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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](http://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 AMER ICAN 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

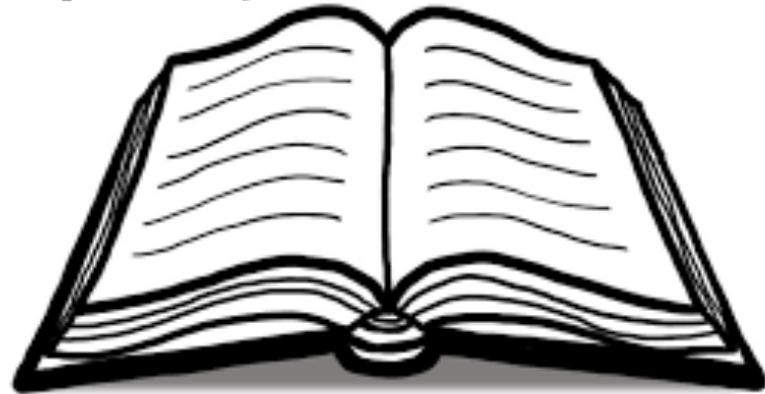
- **physical & metaphysical**
- **individual & structural**
- **prayed about**  
**& worked against**
- **done & left undone**
- **an event & cumulative**
- **forgivable**  
***but* ineradicable**

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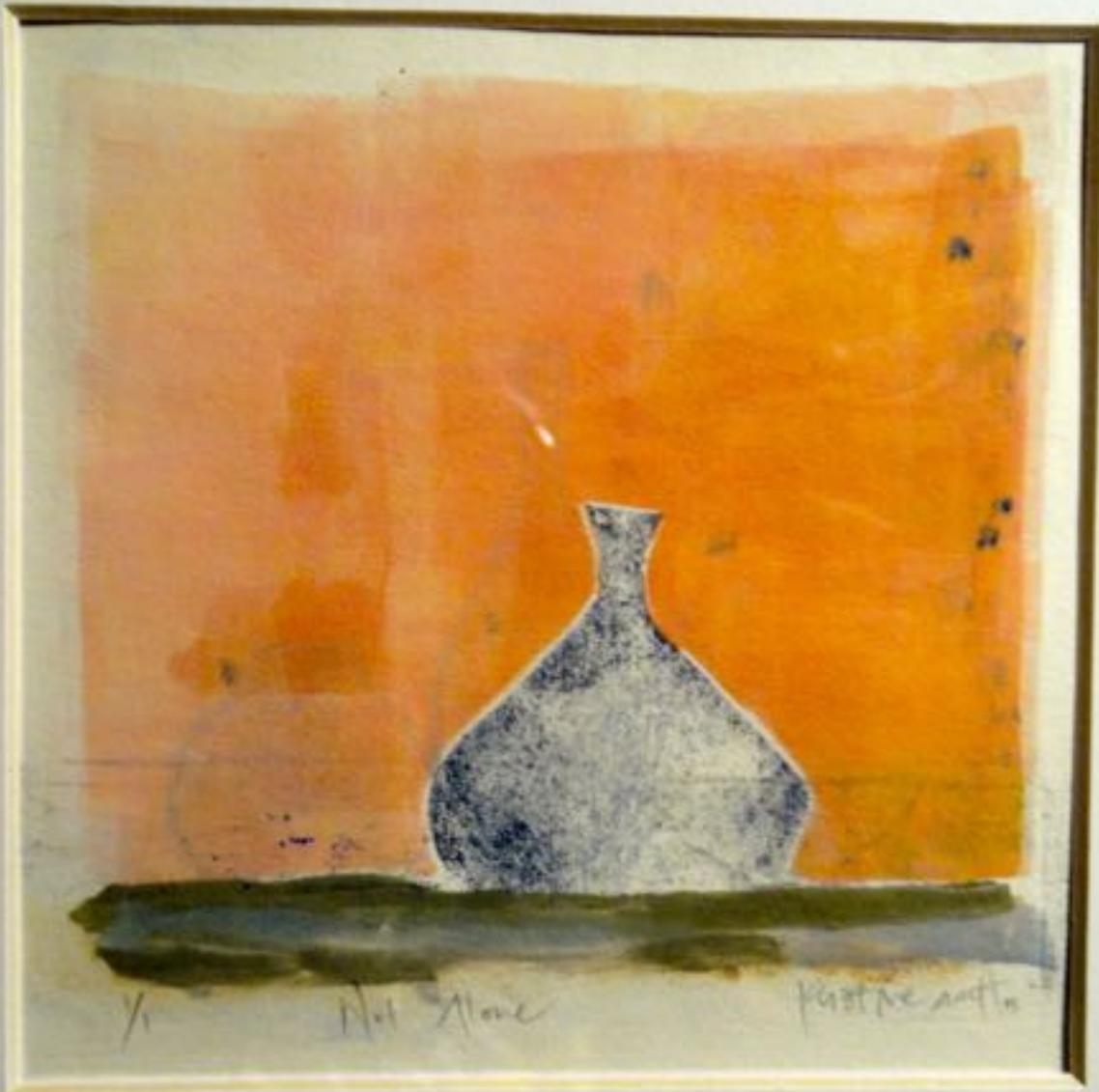
- **certainty of need: vv. 17-22**
- **fragility of faith: vv. 23-24**

“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:

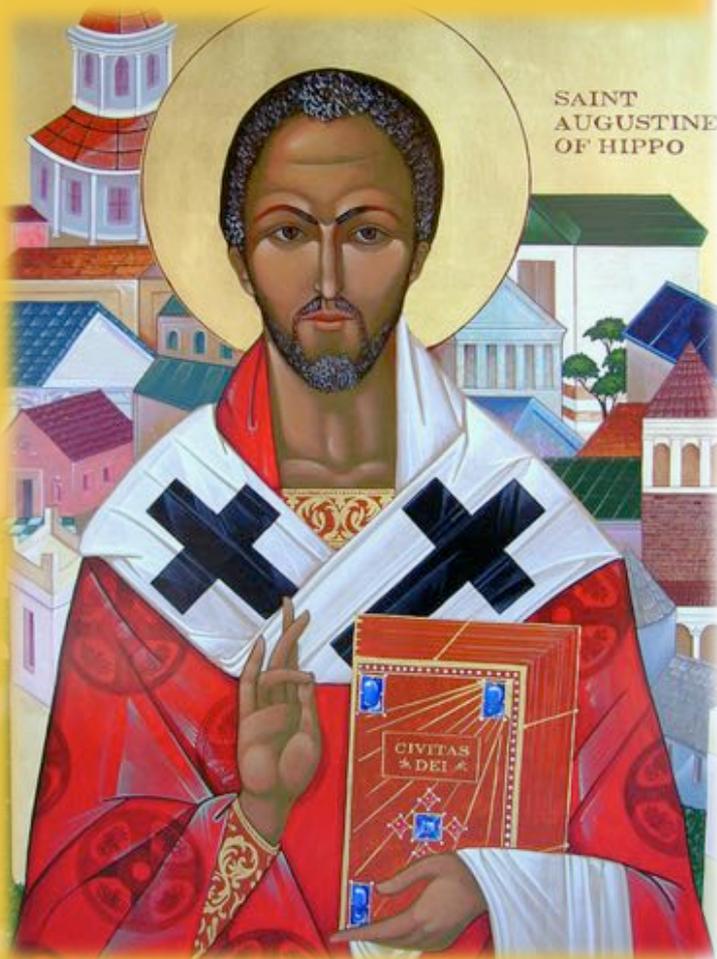
## Mark 8:27-30

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**

<sup>26</sup> Jesus “also said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if someone would **scatter seed** on the ground,  
<sup>27</sup>and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. <sup>28</sup>The 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

<b>1959</b>	<b>65,000</b>
<b>1999</b>	<b>2.5m</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>5.1m</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>6.5m</b>



chaos

creative  
disruption

complacency

ANHEUSER  BUSCH

Chief Officer for Disruptive Growth

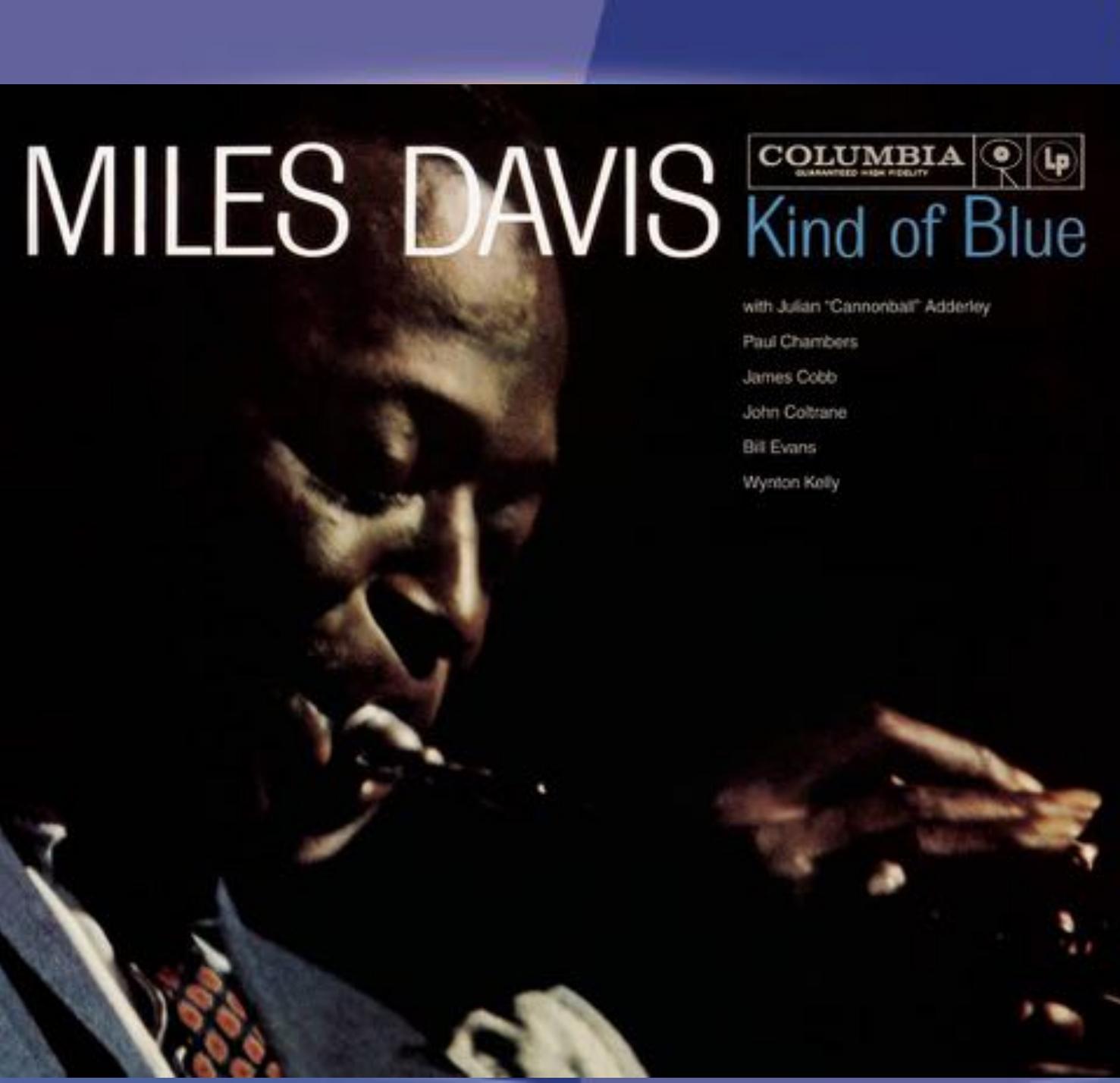
# creative disruption

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”

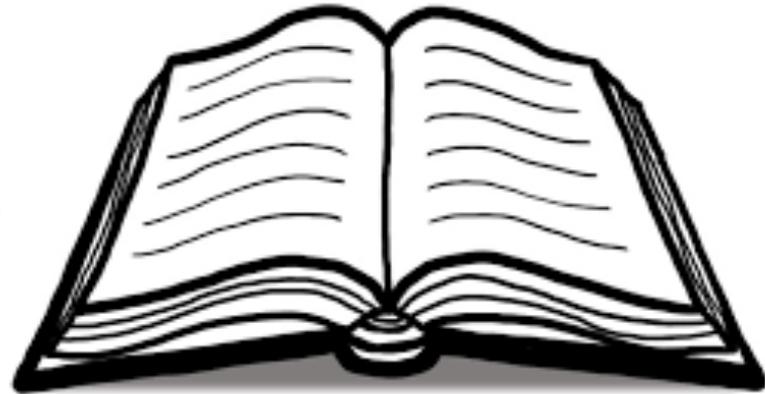
- Main Character: **Jesus Christ**
- Key Figures: **insiders/outsideers**

# 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

