

1 **The Messianic Secret**

- Survey of the Gospel of Mark

2 **Introduction**

- Long novels —700 or more pages—are making a comeback.
- At least, that's a conclusion you might come to, judging from the books that are dominating book festivals and publishers' lists of late.

3 **Contemporary Novels**

- City on Fire, by Garth Risk Halberg (900 pages)
- Red or Dead, by David Peace (720 pages)
- The Goldfinch, by Donna Tartt (784 pages)
- The Luminaries, by Elanor Catton (832 pages)
- The Kills, by Richard House (1,002 pages)

4 **My Recommendation**

- Unbroken, by Laura Hillenbrand (497 pages)
 - Life of Louis Zamperini who was an Olympian, War Hero, Prisoner of War, and who after the war became a hopeless alcoholic.
 - His story of being saved in a 1949 Billy Graham crusade in Los Angeles is truly inspirational.
 - Once becoming a Born-again Christian, Louis Zamperini's life was marked by his extraordinary ability to forgive his enemies.
 - Later this month, on Christmas Day, the movie Unbroken will premiere in local theaters.

5 **Benefits of the Long Novel**

- For some, the return of the long novel may be good news—especially if you are looking for a relaxing way to spend leisure time.
- "Long-form story-telling," says Ong Sor Fern writing in The Straits Times, "... allows for the kind of luxuriant wallowing in an alternative universe, which is all a reader wants from a good story."
- In other words, reading a good story helps us to escape the pressures of our own lives, which isn't bad.

6 **Not Always Bliss**

- At the same time, however, reviewers have pronounced some of these volumes as bloated and in need of pruning.
- Reading long books can be a wonderful experience if their stories can sustain their length, but if not, staying with them can be, instead painful.

7 The Gospel of Mark

- This is what is nice about the Gospel of Mark.
- Not only is it the shortest of the four gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry, but it is also the fastest moving.
- For instance, in just a few verses, Mark 1:9-15, Mark covers . . .
 - Jesus' baptism,
 - his temptation,
 - the arrest of John the Baptist and
 - the inauguration of Jesus' ministry—complete with Jesus' summary statement of his mission: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

8 The Gospel of Mark

- So quickly does Mark move from one incident of Jesus' life to the next that his favorite word seems to be "immediately." Mark uses that or a related term 41 times.
- With only 16 chapters, Mark can be read by a determined reader in a single sitting.
- And more importantly, in those brief chapters, Mark tells enough about Jesus that if we didn't have Matthew, Luke and John, we'd still have sufficient material to hear God's message about who Jesus is and what he came to do.

9 The Gospel of Mark

- Among Bible scholars, there is wide agreement that Mark was the first of the four gospels to be written, and that both Matthew and Luke relied heavily upon Mark as one of their primary sources when they composed their gospels.
- In fact, only 24 of Mark's verses are not repeated in some fashion by either Matthew or Luke or both.

10 John Mark

- While the writer of the Gospel of Mark is anonymous, tradition has it that it was John Mark, who was the author.
- John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas and accompanied the Apostle Paul on the his first mission trip to Asia.
- Perhaps overwhelmed by the journey and persecution, John Mark abandoned Paul and Barnabas and went home.
- This later produced such disagreement between Paul and Barnabas on future missions plans that Paul and Barnabas no longer partnered in ministry with each other any longer.

11 John Mark

- On the night that Jesus was arrested and all of his disciples fled, the Gospel of Mark mentions an unnamed young man who was so afraid when Jesus was arrested, that he fled naked.
- Many believe John Mark was referring to himself. (See Mark 14:51)
- In the book of Acts, there is a story where the believers prayed so earnestly for Peter to be released from prison that the house shook. According to tradition, this was the house of John Mark's mother Mary.
- Interesting enough, in 2 Timothy, Paul asks Timothy to get Mark because he is helpful to him in his ministry.

12 **John Mark**

- To summarize . . .
 - John Mark belonged to a fairly well-to-do family whose house was a gathering place for the early church.
 - Because of this wealth, he was probably educated and could read and write in Greek and other languages.
 - However, John Mark had issues with fear—if not cowardice.
 - Nevertheless, later in life not only was he helpful to both the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter, but he became the first writer of the life and ministry of Jesus, which became foundational to all other gospel accounts.
 - Pretty good for someone who ran away naked at the first sign of danger.

13 **The Theology of Mark**

- One of the most interesting parts of the Gospel of Mark is what is known by scholars as the Messianic secret.
- The Messianic secret refers to how in the Gospel of Mark there is much confusion to the identity and purpose of Jesus and his ministry.
 - Jesus tells the demons to be quiet.
 - The disciples are at a loss who Jesus really is.
 - Jesus teaches in parables and people hardly understand him.

14 **The Theology of Mark**

- However, all of this tension is finally broken in Mark 10:45, when Mark records Jesus as saying, . . .
- For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45 NIV)

15 **Mark 10:45**

- According to Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger, eds., Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary (Accordance electronic ed. 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), n.p.
 - Even the Son of Man is not exempt from the rule of humble service in the kingdom.

- He is in fact par excellence the example of it, especially in his redemptive mission.
- He did not come as a potentate whose every personal whim was to be catered to by groveling servants, but he came as a servant, giving “his life as a ransom for many.”

16 **Servant**

- In other words, our God has a servant’s heart.
- In fact, because of Jesus’ servant heart he became Lord of all.
- As the Apostle Paul says in Philippians, [Jesus] made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name (Phil 2:7–9 NIV)

17 **Sign of Greatness**

- One day Jesus had to rebuke the attitudes of His disciples when they were discussing greatness.
- [He said to them . . .] But you are not to be like that [exercising authority over others]. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:26–27 NIV)

18 **Sign of Greatness**

- “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:13–15 NIV)
- The example that Jesus set was not just about dirty feet, but about doing those humbling acts of service that blesses the body of Christ.
- In fact, Jesus goes on to say . . . Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. (John 13:17 NIV)

19 **Marks of a Servant**

- They are motivated by faith—believing God will honor them for their acts of service, if man doesn’t. Therefore, . . .
 - They don’t complain or grumble when asked to serve.
 - They don’t seek the “limelight” because God sees everything.
 - They are faithful because they know God will reward their faith and hard work.
 - They understand that servanthood is the measure of greatness in God’s Kingdom.

20 **The Values of this World**

- Most of the people of this world, look to be served instead of serving.
- We also seem to honor those who have talents, skills, and charisma more than those who have godly character and virtue—even those in the Christian community.
- I'm not sure if you noticed this, that the number of talent shows on TV far exceeds those on honoring servants.
- So then, let not our attitude be influenced by the world on who and what to honor.

21 **Our Attitude**

- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus . . . made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, (Phil 2:5, 7 NIV)
- Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. (Phil 2:9 NIV)

22 **The Messianic Secret**

- All through the book of Mark, the identity of Jesus is hidden—even among Jesus' disciples.
- Only at the end of Jesus' life is his true identity revealed.
- However, the person who has their revelation is not one of Jesus' disciples or trusted followers.
- It is a humble Roman soldier who was standing at the cross.

23 **The Son of God**

- And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39 NIV)
- In other words, the nature of Jesus' identity was not revealed until the purpose for which he came was completed and observed.
- It was clear to the centurion, that Jesus' death was not an accident, but something very very special.

24 **Our Appearance to the World**

- To the world, we might appear as ordinary people.
- They may slander us and persecute us for our religious convictions and values.
- But when we apply our own moral standards to ourselves they will sit up and take notice.
- So then, let our attitude be the same as Christ and become like him in his death—taking on the role of a servant.

25 **Our Purpose**

- If we want to remove confusion on who the people of God are let us fulfill our purpose.

- Let us not become distracted on how the world defines greatness, but let us instead take on the role of a servant and by faith understand that God sees all our good works and will reward us—even for the things done behind the scenes.
- Let those who serve this church faithfully continue to do so—believing that God will reward us for our faith, if we don't give up.
- And let those who want to serve do so because God loves a cheerful giver.

26 Communion

- So then as we partake of communion tonight, let us understand our salvation is the result of someone being a servant.
- In fact, our whole service tonight is the result of people serving.
- Therefore, let us honor the servants in our lives, by not only acknowledging them, but becoming one as well.
- Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do. [See John 13:17]

27 Communion