

CONCORDIA
COLLEGE



New York Since 1881

The Promise of Paradox in Mark's Gospel



ZION XVI
CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 15-18, 2016

OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS,
BELLEVILLE, ILL.

The Promise of Paradox

God's Word is loaded with the language of paradox. Even more, God's Word is laced with lavish promises of grace. We will look at biblical evidence of how the Holy Spirit works for the good of humans. Especially in the midst of life's worst absurdities, biggest ambiguities and deepest mysteries.

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table talk



Paradoxical Themes

1. **Messianic secret.**
Missional savior.
2. **By whom Jesus is known...**
by whom *not* known.
3. **Redemptive suffering.**
4. **Son of God.**
Son of Man.

Mark's
Gospel
2015

Baby Jesus at bath time.



Main Point:

Things will get worse
before they get
better.

Mark's
Gospel
2015

42 times

“immediately”

Mark's
Gospel
2015

410/678

“And...”

Mark's
Gospel
2015

bible.oremus.org

New
Revised
Standard
Version

Mark's
Gospel
2015

Jesus “did not speak to them
except in parables.”

Mark 4:34



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THIS AMERICAN LIFE



“The beginning of the good news
of Jesus Christ, the **Son of God.**”



Mark 1:1

“Then he began to teach them that the **Son of Man** must undergo great suffering...”



Mark 8:31

1:41 “Moved with pity,”

Jesus healed a begging leper.

1:43 “After sternly warning him,
he sent him away” *at once*.

6:6 “*And* he was amazed
at their unbelief.”

8:12 “*And* he sighed deeply in his spirit.”

10:14 “When Jesus saw this,
he was indignant.”

10:21 “Jesus looking at him loved him.”



Johannes Kepler
1571-1630

Paradoxes of Evil

- **physical & metaphysical**
- **individual & structural**
- **prayed about**
& worked against
- **done & left undone**
- **an event & cumulative**
- **forgivable**
***but* ineradicable**

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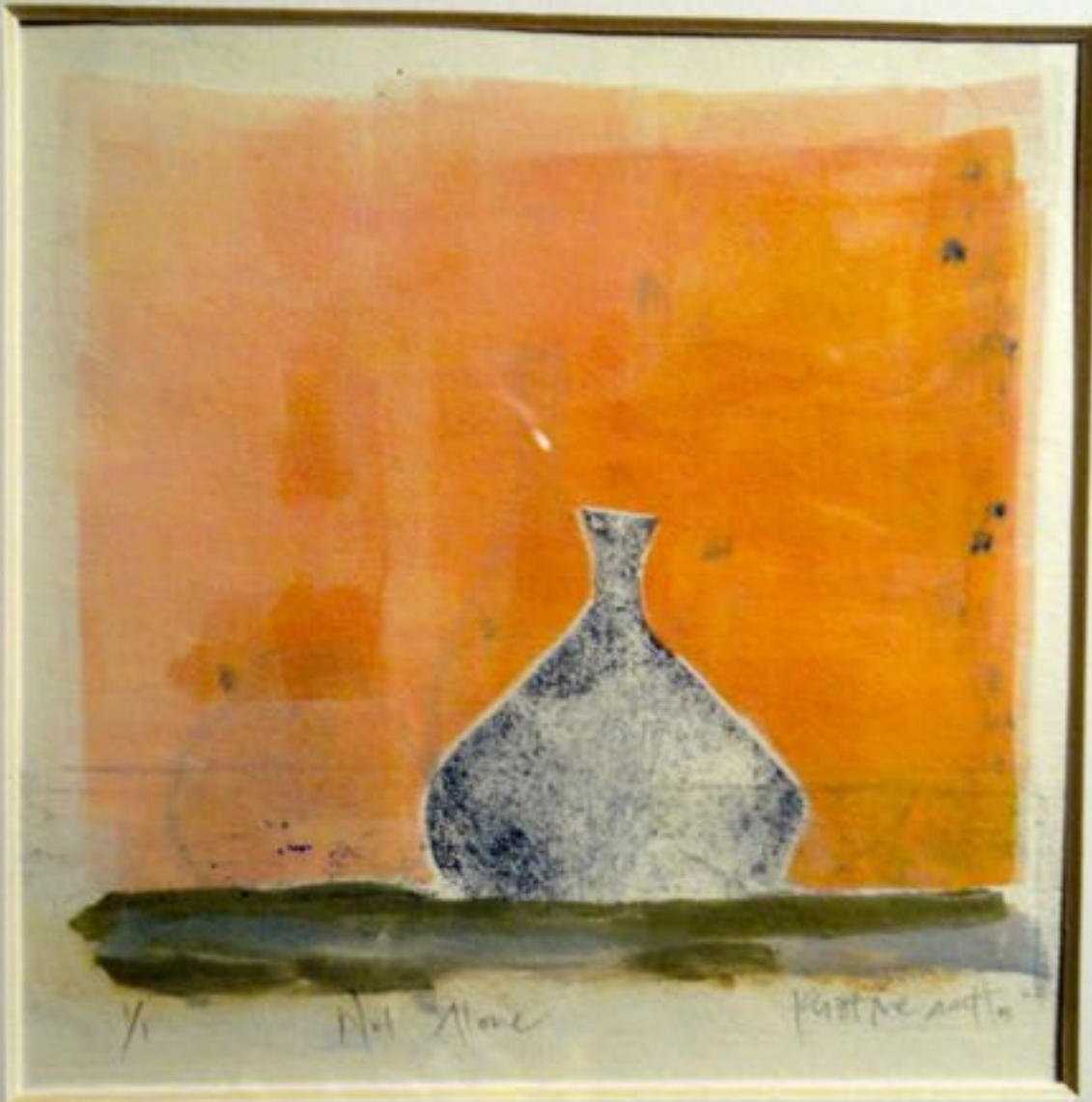
- **certainty of need: vv. 17-22**
- **fragility of faith: vv. 23-24**

“I believe; help my unbelief.”



Mark 9







~ Derek Walcott

**Break a vase, and the love that
reassembles the fragments
is stronger than that love
which took its
symmetry for granted
when it was whole.**

Derek Walcott

The work of
re-creation and rebuilding
is **greater** than
the work of
creation and building.

Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*. Translated by J.A.O. Preus.
(St. Louis: Concordia, 1989): 154.

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creative disruption

begins with the recognition
that our world has
departed devastatingly
from God's divine design;
all things are not right
between our selves and:

CREATION

CREATOR

OUR OWN SELVES

ONE ANOTHER.

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LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES

The turning point:

Mark 8:27-30

Mark's
Gospel
2015

“Then he began to teach them that the **Son of Man** must undergo great suffering...”



Mark 8:31



There are **two** major (and regrettably common) **mistakes** Augustine wants us to avoid. One is the lure of **utopianism**. This is the mistake of thinking that we can produce a human society that will solve our problems and bring about the kingdom of God on earth. This was the basic error of both Marxism and 19th-century liberalism.

The other error, equally disastrous, is **cynicism**. This creeps up on us as we see ever-present evil. We withdraw into our own self-contained circle of contentment, which can just as well be a pious holy huddle as a secular skeptics club.

~Timothy George

**Humans cannot be
justified before God
by their own powers,
merits, or
works.**

Augustana IV

²⁶ Jesus “also said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if someone would **scatter seed** on the ground,
²⁷and would sleep and rise night and day,
and the seed would sprout and grow,
he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces
of itself, first the stalk,
then the head,
then the full grain
in the head.’”



Mark 4:26-28

“As for yourselves, beware: for they will hand you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them.”



Mark 13:9

“We, as Christians,
cannot tolerate
a bad situation
and keep quiet.

It is our duty to **act**,
to **speak**
and even **risk** our life.



Gudina Tumsa

Born: 1929

Martyred: July 28, 1979

**Ethiopian
Evangelical
Church
Mekane Yesus**
EECMY.org

1959	65,000
1999	2.5m
2009	5.1m
2015	6.5m



chaos

creative
disruption

complacency

ANHEUSER  BUSCH

Chief Officer for Disruptive Growth

creative disruption

mission-focused not self-indulgent
surgical not random
scalpel-like not sledgehammer
managed not untended
careful not reckless
prayerful not self-sufficient
systemic not atomistic
pruning not cutting
generative not destructive
oxygenizing not suffocating
life-giving not death-dealing
patient not instantaneous

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MILES DAVIS

COLUMBIA  
GUARANTEED HIGH FIDELITY

Kind of Blue

with Julian "Cannonball" Adderley

Paul Chambers

James Cobb

John Coltrane

Bill Evans

Wynton Kelly

Accompaniment

is all about a four-letter preposition:

WITH.

WITH-ness as our witness.

“We should not boast
or get puffed up.
Nor should we despise
or triumph **over** our neighbors
as if we were their god
or equal to God.”

Martin Luther, “Two Kinds of Righteousness”
Luther’s Works, vol. 31, p. 302

Imago Dei

*analogia
entis*

*analogia
relationis*

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“This last commandment, therefore, is not addressed to those whom the world considers wicked rogues, but precisely to the most upright—to people who wish to be commended as honest and virtuous because they have not offended against the preceding commandments.”

“Everyone tries to accumulate as much as he or she can, and lets others look out for themselves.”

- “clever tricks and shrewd tactics”
- “devised daily—under the guise of justice”
- “appearance of legality”
- “sharpest and shrewdest”
- “practice bribery through friendly connections”

- Main Character: **Jesus Christ**
- Key Figures: **insiders/outsideers**

Mark's Gospel

2015

- Temple curtain torn in two
top to bottom. v. 38
- “stood nearby opposite of him”
παρεστηκῶς ἐκ ἐναντίας v. 39

“Truly this man
was God’s Son.”



Mark 15



“Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime,

Therefore, we are saved by **hope**.

Nothing true or beautiful or good
makes complete sense

in any immediate context of history;

Therefore, we are saved by **faith**.

Nothing we do, however virtuous,
can be accomplished alone.

Therefore, we are saved by **love**.

Reinhold Niebuhr

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500
Voices
for
500
Years

Carnegie Hall
New York City
June 23-25

Jason.Thoms@concordia-NY.edu



**SOMETIMES THE
BEST EVANGELISM
IS SIMPLY TELLING
PEOPLE YOU'RE A
CHRISTIAN AND
THEN NOT BEING
A COMPLETE JERK.**

“In the day-to-day trenches
of adult life, there is actually no
such thing as atheism.
There is no such thing
as not worshipping.
Everybody worships.

Kenyon College Commencement 2005

“This is Water,”

David Foster Wallace (1962-2008)





Mark's Gospel

2015

