



What's Your Favorite Book in the Bible - Gospels?

Last month I talked about favorite books in the Old Testament. I promised to deal with favorites from the Gospels and the New Testament, so this month I will share some thoughts on the Gospels.

As we learned in a recent Men's Study, each of the Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) wrote about Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection from a different perspective. For example, Matthew wrote from the perspective of someone who had grown up in the Jewish faith and was an eyewitness to the events he described. Luke, on the other hand, wrote as a Gentile who came to faith after hearing about Jesus after He had ascended back to heaven. Not an eyewitness to the events of Jesus' life, Luke investigated the stories about Jesus and interviewed Jesus' disciples and family in preparation for his writing.

Of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke are often grouped together as being similar with John's standing apart having obvious differences.

One difference comes due to the fact that John wrote quite a few years after the other gospels, so it is natural to find stories - like the raising of Lazarus - that are not found in the others. John makes an attempt to record important events and situations the others didn't include. John also tells us that the world could not hold all the books that could be written if everything Jesus did and said were written down. Thus, we are faced with a very simple fact: God doesn't tell us everything we want to know (none of the gospel writers tell us about Jesus' life from age 12 to 30, for example). God has, however, told us everything we *need* to know.

John's gospel also has a couple other differences.

1) John records more in-depth conversations that Jesus had with individuals. For example, with Nicodemus in chapter three, with the disciples in the Upper Room in chapters 13-16, with His Father in prayer in chapter 17 and with Pilate in chapter 18.

2) Whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke tend to focus on the words and actions of Jesus, John gives us more of the "behind the scenes" look at those words and actions, highlighting the eternal significance and spiritual meaning of those words and actions. Matthew and Luke, for example, give us the physical details of the birth of Christ including the angel, shepherd, and magi visits. John leaves out those details and describes the birth of Christ this way: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." With those words John makes sure that we know that the baby in the manger is God himself who has come to earth to save His people from our sins.

It is because of those in-depth conversations and the focus on the meaning behind the things Jesus said and did, that I tend to find myself turning to John's gospel with somewhat greater frequency than Matthew, Mark, or Luke. I'd be interested to learn which gospel you find yourself drawn to most often - and why.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net