

Marginalized Disciples of Mark's Gospel: Relation between Discipleship and Side Characters in the Gospel of Mark

In this presentation, I aim to explore the relationship between the literary images of the disciples and side characters in the Gospel of Mark. Through the use of narrative criticism (close reading), I will demonstrate that "those inside" - the ones to whom the mysteries of the Kingdom are revealed - are portrayed as individuals who repeatedly fail to fulfill their mission and answer Jesus's call. Conversely, some of "those who are outside" successfully fulfill this mission and behave as faithful disciples. Ironically, these individuals are not just outside of Jesus's close circle, but they are outside of the "outsiders." They are marginalized in both groups. However, Mark pulls them out of the darkness and puts them in the spotlight as ideal disciples from whom both groups (inside–outside) can learn something. In Mark's narrative, sick, demonized, Gentiles, poor, and sinners play the role of the perfect disciples. They preach and succeed in their mission. They even understand Jesus's parables without any explanation. By performing a comparative close reading, I aim to illustrate the details of these opposing characters. Additionally, I would like to emphasize that these mirror images are relevant today, when the community of "those inside," who possess or believe they possess revealed secrets of the Kingdom, tends to be more and more closed to those outside. We often believe that our way is the only way and that those outside cannot teach us anything about the God who was personally revealed to us. Mark's Gospel and his marginalized perfect disciples serve as a reminder that this is not true.