



St. Mark's Lenten Study Group

“Writing Gospels: Different Takes for Different Folks”

Note: there will be an hour-long study session each evening, starting at 7:30 p.m., followed by the lovely service of Compline

Description: For most of its history the Church has blended elements from all four canonical gospels into one story. Think of the traditional Christmas story we all know: Joseph's dream (from Matthew); Mary's visitation by the angel (from Luke); the birth in a stable (from Luke); the magi (from Matthew); the shepherds (from Luke); the slaughter of the innocents and flight into Egypt (from Matthew).

What happens when the stories are blended is that the individuality of each gospel-writer gets lost, and we don't notice the unique story each intended to tell his or her particular audience. We don't notice, for instance, that in Matthew the birth of Jesus took place in a house, not a stable, so we never think what Matthew may be telling us by that. By comparing and contrasting the gospels, looking for the distinct ways they deal with the same or similar materials rather than assuming they're all saying exactly the same thing in the same way, we can get a surprisingly clear – and clearly surprising – sense of these very different writers, their audiences, and what each writer wanted to communicate. In the end we'll have a better sense of the richness of the Bible.

The study will use overhead projection of key passages to help us see clearly what is going on. This method turned out to work very well in last year's Paul study group. It's sure to work even better with this one, where key passages can be seen side by side.

Preparation for each session will be reading the gospel to be studied. Even those who don't do this will be able to get something out of the session (which is not, I hope, to encourage laziness!).

Schedule:

Feb. 13	Luke:	Writing for People in Tile-Roofed Houses
Feb. 20	Matthew:	Writing for People Disowned by the Synagogue
Feb. 27	Mark:	Writing for Early Gentile Christians
March 5	John:	Writing for an Alternative Community
March 12	Thomas:	Writing for “New Age” Radicals

Study Leader: The Rev'd Dr. Patrick Gray, Hon. Associate, St. Mark's, Port Hope