talked about Divine Revelation: How God revealed himself to us, human beings. The main way he revealed himself was through his son, Jesus. But Jesus died 2000 years ago and yet we still know about him and even know him as a person.

- How was this possible? How did God make this happen? *Jesus commissioned the apostles to pass on all they had seen, heard and experienced of him.*
- Can you tell me the exact words from the Bible (that we looked at last time)? *"Go to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples."*

- The apostles did as they were told. After the Holy Spirit came upon them, they began to preach and teach about Jesus. After a while they realised that they should write down what they had experienced of Jesus. So that is how we got the Gospels. *[Give out handouts at this point]*
- Lets read what Luke has written at the beginning of his Gospel: *[Read [1] from handouts]*
- What reason did Luke give for writing the Gospel? *He felt it would be good to write and orderly account; and he wanted Theophilus to know the full truth about Jesus.*
- Where did the stories come from originally? *From those who had seen the things from the beginning and preached them.*
- Do you know what the word ‘Gospel’ means? It is taken from the Greek word ‘euangelion’ and means ‘good news’ *[Students write in [2]]*
- The Gospel writers are known as ‘evangelists’ (taken from the same word).
- 3 of the Gospels are very similar, (though they have their differences). Do you know which 3? *Matthew, Mark and Luke.* They are called the ‘Synoptic’ Gospels. ‘Syn’ means ‘together’ and ‘optic’ means ‘seeing’. They can be studied together, because they have a lot of common passages. *[Students write]*

2. Let us now look at the 4 portraits of Jesus. Why do you think the writers stressed different things about Jesus?... It was because each one was writing to a different kind of audience, and wanted to draw their attention to something different. Let’s look at each portrait one by one.

[Students fill in the data as the teacher goes over the four portraits]

- MARK: Wrote before 70AD. He wrote to Christians who were Gentiles [non Jews]. They were suffering a lot of persecution from the Roman Emperor, Nero. So Mark stressed that Jesus too had suffered. He wanted to encourage them to be brave and follow in his footsteps. Jesus said, “If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget self, carry his cross, and follow me.” Mark’s Jesus was a SUFFERING SAVIOUR’
- MATTHEW: Wrote between 70 and 90AD. He wrote to ‘Jewish’ Christians. He wanted the Jews to realise that Jesus really was the one whom they were waiting for. Matthew tried to show them that Jesus was like a second Moses, who had given them the law. He stressed Jesus as a TEACHING SAVIOUR. He showed Jesus sitting on a mountain, teaching the people how to live as God wanted them to, just as Moses went up to the mountain and gave the people the Ten Commandments. This section is known as the Sermon on the Mount.
- LUKE: Also wrote between 70-90AD. He was writing to Christians from Greece. They also were Gentiles and many of them were poor, outcasts of society. So Luke stressed the COMPASSIONATE CHRIST. He showed how Jesus reached out to the poor, to widows etc. The story shown here is about a widow who had lost her only son. Jesus knew what a terrible thing this was for her. We see his compassion for her in the words of the Gospel.
- JOHN: Wrote after 90AD. He wrote to Christians of different backgrounds. He wanted to give the people the general message that Jesus was a LIFE-GIVING SAVIOUR, who came to give spiritual life to everyone. Many of the passages in John talk about this.

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- We have been looking at Jesus from 4 different angles.
 - When you are suffering, when you are facing problems for doing what is right, remember that the suffering Jesus is with you. He himself suffered for you and he can strengthen you.
 - When you are feeling rejected, left out or alone; remember the compassionate Jesus, who is there for you, who accepts you as part of his family, as his little sister or brother.
 - When you want to know the way to go, what to do, how to do it, you have Jesus the Teacher, who shows you how to live your life.
 - And when you feel you are empty, hungry inside, needing something more, turn to Jesus the ‘bread of life’ He will fill you and strengthen you.
- Choose one of these 4 pictures of Jesus and spend a little time with him. Talk to him, look at him, listen to him. *[Students reflect in silence.]*

Home assignment: Ask the students to learn Mark 8:34-35 and John6:35 from handouts. Bring a Good News Bible [New Testament will do]