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THO 3161 Gospel Interpretation Mark

The cultural world of the New Testament
(THO 3161 January 18 and 25, 2012)

Why?

Introduction

- Culture
 - “Culture is all about the distinctive, shared meanings and feelings characteristic of a given group at a certain time and place.” (p. 12)
- Cultural norms (p. 14-16)
 - Perception
 - Feeling
 - Acting
 - Believing
 - Admiring
 - Striving
- Meaningful human behavior shares cultural patterns and is performed in ways that are culturally meaningful
- We will be focusing on Mediterranean culture (and specific cultures within the Eastern Mediterranean)

Honour / Shame

- Honour (vs. dishonour)
 - Ascribed
 - Acquired
 - Challenge-Response
 - Failure: envy
- Shame (vs. shamelessness)
 - Example: Mark 15:27-32 (see also Luke 11:5-8)

Limited Good

- Limited good (vs. abundance): “A basic cue of perception”
- Rural vs. urban (cf. peasant)
- Patron – client relationships
 - Example: Mark 4:1-9 (cf. also Matt 20:1-16)

Personality

- Corporate personality (= dyadic) vs. Individual personality
 - Example: Mark 3:21-27
- Bodily action zones
 - Purposeful (= external body parts)
 - Self-expressive (= lips/ears)
 - Emotion-fused (= internal action)
 - Example: cf. Matt 5:21 ff.

Kinship

- Relationships derived from birth and marriage (a network of culturally defined family relationships)
- Marriage
 - Exogamous / Endogamous
 - Patrilocal
 - Female embeddedness in male honour
- Example: Mark 12:18-27

Purity

- Cultural rules concerning what is clean (acceptable) and unclean (unacceptable)
 - Subset: sacred / profane
- Restoration (purifying) / Anomalous (aberrant)
- Sanctifying space (e.g. Temple) and time (e.g., feasts)
- NB: There is a difference between purity / sin
- Example: Mark 7:1-8 (cf. Exod 30:19, 21: the Pharisees sought to extend priestly purity to the people)

Second half of the class

- Assume the following identity ascribed to you by a higher power (me!) and/or which you have acquired:
 1. High Priests
 2. Pharisees
 3. Essenes
 4. Zealots
 5. Retinue of the Roman governor of Judaea
 6. Women

Exercise

- Use the cultural "cues" identified by Malina: perception, feeling, action, believing, admiring, striving to "flesh out" your "identity".
- Identify the way in which your group lives out the values of
 - honour/shame,
 - limited good,
 - kinship, and
 - purity.
- Since corporate personality is a given in this culture, you will need to think about how you "relate" to members of your own group, as well as to the other groups, as well as to other individuals or groups in the first-century AD.
- Ensure that you can refer to actual events from history (Barrett) but also imagine events that you might be aware of from the New Testament (especially the Gospel of Mark).