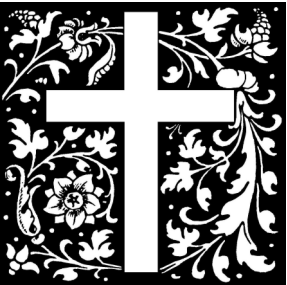




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# Christ Redeemer Church

Grace. Truth. Community.

Summer 2017



## THE GENEROSITY OF GOD

*Pastor Don Willeman, Th.M.*

For the past year we have been working our way through the Gospel of Mark. Central to Mark’s portrayal of the life of Christ is discipleship: What does it look like to follow Jesus? There are many things that we could say about this, but in Mark one thing stands out: generosity. Or as Jesus put it: giving and serving.

In Mark 10 we find a statement that would have been shocking to Jesus’s first century hearers. Many of his contemporaries would have expected the Messiah to come and take charge—to conquer Israel’s enemies by violent force. However, Jesus painted a totally different picture of how the Messiah would “rule” and so how His followers were to operate:

*And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

~Mark 10:42-45 (ESV)

Jesus tells us that His followers are to lead by serving and giving, even as He has for us.

This is the reason why we so emphasize a generous spirit in the life of CRC. In our relatively short history, we have put in thousands of hours in community service, and to date we have invested over \$1.3 million to help those in need and send out people to serve in the name of Christ—not only locally, but also all around the world. Moreover, it’s worth noting that this does not even take into account our care for those in and through the “regular ministry” of the church, or your individual generosity with friends and neighbors, which I trust is equally remarkable. As a pastor at CRC I am very encouraged by this.

I write this not so that we can rest on our laurels—it’s not about us! Rather, I write this as a point of encouragement for how God is at work among you. We do not do these things because we are so generous (we’re not in ourselves!) but because He is. We have a God who lavishly gives and lavishly serves. He unreservedly gave His life on the cross to ransom you from all your sins. And the mark of those who have experienced such generosity is, likewise, generosity.

In light of this, I encourage you to drink deeply from His generosity to you, and so, give and serve all the more.

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- Is Our Picture of Jesus Wrong?
- Friends In Focus: Service in Haiti
- Dartmouth Student Spotlight
- The Kingdom Perspective

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 11-13	Vacation Bible School, Quechee Church
July 12	Community Service Day
July 18-21	Summer Celebration Camp in Hanover (VBS)
July 23	Annual Picnic at Storrs Pond
Aug 6-11	Ocean City Youth Retreat
Aug 18-19	Father-Son Campout
Sept 10	Sunday School Breakfast
Sept 17	CRC Fall Cookout



2017 Women’s Retreat



### GIVING A REASON FOR THE HOPE

The New Testament assumes that a disciple is someone of the thinking type—someone engaged in the very difficult work of thinking through the reasons for and implications of one’s faith. Peter admonishes his readers to always be ready to give a “reason for the hope that is within.” It is not enough for Christians to experience the hope, but they must also be able to understand and explain it. Such an explanation of one’s faith has been called “apologetics,” from the Greek word “apologia,” meaning a “reasoned defense.” It was a word used in Roman law courts for a rational, legal argument. We must be reasonably versed in explaining the Bible and our experience of the grace of God.

This is likewise seen in the numerous times in the book of Acts that the Apostle Paul reasons with those he is evangelizing. He could only do this because he had done his homework. He knew the Scriptures; he had thought through the implications of Christ

and His teaching; he had thought through the assumptions of the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures into which he was speaking, and so was able to speak the gospel into that context.

So, how about you? Have you done your homework? Have you thought through the implications of Christ and his teachings for your life and the life of your family, friends and neighbors? Are you ready to give a reason for the hope within you?

**1 Peter 3:13-16**

*Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*





# IS OUR PICTURE OF JESUS ALL WRONG?

Lindsay Whaley

East of Jerusalem in the late fall of 1946, some Bedouin shepherds went looking for a stray goat. In their search, they entered a cave and found a large collection of pots, some of which contained rolled up sheets of papyrus. Here begins the remarkable story of the Dead Sea Scrolls, arguably the most important archaeological find of the last century. Slowed by the shepherds’ uncertainty about the significance of their find and the outbreak of the Israeli-Arab war, it would take nearly another decade for archaeologists to excavate the area and retrieve the remaining treasures—clay jars, linen cloth, coins, graves and most importantly, thousands of ancient documents dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

The Dead Sea scrolls have proven to be invaluable for a variety of reasons. As one example, they have supplied key evidence for the dating of the book of Daniel. The traditional date for Daniel was the sixth century BC during the Jewish exile in Babylon. The book was recognized to be prophecy and to anticipate the fall of Babylon as a political superpower, as well as the rise of the Persians, Greeks and Romans in succession. At the time of the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, however, that traditional understanding had been largely supplanted by an alternative view. Most biblical scholars argued that Daniel was written far more recently—in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC during the time of fading Greek supremacy. Therefore, it was not a prophetic text at all, but rather a historical book that was composed as though it were prophecy. Under this view, Daniel did not actually predict the succession of empires. Rather a different author who already had historical knowledge of the fall of Babylon and Persia could sense, in his current situation, the impending fall of the Greek empire with Rome waiting in the wings to fill the power vacuum. However, the Aramaic language used in the Dead Sea scrolls—which is from the time period proposed under this alternative view—is much different than the Aramaic found in Daniel. The linguistic

evidence from the Dead Sea scrolls, therefore, support the idea that Jewish groups of this era were involved in a communal sharing of property and wealth. They argued that such a practice ran counter to everything we could reconstruct about this period of Judaism. As it turns out, the 1<sup>st</sup> century community that preserved and wrote the Dead Sea scrolls describe themselves as being involved in just these sorts of practices.

As illuminating as the Dead Sea scrolls have been for biblical scholarship, their discovery has had one unanticipated, and less helpful, consequence. For the last 65 years, there is a palpable thirst in both the scholarly community and in the public for the Next Great Find, a discovery that will utterly transform our perspective on the time in which Jesus lived. As a result, every couple of years an archaeological discovery is announced with a promise that it is going to “revolutionize” our understanding of Christianity. This generates a fear that what we think we know about Jesus of Nazareth may be off-base because our knowledge is rooted in the incomplete record of him provided in the New Testament and other early texts from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

Take, for instance, the brouhaha around the Gospel of Mary Magdalene. In September of 2012, with carefully orchestrated publicity, Harvard professor Karen King introduced the world to a Coptic (i.e. a variety of the Egyptian language) papyrus fragment that depicted Jesus as having a wife. Within days, the New York Times, the Smithsonian, the Telegraph, network news and other media outlets had run stories on the fragment, all with the subtext that the historical figure of Jesus might need some serious reinterpretation.

Through all the hype, Prof. King herself was careful to insist that the fragment provided no actual evidence for whether Jesus was married since she dated it to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, some 200 years after Jesus lived. Her position was that the fragment was a Coptic translation of a Greek original that

dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Its importance, then, was in demonstrating that some early Christians thought Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. Presumably, they were raising the issue to combat the idea that true discipleship required celibacy and, as she said later that year, “to recapture the pleasures of sexuality.” She claims that the voice of these Christians was ultimately silenced by more dominant views, but the newly found fragment had given them voice once again and underscored that the early Christian community was far from uniform in its beliefs.

Five years later, the initial promise that the Gospel of Mary Magdalene would require rewriting parts of early Christian history has rung hollow. In fact, most experts now believe the document to be a fake (not at the hand of Karen King, but a clever forger who knew how to make a quick dollar on the antiquities market). Prof. King herself disagrees, still arguing that the fragment represents a translation of a second century text. However, she now concedes that the fragment itself should be dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century AD rather than her original claim that it was from three hundred years earlier. This to say, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene is not the Next Great Find. Not even close.

Next year, or the year after, there will be another discovery that is touted as revolutionizing what we know about Jesus or about early Christianity. If true, that would indeed be thrilling but it is not likely. The fact of the matter is that what has come down through the ages in the New Testament texts is the most complete and reliable information that we will ever have. And in those rare cases—like the Dead Sea scrolls—when we have unearthed something truly revolutionary, it has only confirmed the picture of Jesus’s world that is provided in the words of scripture. It is a good reminder of the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2: “So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.”

*Lindsay Whaley is a professor of Classics & Linguistics at Dartmouth College. He is a founding member of CRC and serves as an elder.*

## Friends in Focus JESSIE WHITMAN

I love surprises. I love the intentionality and care that goes into creating a good surprise. I love that it takes thoughtfulness and a true knowledge of a person to formulate the perfect surprise. I’ve seen some pretty good surprises in my day: great birthday surprise parties, long-distance surprise visitors, and awesomely creative engagement surprise stories. However, I’m pretty sure that the one



who is best at surprising, who is constantly making hearts leap and bringing that jaw-dropping amazement to hearts is God. What a surprise it is to hear that true, life-giving grace exists. What a shocking truth to know that the God of the universe looked on His sinful, broken, disgraced, and wandering creation with compassion. What a surprising truth to find that He chose to enter into our brokenness and mend it perfectly. I’m so thankful to have been “in” on the surprising truth of the gospel since childhood. I’m thankful for a family where I was exposed to Christ’s atoning sacrifice even as a young child. I’m thankful, too, that even in moments of brokenness and hardship for our family, we were con-

stantly encouraged to hold onto the surprising truths of the Bible, that God is in the business of taking brokenness and making it new.

As an adult, I’m continuing to be surprised by God. I’m surprised by the goodness He shows by providing me with meaningful work as a teacher and opportunities to love and serve families in this capacity. I’m constantly thankful for the surprising ways in which He is at work in His body, the church. The church family at CRC has blessed me in countless ways over the nearly eight years that I’ve been attending. What a gift to have a whole body, a gigantic family, of believers to walk this life of faith with! And the surprises continue to come. As I learn more about God through sharing life with other believers and participating in the teaching and ministries at CRC, I am constantly seeing new facets of the truth of the gospel and how it impacts every aspect of my life. I’ve been given opportunities to experience God’s surprising work in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, by working as a teacher and caregiver at a school and orphanage there. The contrasting truths of spiritual wealth and physical poverty have been heart-breaking and awe-inspiring surprises for me to struggle with. I’m keen to dig deeper into the surprises that God has planned down the road and I’m excited to have a church family to share this awe and wonder with!

*Jessie Whitman, a New Hampshire native, is a teacher and a member at CRC. She spends her summers teaching in Haiti and has served in children’s and youth ministries at CRC.*



## Students in the Spotlight EMMA SISSON

As a student at Dartmouth, I studied history and education. I’ve lived all over the South, and right now claim Memphis, Tennessee, as my hometown. I’m a diehard Dallas Cowboys fan and love to run. I grew up in a Christian home; while I was baptized in 5th grade, I consider no one moment to be my “conversion.” Rather, God has drawn me closer to him over the years, and my faith has grown with each stage of my life. When I was in high school, I was involved in a wonderful bible study that allowed me to think critically about my faith and how a Christian worldview responds to the brokenness of the world. Coming to Dartmouth has been an amazing blessing, through which God has proven his infinite grace and love every day. I’ve had the opportunity to develop a group of faithful friends on campus, as well as many mentors and friends off campus. This past fall, I worked for 12 weeks at Ledyard Charter School in Lebanon, NH, and had the opportunity to teach 40 students. It’s amazing what teaching has taught me about God. I’m all the more humbled by his patience and grace toward our sin, and I have just begun to learn what it is to love without expectation of a return and have joy in service. I’m thankful for the passion and gifts God has given me for education and I look forward to having my own classroom soon.

*Emma Sisson is a Dartmouth College senior and a student intern at CRC. She has served as a Sunday School Teacher and loves working with kids. The Ledyard Charter School awarded her as the Volunteer of the Year for 2016-2017.*

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