

Dear Lillian Methodist Church family,

I always found it remarkable how Jesus' first four disciples would so easily walk away from their livelihoods having apparently only known Him for just a few minutes, as one would naturally assume after reading Matthew 4 or Mark 1.

Over the past few years, I have learned to read the four gospels in a new and more logical, yet spiritually discerning fashion. I have learned that the four must not be read and understood independent of each other. Rather, each of the four gospel accounts of Jesus should be seen as four different witness statements, from four different witnesses, with four different points of view, all reporting on the same historical events. Each gospel records the same general events that occurred surrounding the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth, complete with varying details.

This variance gives rise to the false allegations of contradictory statements. The truth is, these variations in details are expected and attest to the authenticity of the statements. Every investigator knows that if four people say exactly the same thing, word for word, without some variation, they have made the whole thing up.

Instead, we find details that were omitted by one writer, included and expounded upon by another gospel writer. This is not contradiction. This is being complimentary. If one writer leaves a gap in providing certain information, another writer fills in that gap. Case in point, Jesus calling His first four disciples. A study of all four gospel accounts of their call reveals a timeline of encounters with Jesus that is simply not evident by reading Matthew's or Mark's accounts alone.

If we read the "calling of the four" from all four gospels, we find that John alone reports their very first contact with Jesus occurring several days, maybe weeks before the contact reported by Matthew and Mark. At their first meeting, Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, after he and John spent the better part of a whole day with Jesus. Andrew then introduced Peter to Jesus. This happened in Judea, near where John the Baptist was preaching.

Therefore, Andrew, John and Peter had already spent time with Jesus before their "call." No doubt they heard much about Jesus when they returned to

their homes in Galilee. No doubt they told James, brother of John, all about their encounter. Thus, the groundwork was already laid when Jesus saw them by the Sea of Galilee.

For added measure, Luke goes into great detail about that eventful morning on the seashore. The fact that Matthew and Mark give only a brief summary does not mean contradiction. It merely sets up the jigsaw puzzle, allowing John and Luke to supply the needed pieces. The gospels are faithful historical narrative. The people are real. The places are real. Its words are true.

Ultimately, the Bible was authored by the Holy Spirit, using the hands of its human writers. We don't worship the Bible. We worship the God revealed in the Bible. His self-revelation is ".....breathed out by God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16)

See y'all Sunday
Perry Cunningham
Lay Leader