



GCI
60 SECOND
SERMON

Gospel Reading Challenge



MATTHEW ■ MARK ■ LUKE ■ JOHN

Over the course of four weeks, we will enjoy being with and getting to know Jesus through our Gospel Reading Challenge.

Starting with Mark, week one, read at your own pace and volume. The purpose is to grow closer to Jesus through the gospels during this Easter Prep season.



MARK



Main theme: Jesus' rescue of all humanity through sacred suffering and servant leadership.

Audience: Written mostly for non-Jewish followers of Jesus, this book emphasizes a call to all believers to believe in the ministry and join the mission of Jesus.

Who is Mark?

His full name is John Mark, who travelled with Paul and Barnabas sharing the good news of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark is action oriented. "Immediately" is a common word in his writing, and he focuses on what Jesus did more than what Jesus said. He focuses on Jesus' servant leadership and the sacred suffering involved in his ministry.

The Gospel of Mark is an antidote for a secular society bent on "upward mobility" – being first at all costs. On the contrary, Mark teaches us that our lives must truly reflect the "downward mobility" of the cross.

Key features:

- The shortest Gospel account.
- Split into two sections:
 1. Focusing on Jesus' identity as the Messiah, the promised deliverer.
 2. Emphasizing the mission of Jesus; his sacrificial death on the cross.

Notes:



LUKE



Main theme: Jesus is the Savior for all of humanity.

Audience: Luke is written mostly for non-Jewish believers and focuses on Jesus' compassion for the marginalized and salvation for all people.

Who is Luke?

Luke is the only non-Jewish author of the New Testament. He wrote the Gospel of Luke, as well as the book of Acts. He was a doctor and faithful friend of the apostle Paul. His account is based on eyewitness interviews and detailed research.

Luke portrays a Jesus Christ who defined his mission as follows: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (4:18-19). Jesus brought good news to everyone, including the poor and oppressed, to all groups who were despised and marginalized by society in first-century Israel.

Key Features:

- The longest Gospel, starting earlier in Jesus' life, including the announcements of the births of both Jesus and John the Baptist, as well as Jesus' childhood visits to Jerusalem.
- In his account Luke ties the events of Jesus' life to their historical context.
- Highlights Jesus' divinity, but ensures the audience understands that Jesus entered history as a human being.

Notes:



MATTHEW



Main Theme: Jesus is the fulfillment of the promised Messiah.

Audience: Written for Jewish followers of Jesus, and focuses on Jesus as the fulfillment of the promised Messiah by featuring Jesus' genealogy and how his words and actions satisfy Old Testament prophecy. It is a call to take Jesus seriously and follow him.

Who is Matthew?

A tax collector chosen by Jesus to be an apostle. He gives accounts of Jesus' ministry that connect with Jewish history.

While Mark focuses on

Jesus' actions, Matthew focuses more on Jesus' teaching, pointing to him as a master teacher (or rabbi in Jewish tradition)

Matthew wrote a marvelous proclamation of hope in the Messiah. As you read, listen to his clear message: Jesus is the Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Jesus Christ has gained the victory over evil and death. Your death. Re-dedicate yourself to him. Make him the Lord of your life, even as Matthew the tax collector did nearly two thousand years ago.

Key Features:

- Matthew is the most Jewish of the Gospels and also the one most closely linked to the Old Testament and to the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. He points to the promise of the Messiah and its fulfillment in Jesus.
- More than the other Gospel writers, Matthew emphasizes the future aspect of Jesus' work.
- This Gospel points to the church and our call to gathering as the body more than the other Gospels.

Notes:



JOHN



Main theme: Salvation is knowing the Father through his Son, Jesus.

Audience: John's Gospel is written to the early church addressing the truth that Jesus was fully God and fully man. It was written later than the other Gospels, which focus on Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. During John's time the church was wrestling with false teachers who questioned the deity of Christ. John writes to provoke faith in Jesus, resulting in eternal life.

Who is John?

John is known for being one of the first disciples called by

Jesus, along with his brother James. He was a Jewish fisherman, and in church tradition is known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Jesus also referred to John and James as "Sons of Thunder." He was also a prominent leader in the early church.

John tells us that because Jesus is "God in the flesh" (fully divine yet fully human), he is able to reveal God to us clearly and accurately. So if we want to know what God is like, we only have to look at the life of Jesus of Nazareth who was, in the words of the apostle Paul, "the image of the invisible God.... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1:15, 19).

Key Features:

- John's portrait of Jesus focuses less on his messiahship and more on his true humanity and true deity. He is the eternal Son and the "Word" (logos) of God, God's self-revelation.
- John's Gospel accounts differ in style from the others. His narrative accounts are usually longer and often includes conversations between Jesus and an individual. In his accounts of Jesus' miracles he includes more of the conversations between Jesus and religious opponents.

Notes:

