group Bible Study – April 16, 2008

Read Mark chapters 2-3

Reflection: Patrick Nygren, group coordinator, nygrep@spu.edu

The other night, I watched the movie “I ♥ Huckabees” with some of my friends. For those of you who haven’t seen it, it’s a great movie. I’ll try not to ruin the whole movie, but there’s a scene from it that immediately reminded me of something crucial to how we understand the kingdom of God.

In the movie, Jason Schwartzman plays Albert Markovski, an environmental activist whose arch-rival Brad Stand (played by Jude Law) owns a mega-store (kind of like Wal-Mart). Albert feels like he is the victim of absurd coincidences, so he hires “existential detectives” to find out what these coincidences mean.

They begin to investigate Albert’s life, on the basis of their theory that everything is connected and related.

However, his detectives have an arch-nemesis who is simultaneously trying to convince Albert that the meaning of life is found in suffering and misery.

Ultimately, through a series of strange events, Albert sees Brad’s life completely destroyed. Brad’s complete dejection and hopelessness seems to mirror Albert’s, and it triggers an epiphany. Albert realizes that we are all connected in our suffering. Our humanity is what binds us together. We are creatures, part of creation, and we suffer along with all of creation (see Romans 8:22).

What does this mean for our lives?

In Mark, we see that Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God is for the suffering. It’s for the broken and the marginalized. In Mark 2:17 Jesus says “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” God is welcoming the forsaken into a new family.

As part of this family, we look forward to a new creation, when God will make all things well. We look forward to healing, we look forward to renewal, we look forward to reconciliation. This is a gospel of hope.

To proclaim this gospel, to be the people of God, means being broken with the broken, and carrying in our bodies and in our community the Spirit of love and hope that will one day defeat all brokenness.

Questions:

— Who are the broken and marginalized people in our own lives? How can we be broken with them?

— How are we connected to those who suffer? How could we be more connected than we are? What does it look like to bring hope to the suffering?

— In Mark 2 and 3, Jesus called his disciples out of a crowd of ordinary people, and ministered to those who were on the margins. Many saw this as strange. In what ways do we miss seeing who the people of God really are today?