

Mark 1:1-13

Date: Sunday, 27 December 2020

Scripture: Mark 1:1-13

Sermon: The Beginning of the Good News

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Passage

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark 1:2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,

who will prepare your way,

3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight,’”

Mark 1:4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Mark 1:9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Mark 1:12 The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

Transcript

The Best Good News

Well, 2020 is almost over. What a year. Are you thinking, are you hoping that 2021 will be better? I am. Yes, there have been good things about this year even in the midst of difficulty but this year has been hard. What good news are you hoping to hear in 2021? Maybe, we hope that 2021 will bring the vaccine to our country so that things will go back to normal. Maybe, it's that we might see our family, our loved ones who are in another state or country. Maybe it's the news that interstate, international travel can happen. Maybe it's that you can finally come back to church without the fear of COVID.

Or maybe it's some other good news you're hoping for. I don't know what good news you're hoping for. But at church, we're starting our series in the gospel of Mark. The word "gospel" means "good news." The author, Mark, is telling us good news. What is the good news that Mark is telling us? We're told, in verse 1, aren't we, these words.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Mark 1:1 ESV)

The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ. And I want to be straight forward, up front right now. This is *the* ultimate good news that we can hear. Yes, maybe we will hear some good news next year. But nothing will compare to the good news that has happened, that we'll hear today in Mark.

Today, we will be focusing on the first thirteen verses of Mark's gospel. And we'll see the good news is all about Jesus. But what we see is that it relates to us as well. It's good news that affects you and me! I thought it would be good to show you from the passage that the good news about Jesus affects us in three ways. It shows that firstly, we are forgiven. Secondly, it shows that we are beloved. And thirdly, we are victorious.

Forgiven

Let's look at the first point, that good news tells us that we are forgiven. But let's look at verse 2, because Mark introduces us to a prophecy from Isaiah.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" (Mark 1:2-3 ESV)

Here is a prophesy made hundreds of years ago that God would send someone to prepare the way. There would be a messenger that would come to prepare the way for God and his glory to be revealed (Isaiah 40:5). Who is this messenger? Let's have a look at verse 4.

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4 ESV)

The messenger is John. What's the message that he's brought? John calls people to be baptised. Calling people to be baptised as a sign that they would repent. As a sign that they 'change their minds', turn their lives around. John is calling people to repent so that their sins would be forgiven. John is preparing the people for God's arrival. And he's telling them that they need to be forgiven of their sins.

Sometimes, when Rachel and I are invited to a wedding of a friend. We'll go to the reception. It's an opportunity for me to enjoy the food. It's often a joyous occasion. But before we can enjoy the food, we often wait for the bridal party. The groomsmen and the bridesmaids often come in. Preparing the way for the new husband and wife. The groomsmen and the bridesmaids prepare us for someone greater.

John the Baptist comes to prepare us for someone greater. Have a look at verses 6 to 8.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:6-8 ESV)

John prepares us for someone greater than himself. You know who arrives. It's Jesus Christ. And we're told he's greater and that he will baptise us with the Holy Spirit. What's so great about the Holy Spirit? If you've received the Holy Spirit, one of the things that shows is that you're forgiven. That's what Jesus came to do through his life, death and resurrection. That's the good news! If you put your faith in Jesus Christ, then you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in your heart, and you are forgiven. Brothers and sisters, I hope that we don't lose sight of how magnificent a message that is. The fact that we are baptised by the Holy Spirit. It means that we have the greatest gift, God himself. Our relationship with God!

I want to stop here for a moment. I want to lay down a challenge at this point. I wonder whether we take sin seriously? Often, when I preach about sin, I can see our eyes glaze over. "Oh, Justin's talking about sin. Time to tune out." But the Scriptures never take sin less seriously than God takes it. And it calls us to take it seriously. Let me show you one example. Paul, when he writes to the church in Rome, he talks about sin. He tells us that everyone is sinful, and in chapter 1 he describes what sin is like. If you don't think you're a sinner, listen to this list and tell me if you haven't been one of these (Romans 1:28-32).

A debased mind.

All manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.

Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

Gossipers, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

People who give approval to others who practice these things.

That's a terribly dark list. It's the types of the things that the people went out to John the Baptist to confess. Verse 5.

And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. (Mark 1:5 ESV)

Confessing isn't really something that is in vogue these days. But the Scriptures tells us that confessing is important (e.g. 1 John 1:9, James 5:16). Even if you're a Christian, we confess to our Heavenly Father to mend our relationship. He will always be our Heavenly Father, but we can be out of communion with him. Is confessing something that we do on a regular basis? Do we forgive others regularly from our hearts just as we are encouraged to do in the Lord's prayer? (Matthew 6:7-15).

The good news tells us that we're forgiven.

Beloved

But the good news also tells us that we're beloved by God. Let's have a look at verses 9-11.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:9-11 ESV)

One question that you might be asking is. Why did Jesus need to be baptised? Isn't he sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21)? Yes, Jesus is sinless. But we're told in the gospel of Matthew that Jesus had to be baptised in order to fulfil all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). In order that he may identify with us, in order that he might sympathise with us, he was baptised.

But I want to draw your attention to something that's really important. The fact that the Spirit descends upon him like a dove and the fact that God speaks personally to Jesus here in Mark 1. It's a picture of God choosing a servant and a king. A servant king. It's an illusion to the Old Testament. To two Old Testament passages. To Isaiah 42:1 where we're told that the Spirit will be put upon God's servant, and he will bring forth justice to the nations. It's also an illusion to Psalm 2 where God declares to a king that he is his son, I have begotten you. The nations will be Jesus' heritage, and the ends of the earth his possession.

Jesus Christ is special. God's beloved, only begotten son. God's king and servant. God's servant king. And that's great news for us! We have Jesus who rules but also serves us. The one who is strong, yet deals gently with the ignorant and wayward (Hebrews 5:2). That's the good news we have right here. Let me lay down a challenge. Are you finding yourself overburdened with life's cares and worries? Jesus Christ, God's beloved son, is there for you. The one who is gentle and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:28-30). He is able to walk with you. Even when our friends desert us, he will never leave us.

I once was at a wedding years ago, I can't even remember who the bride and groom were. But I remember the groom getting on his hands and knees to wash his bride's feet. It's kind of sweet, but awkward at the same time. But that's the kind of picture that we get of Jesus. But how many of you can say that you know of a leader, a ruler in the world who gets on their hands and knees and washes their disciples feet? How many leaders do you know would be willing to die for their followers? That's Jesus Christ, the servant king. That's the servant king we worship.

But for us who put our trust in Jesus Christ, beloved is also what we are called because of the good news of Jesus! Because it's a title that we are often referred to in the New Testament. Beloved! Beloved by God (Ro 12:19; 2 Cor 7:1; 12:19; Hebrews 6:9; 1 Peter 2:11; 4:12; 2 Peter 3:1, 8, 14, 17; 1 John 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11; Jude 3, 17, 20) Beloved by God because of what Christ has done for you. Because you have Christ's spirit in you. Do you see yourself at that? Beloved? Or do you think yourself as worthless? Do you condemn yourself? That's not what we are called. We are beloved. I want you to do something really strange. In a moment, I want you to turn to the person beside you and say to them, "You are beloved by God, you are a child of God." Go on!! And tomorrow get up in the morning and tell yourself that you are beloved by God. That's the good news of Jesus Christ.

Beloved Son of God, that we may be beloved.

Victorious

Finally, victorious. Let's look at verse 12-13.

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. (Mark 1:12-13 ESV)

What did Jesus Christ come to do? He came to defeat Satan. Jesus' battle wasn't a physical battle, it was a spiritual battle. He went out to the wilderness, and he fasted for forty days and forty nights.

Rachel has a number of cousins. And two of them in particular love their food. So they only eat one meal a day. It's just brelundinner. Just one meal. They're always hungry. Always asking, "What's for breakfast? What's for lunch? What's for dinner?" Jesus fasts for 40 days and forty nights. It's serious business. It's a spiritual battle.

That's what he came to do. The picture that we get of Jesus going out to the wilderness parallels Israel as they wander the wilderness for 40 years. Jesus Christ, like the nation of Israel, is God's first born son. But Jesus is unlike Israel. Israel failed to trust God at his word, they failed to enter the promised land the first time. But Jesus holds onto God's word.

Jesus going out to the wilderness is a picture of the spiritual battle that he will be victorious over Satan when he goes to the cross. Jesus Christ defeats Satan on the cross through his death and resurrection. Jesus is victorious. Victorious over death. He reverses the curse of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. That's great news. It's why we can sing "Joy to the World"

No more let sins and sorrows grow

Nor thorns infest the ground

He comes to make His blessings flow

Far as the curse is found

Far as the curse is found

Far as far as the curse is found

Sometimes we might feel defeated. We might have had a terrible day, week, month or years. It feels like we are not getting anywhere with life. Life feels futile. But that's not true. Because of what Jesus did. Because of how he is victorious over the spiritual realm. Let me ask, do you feel defeated in life? Maybe you feel defeated by all the set backs that have occurred to you. Work, career, relationships, family. You look at your life and it gets you down. But look to Jesus, who was victorious for you and me. No defeat you experience in this lifetime compares to the wonder-

ful victory that Jesus Christ has secured for you through his life death and resurrection.

That's the good news of Jesus Christ, the one who is victorious.

Are You Ready?

As I finish off today. I want to ask one final question. As we enter 2021, will we really treasure this good news?

When we read of people in the Scriptures encounter this good news of Jesus, it flips their world upside down. It changes how they see themselves, it changes the way that they live, it changes the way that they treat other people. In fact, I can give you an example, of Saul, who encounters Jesus on the Damascus road and his life is changed forever. Before his encounter, he's a murderer, killing members of the church. But after, his whole life is changed upside down. In fact he writes at one point that his focus is to know Christ (Philippians 3:8-11). To know nothing except for Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). Lorraine had Rachel and me over for morning tea once. And she showed me her outdoor table. Now she's wishing she didn't show me. But she showed me this burn mark. I said, "How is that possible?" Apparently, she had sat a snow globe on the table, which magnified the rays of the sun. Burning through her new table cloth and her table. Such was the focus of the sun through that ball. I wonder, whether people see us like that snow globe. Focused in our lives on the good news of Jesus Christ. Have our lives really changed? For people who knew us before we were Christians, what would they say about the change in us? Would they see the change?

Let's pray.