

Making Sense of the Gospels, Part One

Christian Study Center

Fall semester 2017

It is hard to over-estimate the significance of the first four books of the New Testament. Known as the Gospels, they give us the picture of Jesus of Nazareth that has made him as famous a name as any in human history. What shall we make of these four books? What themes and aims do they share? How do their different agendas, perspectives, and editorial policies shape these books and distinguish them from each other? How shall we make sense of the contradictions that appear when we place the gospels alongside each other? And how do the differences enrich the picture of Jesus that they give us?

Whether you have never read the gospels before and have no idea what they say, or read them many times and puzzled over what to make of them, you are welcome in this class. The class will be both accessible to those who are new to these texts and challenging to those who know them well.

Schedule	Reading Assignments (optional but recommended)			
	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
09/20 Gospel distinctives	1.1-17	1.1-15	1.1-5	1.1-14
09/27 The birth narratives	1.18 - 2.23		1.5 - 2.52	
10/04 John the Baptizer (Guest teacher: Rev. Tim Hayse, Christ Community Church)	3.1-17	1.1-11	3.1-22	1.15 – 4.54
10/11 Jesus steps out	4.1-25	1.12-28	3.23 – 4.44	1.15 – 4.54
10/18 Mark lays out the basic story		1.21 – 6.13		
10/25 Matthew makes an argument	5.1 – 13.58			
11/01 Contradictions in the gospels	8.1 – 9. 35	1.21 – 6.13		
11/08 Luke weighs in			4.16 – 9.6	
11/15 Making sense of the Gospels	14.1 – 16.12	6.14 – 8.26	9.7-17	
11/22 [THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY]				
11/29 Making sense of the gospels (cont.)				5.1 – 6.59
12/06 The turn to Jerusalem	16.13-28	8.27-38	9.18-27	6.60-71

When teaching this class, I always wish we could meet three times a week and that one of those times could be a discussion section. Because you are taking this class on top of everything else you are already doing, I will settle for a single class period with bits of discussion along the way, but please know that I would love to have further discussion of this material with you. I am typically available after class on Wednesdays and am also glad to arrange to meet you at other times. Don't hesitate to contact me at richard@christianstudycenter.org.