



the Gospel of MARK

CHAPTER ONE

The Gospel of Mark is a fast-paced, action-packed account of the life of Jesus. However, we will be journeying through it very slowly! As we soak in the miracles and events of Jesus, may we be FORMED into his image. May the words on the pages illuminate the person of Christ, his character, his nature, and his example of how to TRULY be human. As we do this, we'll have to come face to face with Mark's central question: Was Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God?

Over the next few stations we'll be introduced to the person of Jesus, focusing JUST on Mark chapter 1 as we go through this Gospel slowly and prayerfully.

Before you move on, spend a moment or two in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to give you fresh eyes to see Jesus.

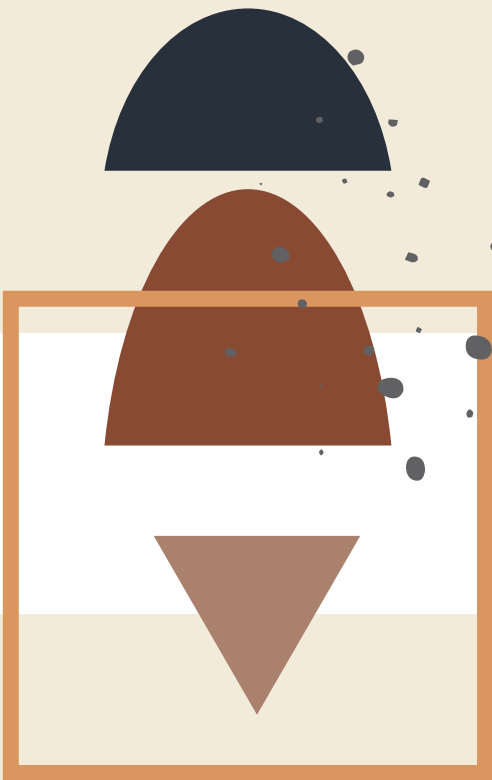


*TAKE THE PRAYER WALK
WITH YOU!*

this is GOOD NEWS

*THIS IS THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS THE
MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD.*

Mark 1:1



When was the last time you received good news?

I can remember a time when I received a call with a job opportunity that had not just been prayed for but PLEADED for in moments of desperation.

I wept with tears of joy and relief.

In today's age, we have ALL the news of the WHOLE world available at our fingertips at a moments notice. This is both convenient...and anxiety-inducing. Imagine the first century world in which Mark was writing. News had to travel long distances very slowly. When good news arrived it was often long anticipated and brought joy, relief, and change.

I am reminded of what we celebrate on Juneteenth in the US. The day when the final enslaved Americans received the news of their freedom. That is the type of good news that changes your whole life, identity, and future!

That is also the Good News Mark writes about. Mark wasn't thinking of "the Gospel" how we think about it today...simply Good News for my eternity. Mark's Gospel was Good News for TODAY, right now, and tomorrow. It was the type of news that changed EVERYTHING. How we see ourselves, how we see others and every decision we make.

How has the Gospel been Good News in your life?



REFLECT

*SPEND A FEW MOMENTS
REFLECTING ON THE GOSPEL.
DON'T ALLOW YOURSELF
TO BECOME COMPLACENT
TOWARDS THIS GOOD NEWS.
ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO FILL
YOU WITH JOY AND GRATITUDE.*

*HOW HAS THE GOSPEL
PERMEATED EVERY CORNER
OF YOUR MIND, HEART, AND
LIFE?*

*HOW HAS THE GOSPEL
INFLUENCED HOW YOU SEE
YOURSELF AND OTHERS?*

PREPARE the way



IT BEGAN JUST AS THE PROPHET ISAIAH HAD WRITTEN:

"LOOK, I AM SENDING MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, AND HE WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY. HE IS A VOICE SHOUTING IN THE WILDERNESS, PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD'S COMING! CLEAR THE ROAD FOR HIM!

THIS MESSENGER WAS JOHN THE BAPTIST... {HE} ANNOUNCED: "SOMEONE IS COMING SOON WHO IS GREATER THAN I AM - SO MUCH GREATER THAT I'M NOT EVEN WORTHY TO STOOP DOWN LIKE A SLAVE AND UNTIE THE STRAPS OF HIS SANDALS.

Mark 1:2-4, 7



dear God,

MAY MY LIFE AND MESSAGE
PREPARE THE WAY FOR
JESUS. LIKE JOHN, I KNOW
I AM UNWORTHY, BUT STILL
PRAY YOU WILL USE ME TO
POINT TO JESUS AND JESUS
ALONE. MAY MY WORDS
AND MY ACTIONS NOT PUT
ROADBLOCKS IN PEOPLE'S WAY
TO JESUS, BUT RATHER CLEAR
THE WAY FOR HIM TO MOVE
IN THEIR LIFE.

amen.

Think about it for a minute. God was at work in people's lives and hearts before Jesus arrived on the scene.

There was much preparation that needed to be made in order for many to receive the Good News of Jesus' message with gladness and openness.

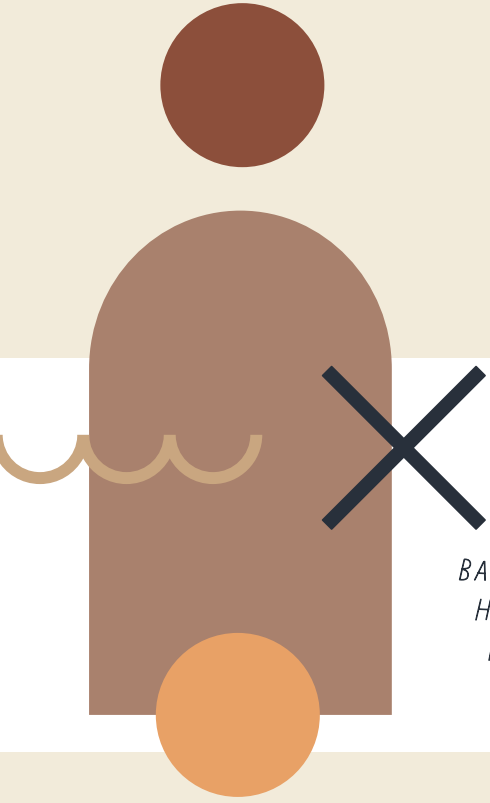
John was a "voice shouting in the wilderness"...quite literally. Let's face it. Although it looks beautiful on the Central Coast, sometimes it's WILD out there. The world we live in is a wilderness too. What are the voices that are shouting in OUR wilderness? Spend a few moments pondering that.

John's role in the Gospel was that of preparer. In many ways, that is our role too. We are not Jesus. We are not the savior. Yet, we do have an important role to play in God's work here.

Think about a person or people who seem far from God at the moment. God is already at work in their lives. Do you believe it? God is calling to them, drawing them to himself. He is using people and circumstances to reveal himself to them. It is safe to assume that God is already at work. Look for where he is already at work and join him.

How are our words and lives preparing the way for Jesus to move in the wilderness?

BAPTISM in the Spirit



[JOHN] WAS IN THE WILDERNESS AND PREACHED THAT THE PEOPLE SHOULD BE BAPTIZED TO SHOW THEY HAD REPENTED OF THEIR SINS AND TURNED TO GOD TO BE FORGIVEN. JOHN ANNOUNCED, "I BAPTIZE YOU WITH WATER, BUT HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT! ONE DAY JESUS CAME FROM NAZARETH IN GALILEE, AND JOHN BAPTIZED HIM IN THE JORDAN RIVER. AS JESUS CAME UP OUT OF THE WATER, HE SAW THE HEAVENS SPLITTING APART AND THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDING LIKE A DOVE. AND A VOICE FROM HEAVEN SAID, "YOU ARE MY DEARLY LOVED SON, AND YOU BRING ME GREAT JOY."

Mark 1:4, 8-11

As part of the preparation for the arrival of Jesus, John baptized many in the Jordan River. We've come to associate baptism solely with the movement of Christianity, but it existed before Jesus. In fact, as we read in this passage, Jesus was baptized himself.

To the Jews at the time, baptism was a purification ceremony. Ritual baths were a normal part of Jewish life as being "spiritually clean" was important for integrating into the society of faith. It was a symbol of repentance and of being accepted fully into the Jewish community, especially for converts. John was baptizing any Jew who was desiring to "get right with God". This was an act of preparation for what would happen when Jesus arrived.

When Jesus is baptized, something truly remarkable happens. Jesus' divine connection to the Father is revealed in a beautifully terrifying moment. Spend a minute picturing the scene in your mind and allow it to guide your heart to reverence for Christ.

John baptized with water; however, he claims that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Baptism is still a ceremony, celebrating a repented life "getting right" with God. It's symbolic...and yet, it's also something more. It's a holy moment where the divine brushes earth. Mere water doesn't purify...but the Holy Spirit cleanses WHOLLY. Have you been baptized? If so, spend a minute or two reflecting on your baptism. How did it mark your life? If you haven't been baptized, spend a minute reflecting on why that is? Ask God how He might want to shape you through this meaningful practice?



dear God,

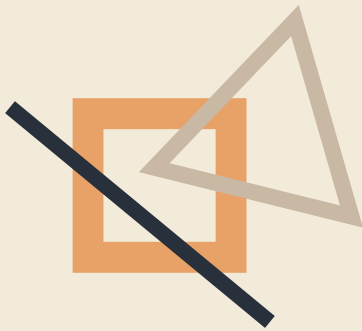
THANK YOU FOR THE BEAUTY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM. HOLY SPIRIT, THANK YOU FOR YOUR CLEANSING POWER IN MY LIFE AND HEART. JESUS, I RECOGNIZE YOUR DIVINITY AND TRUE IDENTITY, REVEALED FOR THE FIRST TIME AT YOUR BAPTISM. YOU ARE AWESOME AND WORTHY TO BE PRAISED!

amen.

the kingdom of God IS NEAR!

LATER ON, AFTER JOHN WAS ARRESTED, JESUS WENT INTO GALILEE, WHERE HE PREACHED GOD'S GOOD NEWS. "THE TIME PROMISED BY GOD HAS COME AT LAST!" HE ANNOUNCED. "THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR! REPENT OF YOUR SINS AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS!"

Mark 1: 14-15



dear God,

GIVE ME EYES TO SEE YOUR
KINGDOM BREAKING THROUGH.
SHOW ME THE EVIDENCE
OF ITS NEARNESS. MAY I
BE A SIGNPOST FOR YOUR
KINGDOM POINTING OTHERS
TO ITS PROXIMITY. GIVE ME
A PROPHETIC IMAGINATION
TO SEE THIS WORLD
THROUGH THE LENS OF YOUR
KINGDOM AND MAY MY ONLY
RESPONSE TO IT BE GENUINE
REPENTANCE AND BELIEF!

amen.

Throughout the centuries, there have been many words, phrases, or concepts that have been attributed to Jesus...whether he said them or not. Have you ever wondered, what was the central message Jesus preached? What was the “thesis statement” of his life? Well...look no further. Here it is. Jesus’ main memorandum:

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR!

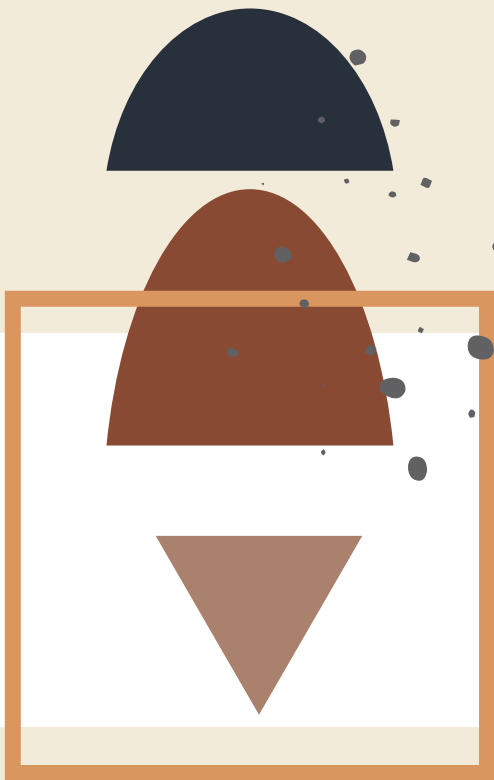
Does that surprise you at all? What does the world see as Jesus’ central message? What assumptions do people make about Jesus’ intentions or directives? As ambassadors of Christ, what is the central message we preach?

Often, our message centers around the Good News for eternity, but doesn’t often translate to the here and now. Does our life and our message proclaim that the kingdom of God is NEAR? Close at hand? Or is it something far off, unattainable this side of eternity?

Yes, the message of Jesus is for eternity...but to Jesus, eternity wasn’t just QUANTITY of life...but QUALITY of life as well. And that life...the one promised by God long ago, has come at last!

Do you believe it? There are many signs of the Kingdom breaking through that we’ll see throughout Mark. Here are a few to keep an eye out for...in the text, and in our world today: Healing, Deliverance, Prophecy, Justice (making wrong things right).

What is our response to the nearness of the kingdom? As Jesus himself said, repent and believe!



come and FOLLOW

ONE DAY AS JESUS WAS WALKING ALONG THE SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE, HE SAW SIMON AND HIS BROTHER ANDREW THROWING A NET INTO THE WATER, FOR THEY FISHED FOR A LIVING. JESUS CALLED OUT TO THEM, "COME, FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO FISH FOR PEOPLE!" AND THEY LEFT THEIR NETS AT ONCE AND FOLLOWED HIM.

Mark 1: 16-18

“Come, Follow Me.”

These might be the single most important words spoken in the history of humankind.

Wow. I know. That’s quite a statement. But it’s true.

This invitation from Jesus was not an invitation to convert to Christianity. It wasn’t an invitation to pray a prayer or subscribe to a set of beliefs. Jesus’ invitation was exactly what it sounds like. Come. Follow.

In our society, we don’t quite understand this. Latest surveys state that 63% of the US identify themselves as a Christian... yet only 4% are actually following him. Ouch.

This invitation was an appeal to become an apprentice. As John Mark Comer puts it, “Apprenticeship to Jesus is a whole-life process of being with Jesus for the purpose of becoming like him and carrying his work in the world. It’s a lifelong journey in which we gradually learn to say and do the kinds of things Jesus said and did as we apprentice under him in every facet of our lives.”

Many were drawn to Jesus, yet few apprenticed under him. The reality is, like these first disciples in Mark, apprenticeship to Jesus WILL cost something. Following Jesus always requires leaving something behind. However, as we will find out in Mark, the cost is always worth it.



dear God,

I DON'T WANT TO BE A MERE SPECTATOR. I DON'T WANT TO OBSERVE YOU FROM A DISTANCE. I WANT TO APPRENTICE UNDER YOU...TO FOLLOW YOU SO CLOSELY THAT I'M COVERED IN YOUR DUST. SHOW ME WHAT MUST BE LEFT BEHIND. POINT OUT THE DEAD WEIGHT THAT IS HINDERING ME FROM TRULY FOLLOWING YOU. I WILL ANSWER YOUR INVITATION WITH , YES!

amen.

Jesus is the AUTHOR-ITY



THE PEOPLE WERE AMAZED AT HIS TEACHING, FOR HE TAUGHT WITH REAL AUTHORITY - QUITE UNLIKE THE TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS LAW.

SUDDENLY, A MAN IN THE SYNAGOGUE WHO WAS POSSESSED BY AN EVIL SPIRIT CRIED OUT, "WHY ARE YOU INTERFERING WITH US, JESUS OF NAZARETH? HAVE YOU COME TO DESTROY US? I KNOW WHO YOU ARE - THE HOLY ONE OF GOD!" BUT JESUS REPRIMANDED HIM. "BE QUIET! COME OUT OF THE MAN," HE ORDERED. AT THAT, THE EVIL SPIRIT SCREAMED, THREW THE MAN INTO A CONVULSION, AND THEN CAME OUT OF HIM.

AMAZEMENT GRIPPED THE AUDIENCE, AND THEY BEGAN TO DISCUSS WHAT HAD HAPPENED. "WHAT SORT OF NEW TEACHING IS THIS?" THEY ASKED EXCITEDLY. "IT HAS SUCH AUTHORITY! EVEN EVIL SPIRITS OBEY HIS ORDERS!"

Mark 1: 22-27



dear God,

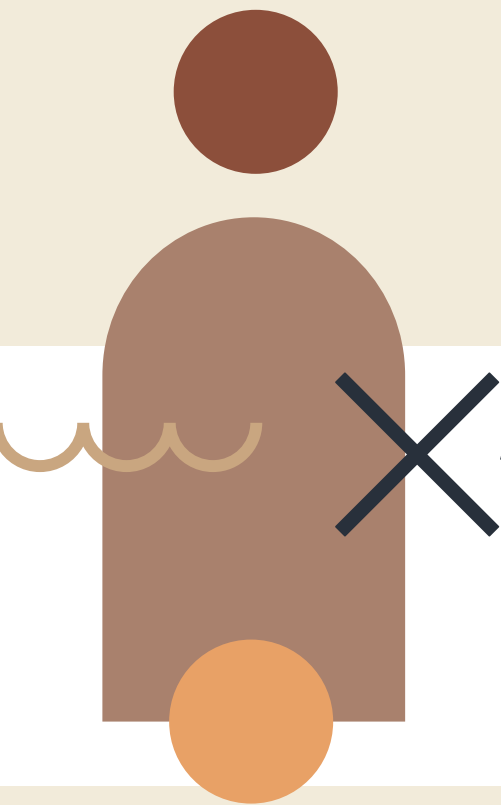
*OPEN MY EYES TO SEE WHO
JESUS REALLY IS. NOT
JUST A GOOD IDEA OR WISE
TEACHER... BUT THE AUTHOR
OF MY LIFE. THEREFORE I
RECOGNIZE AND SUBMIT TO
YOUR AUTHORITY. CAST OUT
THE DARKNESS IN MY WORLD
AND IN MY HEART. I GIVE
YOU PERMISSION.*

amen.

Authority is going to be a common word attributed to Jesus in the book of Mark. One of the things that distinguished Jesus from all the other rabbis and teachers of religious law was his AUTHORITY. Why? Simply put, because Jesus is also the AUTHOR. If you like to read books...specifically fiction, you know the author has the authority over the story. I might not agree with an author's literary choice in their plot, but I am not the author...therefore, I don't have the authority to dictate the storyline.

As we see in this first miraculous event of Jesus' ministry recorded in Mark, Jesus even has authority over the darkness and evil of this world. Isn't it so fascinating that in Mark's gospel the first "person" to recognize Jesus' true identity is a demon?! This spirit knew exactly who Jesus was and he believed he had the power to destroy evil. YET, this spirit was unwilling to submit to Jesus' authority, until Jesus commanded him.

Do you know who Jesus is? Do you believe in him? So do the demons. So...the real question is: Have you submitted to his authority in your life? He's not going to force you into it. It's a beautiful choice offered to you with grace.



Jesus came to RESTORE

A MAN WITH LEPROSY CAME AND KNELT IN FRONT OF JESUS, BEGGING TO BE HEALED. IF YOU ARE WILLING, YOU CAN HEAL ME AND MAKE ME CLEAN," HE SAID. MOVED WITH COMPASSION, JESUS REACHED OUT AND TOUCHED HIM. "I AM WILLING," HE SAID. "BE HEALED!" INSTANTLY THE LEPROSY DISAPPEARED, AND THE MAN WAS HEALED.

Mark 1: 40-42

There is SO MUCH to unpack in this very personal and purposeful miracle healing from Jesus. In this short few verses we get a glimpse of Jesus' compassionate heart toward the least and forgotten of society. We see his WILLINGNESS to heal and to touch...even in the situation where touching should have made HIM unclean.

Take a closer look at this man's request. He is begging... "Heal me AND make me clean." At first glance these seem like the same request. However they are two separate asks. He wants physical healing...but he also wants to be restored into society and community. As a leper, he would have been declared "unclean"; shunned and forced from society. He would have been compelled to yell out, "UNCLEAN" if anyone got too close and he probably hadn't been touched or even talked to in a very long time. This was a lonely, disgraced existence.

And Jesus is moved with compassion.

He wants to see this man restored...not just physically, but spiritually and socially as well. He even gives him strict instructions so that he would be officially restored to society.

Jesus wants to see you restored as well! Physically. Spiritually. Relationally. Those are the things that happen when the kingdom of God comes near.



dear God,

RESTORE ME! SOMETIMES I FEEL UNTOUCHABLE OR LONELY OR BROKEN, JUST LIKE THIS MAN. I AM DESPERATE FOR YOUR TOUCH. I KNOW YOU HAVE THE POWER AND THE WILLINGNESS TO SEE MY LIFE RESTORED TO HOW YOU INTENDED LIFE TO BE. RESTORE ME LORD!

amen.