

What's Your Type: Mark  
Second in a Series

...they will throw out demons in my name. They will speak in new languages. They will pick up snakes with their hands. If they drink anything poisonous, it will not hurt them. They will place their hands on the sick, and they will get well. -Mark 16:18

Jan 23, 2022

Rev. Dr. Jenothy Irvine

Prayer - Continue to reveal your wisdom and truth Lord, and open all that we are to the movement and presence of your Holy Spirit.

### Message

Last weekend I asked you to consider the question, “what’s your type”? Speaking of course about your type of discipleship - or the approach you are drawn to when it comes to living out, growing in, and becoming more like Jesus. Discipleship can be one of those churchy words that is thrown about but never really defined for the average person. It can be a daunting word, loaded with high expectations and charged with lofty ideals.

At its basic level however, discipleship is simply the process by which a follower of Jesus practices the ways, lessons, and teachings of Jesus and applies them to the way they live as individuals, as a church in community, as leaders, parents, spouses, friends, siblings, etc. Discipleship is about the way(s) we commit to following Jesus and involves being, doing, learning, teaching, growing, adapting, and serving.

The invitation last week was to journey through the book, (SLIDE) Gospel Discipleship by Michelle Morris as she looks at discipleship through the lens of each of the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. By noting that the ending of each of these writings is different, Morris highlights the possibility that each author had a different approach to discipleship and how they interpreted what it was Jesus said in his final words to each of them.

Based on the style of writing, what we know about each author, how they viewed the world and work of Jesus, what was important to them, and how they, as best we can tell, interpreted the way to live a life of discipleship, Morris calls the different types: Markan, Matthean, Lukan, and Johannine.

I explained this idea by using the example that four different people can witness the exact same accident, action, moment of breathtaking beauty, or stunning acts of talent, art, and ability, and each of them will remember or retell it just a little bit differently because they see, feel, hear, relate to, experience, and remember what matters to them and their personal interests, convictions, and understandings. Morris concludes that each gospel writer ended their description of Jesus' commands a little differently because of what was important to them in their context, community, and call to carry out the teachings of Jesus.

As promised then, we begin looking at each discipleship style and we start with the gospel of Mark. Hear how Mark understood what Jesus said in his final moments of instruction to the disciples.

READ Mark 16:14-18

If there was a gospel that could both inspire a believer to great heights and scare the pants off them, Mark could be the one! Whether you stop with the shorter ending at verse eight, where the women who went early in the morning to anoint Jesus's body, end up fleeing the scene terrified and tell no one. This ending leaves you thinking discipleship is fear based, mysterious, and you're better off to run. OR you go with the longer ending in which Jesus, after he was raised from the tomb, met his disciples where they were hiding in fear for their lives, and told them, "those who believe will cast out demons, speak in new tongues, handle snakes, lay hands on and heal the sick, and not be harmed if they were to drink any deadly thing!" (14:17-18)

Either way, there is a powerful force at work and if you align your understanding of discipleship more with Mark, then that powerful force is how you experience God and interact with the world around you. In fact, according to Morris, that is one of the main characteristics of Markan disciples - they are continually seeking the power and presence of the Spirit of God in their everyday life; in their coming and going of their work, church, and encounters with others.

Markan disciples are characterized by their creativity. They tend to be the artists, poets, and musicians among us. They are energized by creating something new; new ministries, new growth opportunities, new outreach projects, and new ways to connect with others. Because of this quality, Markans tend to be the ones who will push the boundaries, primarily because they either don't see boundaries or because they don't

see much purpose in them. They often feel boundaries tend to box God in rather than allow the vastness of God to take shape in the church and the world. Markens apply this to humanity as well, meaning that too many restrictive rules and boundaries can box individuals in and squelch the Spirit of God within them.

A second characteristic found in Markan disciples is they are “wildly inclusive” (Morris 29). Markans know how to make space for everyone - not necessarily by building one on one relationships but rather by making sure “there is space at the table for everyone” (29). This is core to the Marken disciple because they truly believe that everyone has been gifted by God and has something to offer. As this diagram shows, it is out of our giftedness that you find your place and purpose within service, worship, community, and spiritual formation. Markan disciples make space for everyone, believing they could be the missing piece for the church, mission project, outreach events, or new ministries to “catch fire” and burn with the kind of passion only the Holy Spirit could bring.

The third characteristic of Markan disciples is what Morris calls their “short attention span” (30). Not because they can’t focus or remain focussed, but because if a Markan believes the Spirit of God shifts, they too will shift their focus. You might say that Markan disciples wrestle with Spiritual ADD. The phrase move when the Spirit says move, is the heartbeat of the Markan. This can be a challenge for other discipleship types as it often appears they change on a whim with no apparent reason, plan, or list of action items. Immediately is the word of choice when a Marken sees a need, feels the Spirit presenting an opportunity, or becomes

aware of how their gift or the gift of another can bring the divine presence into the lives of others.

That leads to the final two characteristics of Markans: they feel the presence of God in an active, physical, tangible way, which allows them to almost always be open to the miraculous. They actively seek the presence of God and look for God in all things and moments. Their prayers look less like petitions and more like positions and creative actions. It is their way to make space for the holy in their lives; space for the Spirit to pour energy into them and their lives so that they could then pour that energy into living out their faith. They see what the world could be and are deeply saddened and frustrated when very little progress is made in that direction” (31).

Markans thrive in the mess of being church and community. Messes create the margins where the extraordinary can happen. Messes are where people quit trying to put on a mask and instead come forward authentically. Markans see the mess as a place for God to break in and the Holy Spirit to bring about change, wisdom, unity, transformation, growth, and hope.

Does any of that sound like anyone you know? Did a certain person come to mind as you heard those descriptions? Did you, yourself resonate with any of them? The purpose of this series is to invite you to discover your discipleship type and then explore what that might mean for how you interact with others and how you approach spiritual growth. It is an invitation for you to uncover ways to engage in ministries of the church, reflect on what your expectations might or might not be when it comes to

prayer, worship, and service, and how your type interacts with other types in this thing we call community.

What does all this mean for the Markans out there? Mirroring the style of the great evangelist, Jeff Foxworthy...

It means, If the final words of Jesus as recorded by the author of Mark energize and inspire you to immediate action, you may be a Markan disciple.

If you believe the church too often puts people and God in a box, and that box is too small, you might be a Markan disciple.

If new ideas, ministries, and projects are exciting to you, you might be a Markan disciple.

If you look for, expect, and experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in profound *and* ordinary ways, you might be a Markan disciple.

If you believe everyone has a place you might be a Markan disciple.

If you believe boundaries and rules can limit the work of the Spirit you might be a Markan disciple.

AND based on the mysterious and power packed text we read today:

If you speak in tongues, which I believe can mean you speak in a way that those who have been pushed aside, ignored, or otherwise made to feel like outsiders to the church, you might be a Markan disciple.

If you have the courage to handle the snakes of our time; the bullies, the arrogant, and those who misuse the power given them, you might be a Markan disciple.

If you have been exposed to the poison of lies, cynicism, and double standards poured out in our world and did NOT cave or compromise, you might be a Markan disciple.

If your encouraging words, consistent actions, faithful presence, helping hand, or clear minded council provided healing, support, and wisdom for a hurting soul, you might be a Markan disciple.

The words of Jesus as recorded at the end of the gospel of Mark are not intended to alarm or frighten the followers of Jesus, but rather to energize and inspire them knowing that they have access to and are empowered by the very presence of God's Holy Spirit. They are words to encourage and remind believers that it is the Holy Spirit that does the moving and transforming and that all humanity is the vessel through which God can transform lives and in fact change the world.

I don't know about you, but I firmly believe the church today cannot afford to be without its Markan disciples. May the Spirit move where it will and may we have the courage to hold on with everything we got! AMEN