

“Familiarity & Caricature”
Mark 6:1-6
January 14, 2024
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

The Reading of the Word

This morning we turn to the Gospel of Mark.

And as we do, it might be a good time for me to review how we have approached our sermon series in the morning service for the past few years.

Generally speaking, we work through whole books of the Bible in our sermon series, from beginning to end, without skipping portions. This approach is rooted in our conviction that all of Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for us, as God’s people. [2 Timothy 3:16-17] This approach brings us to many portions of Scripture we are familiar with, but it also keeps us from skipping over the portions that challenge, confuse, or distress us. We’re forced to engage with such biblical texts, and that is good for us.

For almost the last three years we’ve combined this approach of whole-book preaching with a seasonal rotation through different portions of Scripture.

And so, while we still continue through whole books, we also move between different portions of Scripture throughout the year. In the fall, from September to about Christmas, we are in a book of the Old Testament. From Epiphany to around Pentecost, we are in a gospel. And from around Pentecost to the end of August, we are in an epistle. When the season changes, we pause one series, and go to the other, and we return to the previous book the next time that season comes around.

The past three falls we have been working through Deuteronomy and we’ll return to it again in September.

And now, as the new year begins, we return to the Gospel of Mark, right where we left off from it last year – beginning this morning in Mark 6.

And as we return to Mark, after a few months away, a little background can be helpful.

At this point in his gospel, Mark has told us that Jesus is the Messiah – the Son of God [1:1]. He’s told us about Jesus’s baptism, his preaching ministry, and his gathering of disciples to himself. He’s also told us about the mighty and miraculous works and healings that Jesus has performed, all testifying to his identity as the Son of God. And then, at the end of Mark 5, Jesus performed his greatest miracle recorded in the Gospel of Mark so far: he raised a little girl – Jairus’s daughter – from the dead.

Now, having performed this miracle to the astonishment and wonder of many, Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth – the place where he grew up.

With all that in mind, let's turn to our text: Mark 6:1-6.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God's Word for us this morning.

Mark writes:

^{6:1} He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ² And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands?" ³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴ And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." ⁵ And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And he marveled because of their unbelief.

And he went about among the villages teaching.

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

"All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let's pray ...

Prayer of Illumination

Lord, as we come to your Word,
we ask you to teach us the way of your statutes,
that we might keep it to the end.
Give us understanding, that we may follow your word
and observe it with our whole hearts.
Incline our hearts to your testimonies,
and not to our own selfish ends.
Turn our eyes and attention now from frivolous things,
and give us life through your word.
Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:33-34, 36-37]

Introduction

Our text this morning confronts us with a general truth that has serious spiritual implications.

In verse four Jesus cites what, in his day, was already a common proverb – a generally accepted truth [Edwards, 174]. But what we see in this passage is that that mundane ordinary truth, when applied to the things of God – when applied to the person of Jesus – could have cosmic and even eternally catastrophic implications.

So, this morning we're going to reflect on the general truth Jesus raises, consider its spiritual implications, and then ask how we can correct the problem in our own spiritual lives.

And as we do that, what we'll see is that because we are prone to caricature, when it comes to matters of faith – when it comes to things concerning Jesus – we need to hear from a range of people, who know what we do not know about who Jesus really is.

Let me say that again: Because we are prone to caricature, we need to hear from a range of people, who know what we don't know, about who Jesus really is.

That's what we see in our text, and so that's what we'll consider together this morning.

Caricature

So the first thing for us to consider is that we are prone to caricature.

More specifically, what we see here is that: High familiarity with a narrow aspect of a person can lead us to exclude other aspects of who they are from our thinking, and then to make a caricature of them in our minds.

That is, in many ways, the idea behind the proverb that Jesus cites. He says, in verse 4: “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.”

The idea is simple: Let's say there's a kid we all know in our hometown. Let's call him Jerry. Jerry is maybe a cute kid. We see him grow up. We see him maybe get into trouble sometimes as a child. We see him at church, doing the things kids do. We watch him go through the awkward stages of adolescence, and then grow into a young man. We're familiar with him. We all know his parents, his siblings, and so on. He's little Jerry. Hometown kid.

But now let's imagine we're ancient Israelites living in the little town of Anathoth ... and little Jerry – who now prefers to go by Jeremiah – starts telling us that the Lord has called him as a prophet, and that we all need to repent. His speeches may be learned and his words may be powerful ... but he doesn't quite seem to us like “the Prophet Jeremiah” ... he's little Jerry ... the boy who got into mischief as a kid, whose parents we had Sabbath dinner with sometimes ... we hired his brother last spring to help repair our barn. Even if we try, we struggle to really see him as a prophet of God.

Now, why is that?

Well, the dynamic seems to be that when we are highly familiar with a narrow aspect of a person, we may then tend to exclude other aspects of who they are, and so caricature them. With the prophet Jeremiah, as people from his hometown, we may be highly familiar with the youthful, familial, and informal aspects of his life – what we often call the “private” aspects of his life, and then we let that knowledge crowd out and exclude the formal or “public” aspects of who he is as a prophet of God.

And this is actually a really common tendency in our lives and relationships – maybe especially in our families.

As kids, if one or both of our parents work jobs where we don't actually see them at work ... then we can have trouble, if we're honest, even imagining them at those tasks. They may be highly competent at certain skills, or they might have significant authority in their workplace ... but we don't see them through that lens ... we see them as our mom or dad. In the family realm we are highly familiar with them, but if we're honest there's a whole other realm of their lives that we mainly exclude from our view of them. And then one day, we're brought to a work-related function with that parent ... and we see how their coworkers interact with them ... and it kind of throws us off. It doesn't seem to fit. And if we're willing to accept it, we may realize that in some ways we've caricatured that parent – we've reduced them to just the role they play in our own lives as a parent, excluding a whole dimension of who they really are from our thinking.

And this same dynamic can happen in other family relationships. It can happen between spouses if they aren't intentional about sharing the other aspects of their lives with one another over the years. It's something parents can do to their children as their children move into adulthood – they might ignore or disregard the ways their adult children have grown and matured, and they might treat them as children for longer than is really fair. Siblings do it to each other too.

In all sorts of ways we can do this to one another in our families and other close relationships: when we know the private, informal, or youthful aspects of a person – when that is highly familiar to us – we can tend to exclude the formal and even authoritative aspects of who they are.

Of course, the opposite is also true.

We each have many people in our lives who we see only in their formal, public role, and seeing their lives beyond that role can also throw us off. As children we see our teacher outside of the classroom ... or as adults we see our doctor or dentist walking with their spouse in the park ... and it throws us off. We knew they had a life outside that formal role ... but functionally, in our minds, we had narrowly reduced them to one role: to something of a caricature.

In all sorts of ways, high familiarity with a narrow aspect of a person can lead us to exclude other aspects of who they are, and caricature them. That's the dynamic behind the proverb that Jesus cites in verse 4: "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household."

That's the general pattern at work here.

But then, in our text, that general, kind of mundane truth results in a catastrophe of cosmic proportions. It results in people rejecting the Messiah of God.

That's what's happening here. Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, has come to Nazareth. In other towns crowds have gathered and been astounded at his mighty works and his teaching. But here ... we're told in verse three that the people "took offense at him." They question his teaching. They question his wisdom. They question his ability to perform miracles. That's what it says in verse two. And at the root of that questioning is their high familiarity with Jesus in a narrow aspect of

who he is. And that familiarity came both from their own experience of Jesus and also their experience of those who were supposed to be close to him – in this case his family.

The people of Nazareth knew Jesus's family. Nazareth was not a big town – likely no larger than 500 people. [Edwards, 169] They knew Jesus's family. And while they don't speak against his brothers and sisters in verse three ... the idea seems to be that knowing them, it doesn't exactly seem like they'd be brothers and sisters of the Son of God. They might have been fine. But in their view the people close to Jesus weren't impressive enough to justify an exalted view of Jesus.

More than that, some close to Jesus might have even seemed morally suspect to them. It's debatable, but the fact that they refer to Jesus as "the son of Mary" instead of "the son of Joseph" may have been a way of insinuating that Jesus was conceived illegitimately. It might have been a dig at Mary's moral integrity and reputation. [Edwards, 172] If those closest to Jesus – people like Mary – were morally suspect, then why entertain such grand claims about who Jesus is?

In addition to that, it seems likely that Jesus's family had spoken negatively about him to the people of Nazareth. That seems to be implied in verse four, and it makes sense in light of what we've read earlier in Mark's gospel. In Mark 3 we were told that Jesus's family, when they heard the sort of things Jesus was teaching, they believed Jesus was out of his mind. [Mark 3:21] A few verses later, Mary and Jesus's brothers show up where Jesus is [Mark 3:31] presumably to seize him and take him home because they think he's gone crazy [Mark 3:21] John, in his gospel, is clear that Jesus's brothers did not believe in Jesus during his earthly ministry. [John 7:5] And while Mary serves as a model of faith in so many ways, Mark's gospel implies that she at least went through a season of doubt during part of Jesus's ministry. Jesus's family thinks Jesus has gone mad – and people knew it. And so the people of Nazareth were also probably responding to the negative words they'd heard about Jesus from his family.

And so, this narrow, caricatured picture of Jesus the people of Nazareth have – seeing Jesus as only human, came from their assessment of those who seemed close to Jesus, and also the words of some who would seem to know Jesus, but had rejected his claims.

And people still do that sort of thing today.

Some people today look at those who seem close to Jesus ... and they find them unimpressive, just as the people of Nazareth found Jesus's siblings unimpressive. Or they find them morally suspect, just as the people of Nazareth might have viewed Mary. And they use that to dismiss Jesus himself.

Others today hear from people who used to be part of the Church but no longer are. Those people would seem to know what this Jesus is all about – right? And since they have dismissed him, those who listen to them also feel that they can dismiss Jesus without further investigation themselves – just as the people of Nazareth did.

Of course ... that's not a particularly fair or objective thing to do.

It's kind of like deciding to write a biography about someone, and basing it solely on the perspective of their ex-husband or ex-wife who left them for someone else. Their ex might tell you some things that are true and even insightful – but it's delusional to think you're getting an unbiased perspective from them.

In the same way, constructing a picture of Jesus only from the perspective of those who have walked away from him may contain real and even important truths about who Jesus is ... but it will not be a full picture of who he is.

Similarly, judging him by the traits of those who associate with him now can also be misleading if we fail to recognize the role he plays in their lives. Doctors spend lots of time with sick people. That doesn't mean they're making those people sick or approving of their sickness. Rather, they're with sick people because their job is to heal them. Jesus spends a lot of time with sinners. It doesn't mean he makes people sinful or approves of their sin. Rather, like a doctor, he is at work treating their sinfulness.

How have you formed a skewed or caricatured view of Jesus by your judgments of those close to him, or your listening to the words of those who have rejected him? And can you see that that is not the most accurate or truthful way to form a picture of someone?

Of course, other times our narrow views of who Jesus is are based more on our own personal experiences.

The people of Nazareth knew Jesus as “the carpenter” we read in verse three. They experienced Jesus in one way – as a manual laborer – and they decided that based on that, they could exclude the other things Jesus claimed to be.

Maybe you know Jesus in one way ... and it's led you to exclude other aspects of who he is.

This tendency can affect believers and unbelievers alike. [Our text supports that idea. Many of the people of Nazareth who are rejecting Jesus in this passage are unbelievers who likely remained unbelievers. No church was built in Nazareth until the fourth century. [Edwards, 169] But we also see this behavior here in unbelievers who will later believe – at least two of Jesus's brothers who reject him here will later become not just believers but leaders in the early Church. But then, this text reminds us that believers can struggle with this too. We heard of Mary's great faith just a few weeks ago, in the Christmas story. We will see her faith again when she gathers with believers in the Book of Acts [Acts 1:14]. Mary is a believer ... but even she is struggling with this tendency at this point in Jesus's ministry. Her narrow understanding of Jesus seems to have blinded her to other aspects of who Jesus is.]

Some of us see Jesus as Lord and Lawgiver and Judge ... but then we struggle to see him also as our Savior, our gentle Shepherd, and Friend. You can see him handing out his law. You can see him judging your failure to keep his commands. But you cannot picture him coming alongside you, in your struggles and sin. You cannot picture him releasing you of your guilt. You cannot picture him embracing you in love and grace. You are highly familiar with one aspect of who Jesus is – after all, he is a lawgiver and a judge – but you've used that to exclude other essential aspects of who he is – because he is also a Savior and a Friend to sinners.

Or maybe for you it's the other way around: You see Jesus as your Friend and Savior, but you can't really see him as a Judge or Lawgiver. You can't imagine he would tell you what to do with your life, or object to your choices or desires. But again, you too have a caricatured picture of Jesus

– you’re right that he is a Savior and Friend of sinners ... but you’ve used that to exclude other essential aspects of who he is – because he is also a Lawgiver and a Judge.

Other times, we might see Jesus as a professor or a program director in our lives ... but not as a true person we’re called to really interact with. He provides a framework for how we should live and what we should do – he gives us a worldview that works like no other ... but he’s not really a person we relate to directly. We assume we are engaged with God because we debate theology, or we serve in a ministry ... but we rarely actually relate to God directly in prayer, reflection, or by listening intently to his Word. Now, it’s not that God doesn’t want us to engage with him intellectually or in acts of service – he does. But he also calls us to engage with him relationally and personally ... but some of us can be tempted to exclude that aspect of who he is. [Peterson, 31]

If you’re a Christian ... do you see any of these tendencies in yourself?

Or, if you’re not a Christian, then maybe you see Jesus as the God of your cultural opponents ... but cannot believe that he is more than a partisan political mascot. Or, more positively, maybe you think of Jesus as One who helped a close friend when they were going through a hard time ... but you can’t really see him as more than a therapeutic crutch for certain people. Maybe you see him as the God of your parents, but can’t see him as God also to you, or people like you.

For Christians and non-Christians alike, when we feel highly familiar with one, narrow, aspect of who Jesus is, then like the people of Nazareth, we can be tempted to then exclude other aspects of who he is, and form a caricature of him in our hearts and minds. Which leads us either to reject him in unbelief, or, even if we do believe, to not know him as truly as we should.

That’s the problem our text raises for us.

Correction

What then is the solution?

How do we correct this tendency?

Now, at first glance, it may not appear that Mark really gives us an answer to that question in this passage. After all, there’s no real turnaround for the people of Nazareth described here.

But actually, if we zoom out a bit, then I think we do get indications of what the people of Nazareth could have done, and should have done, to know Jesus more truly.

And so, it may not be in these particular verses, but in the passages surrounding them – the passage before and the passage after – Mark offers us a correction to the error of the people of Nazareth.

And what we see from the context of this passage is that what we need is to hear from a range of people, who know what we do not know, about who Jesus really is.

And that again, an important spiritual truth that is rooted in a general truth.

When you are highly familiar with one aspect of who a person is, but you're missing other aspects of who they are, then one way to correct that is to hear from, and spend time with, other people, who know other sides of that person.

For example: It's not uncommon, when a loved one has died, that a family member – maybe the person's child, or grandchild ... will, maybe at the wake, or after the funeral ... speak to others who knew their loved one in a different way – who knew them as a friend, or as a co-worker, or as a childhood companion ... and they hear stories from them and learn new things about that loved one, and come away with a fuller picture – an expanded perspective – of who that loved one was.

And, of course, you don't need to wait until someone's dead for that. Other people can help give us a fuller picture of someone we know even now as they live.

A parent of an adult child, if they have eyes to see it, can get a fuller picture of their adult son or daughter as they see them interacting with a friend, or with a spouse, or one day with their own son or daughter. A spouse can see new sides of their husband or wife as they see them interact with their parent, or with a co-worker. The list can go on.

As C.S. Lewis observed, other people can often draw out aspects of those we are close to, that we ourselves cannot draw out – and so other people can help us more truly know a person we are close to, whether it's a friend, a parent, a spouse, a child, or someone else. [Lewis, 246]

Have you ever experienced that yourself?

Many of us have. And as C.S. Lewis points out, that experience is not limited to our relationships with other human beings. This dynamic is also true when it comes to how we each relate to Jesus Christ. [Lewis, 246]

And we see that possibility implied here in our text this morning.

Remember, Jesus didn't show up in Nazareth alone. Verse one tells us that when he went to his hometown, "his disciples followed with him." If the people of Nazareth were personally highly familiar with Jesus in his very human dimensions, then the disciples were personally familiar with Jesus in his Messianic dimensions. They had heard his teaching. They had seen people respond to him. They had seen him perform miracles. In fact, they were just coming from having seen Jesus raise a little girl from the dead! The stories they could tell!

If the people of Nazareth had sat down with Jesus's disciples and heard from them, then they could have learned new things about Jesus. They could have expanded their understanding of him – not to toss out what they already knew of him, but to add to it, and see him both as man and as Messiah – as the son of Mary and as the Son of God.

But they didn't do that. And so their view of Jesus remained truncated and caricatured.

But we still can. We can do what they did not. Here this morning, in the Church, are other Christians, who know, from their own lives, and from their own personal experience, different

aspects of who Jesus is. They have likely experienced Jesus in some ways that are different than you have – not in contradiction to your own experience ... but in addition to it. And so they have something to teach you. How much time have you spent hearing from the people around you about the Lord's work in their lives?

As we've already shared with you, Pastor Knox is working hard and pushing forward to start up a small group ministry here, with a soft launch of several small groups in April, and a full launch in September. He's recruiting leaders, and preparing to train them. And one of the reasons we're excited about the launch of this small group ministry is so that it can be a space where we can share with one another how the Lord is at work in our lives, and thus grow in our understanding and our vision of who Jesus is and what he does, by hearing about his work in one another's lives.

If you're a Christian, then you need that to grow in your faith, and to push back against the tendency to have too narrow of a view of your Lord and Savior.

And it's not just us adults who need that. Our young adults, and youth, and children need it too.

That's one thing I loved about working with RUF – our denomination's college ministry. We'd often get students who grew up in Christian homes. But as they became adults, they struggled in their faith. Often what they needed was not to learn fundamentally new things about Jesus, so much as to re-approach the same basic doctrine, but in connection with a new community of Christians, who might be different from their parents or their home church, but who were following the same Lord. And that experience strengthened and encouraged their faith, and gave them a fuller picture of who Jesus is. If you're an adult covenant child, then maybe that's the sort of thing you need right now as well.

As the youth pastor here for five years, I soon learned that often the youth I was working with had already heard the important truth they needed in a situation from their parents. But then they also needed to hear it again, maybe put a bit differently, from someone else, who wasn't their parent. And by hearing it from other believers, outside their home, it often sank in a little more deeply. Pastor Gutierrez and the adult volunteers of our youth ministry are dedicated to being part of that larger group of faithful believers who can speak to our youth about what they have seen and known and experienced about who Jesus is and what he has done, to strengthen and grow and mature our young people's faith.

And every week – every Sunday morning – largely unseen by most of us, a faithful team of Sunday school teachers spread throughout this building, into our classrooms, to meet with our covenant children of all ages, and to be those additional voices in their lives, telling them about our Lord – about who he is, and what he has done, as they know him and understand him themselves, serving as the voice of Jesus's disciples, recounting the mighty deeds of the Lord.

Our covenant children need the Church to expand their vision of who Jesus is. Our youth need the Church to expand their vision of who Jesus is. You need the Church to expand your vision of who Jesus is. We must not forget that, as Christians.

And if you're a non-Christian, you actually need that too. You need to hear from Christians – preferably from a variety of Christians – about this Jesus, and what he has done and is doing. Because the narrow vision you have of him – the caricature you may have of him – is not sufficient

for you to make a decision of cosmic and eternal significance. The people of Nazareth failed to listen to Jesus's disciples – to ask questions about their experiences and what they had seen Jesus do. Don't make the same mistake as them.

So one way to combat this tendency towards caricaturing Jesus is to hear from other Christians about what they have heard, and seen, and experienced of Jesus themselves.

And I should say ... you don't need to wait for us to launch a new ministry before you can experience some degree of that. You can do this without our help. Even today, around the lunch table, you can break the ice by sharing how the Lord has been working in your life. And then you can ask if anyone else is willing to share as well. Let's talk more with one another about what we have seen Jesus do, and what we see him doing even now.

That's one way we see in the context of our passage that we can push back against caricatures of Jesus.

The other way we see, placed alongside this text, is by looking not only to the experience of Christians in general, but to the testimony of the Apostles in particular.

And we see this when we look to the text that comes right after this one on Mark's gospel.

In the very next passage, Jesus calls and sends out the twelve, commissioning them to minister – to proclaim and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here the twelve Apostles are given special authority to teach others about Jesus. And the culmination of their ministry, in many ways, was the writing of the New Testament. In the New Testament we have the Apostolic teaching about who Jesus is, that was approved and commissioned by Jesus himself. The people of Nazareth may have disregarded the words of the Apostles ... but we can still listen to them. Because they give us God's own testimony about who Jesus is.

Where we tend towards shallow visions of Jesus, the New Testament gives us a deep picture of him from those who knew him best. Where we tend towards narrow visions of Jesus, only looking at him from one angle, the Bible confronts us with Jesus from many angles. We read there the story of his life not from one author – but four authors, in the four gospels. The implications of his life are explained to us not by one Christian but by seven different Christians who wrote the remainder of the New Testament. We get Jesus from at least nine different angles in the New Testament alone – and when you add the Old Testament we get even more.

God has given us the Bible to give us a fuller and deeper vision of who he is in general – as our Triune God – and who he is specifically in Jesus Christ. In the Bible we hear from a range of people, who know things about who God really is, and who Jesus Christ really is – things that we do not. And in the Scriptures, aided by the Holy Spirit, they share those things with us.

This is why we encourage daily Bible reading. This is why our liturgy is full of Scripture. This is why we spend so much time here, in every worship service, hearing from, reflecting on, and trying to take in and apply the Scriptures. It's why we preach through whole books of the Bible. And why we want to hear from a range of Scripture throughout the year. Because in the Scriptures we have

a fuller, deeper, and more accurate picture of who God is than we could ever come up with on our own.

We may be prone to caricature God and Jesus Christ – to make them narrow and two-dimensional in our minds. But in the Church and the Scriptures God has given us all we need to have a deep, robust, complex picture of who our Lord is, so that we can know him, and marvel at him – trust in him, and follow him.

Conclusion

Where do you need to pursue that more? Where do you tend to caricature, or flatten out, or dismiss God or Jesus Christ?

Your relationship to the Lord is of cosmic and eternal significance. Don't let it be thin, partial, and misleading. Seek to know the Lord as he truly is.

Talk to the people of God – the people gathered here this morning – talk to them about the Lord, and seek to learn from them things you don't yet know about Christ.

Turn to the Scriptures – the Bible you have access to all the time – turn to it, listen to it, read it, and seek to learn from it things about God that you don't yet truly know.

Know our Lord. Place your trust in him.

And then you will see more truly who he is, and what he is able to do in your life.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

- Bayer, Hans. Introduction and notes to Mark in *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Horne, Mark. *The Victory According to Mark: An Exposition of the Second Gospel*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003.
- Keller, Timothy. *Jesus the King*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2011.
- Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves* in a collection of four works titled *The Inspirational Works of C. S. Lewis* (New York, NY: Inspirational Press, copyright 1960, collection printed 1994)
- Leithart, Peter J. *The Gospel of Matthew Through New Eyes: Volume Two, Jesus as Israel*. Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2018.
- Peterson, Eugene H. *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Wright, N.T. *Mark for Everyone*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

Note: In my preaching I often cite and draw from a range of sources, which includes material from Christians within my theological tradition, Christians outside my theological tradition (in keeping with our church's core value of "Reformed Catholicity"), and also (following the Apostle Paul's example in Acts 17) non-Christians who are well outside of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. And so, when I cite an author or a source, that citation should not be understood or construed as me necessarily agreeing with, endorsing, or recommending to others anything else from that author or source, except for what I explicitly say I agree with, endorse, or recommend. When engaging with different materials and thinkers, all Christians must exercise wisdom and discernment to determine what is helpful, appropriate, and edifying for each person, taking into account their current needs, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.