

Good News

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[0 : 00] With me please to the passage which we read there in the Gospel of Mark. Just reading the first verse. The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I think somebody has well said that the Gospel is neither a discussion nor is it a debate.

The Gospel is quite simply an announcement, a proclamation. And Mark here, the writer of this second Gospel, he wastes no time in telling us what he is about as he is writing this Gospel. It is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What Mark is saying is, here is how it all started.

Now Gospel means good news. And that is what we have in this Gospel, in this book. That is what Mark is going to tell us about.

[1 : 15] It is the good news, particularly about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is good news for people concerning him, concerning what he has done.

And friends, this is the heart of our religion. This is what makes the Gospels so important in the Christian faith.

They tell us about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is good news for sinners. And our notions of who Jesus is, and of what Christianity is, must be fashioned by this word.

But the point is, of course, this is good news for us. Good news for such as you and me. And because it is this, it is vital.

It is important. It is vital that you and I and all men make the right response to this word, to this good news.

[2 : 29] So, Mark, as it were, lays it on the line. This is the Gospel, he says. This is how it started concerning Jesus Christ.

And this is the proclamation. Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the Gospel. That sums it up. Sums it up in Jesus' own words.

And that is Mark's burden as he comes to write this book. His burden for Gentiles like you and me.

And as Mark develops this good news, his emphasis will be on Jesus as a man of action.

And Jesus as a servant of God. As a servant who was sent to minister to suffering people, and sent to die for their sins.

[3 : 41] For even, we read in chapter 10, And for even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

But who was this Mark who wrote this Gospel, which we're going to look at? Well, it seems quite likely that Mark was an eyewitness of the things that he records here.

From Acts chapter 12, we learn that Mark and his mother lived in Jerusalem. He seems to have been close to the Apostle Peter. And tradition has it that he was, as it were, Peter's chronicler.

That he reflects in his Gospel Peter's experiences. Whether that's true or not, certainly Mark was close to Peter. And indeed also, at one stage, to Paul in the early life, or the life of the early church. But what a wonderful sketch Mark provides of who Jesus is and what the Gospel is. And as we start looking at this sketchbook this morning, I'd like us to notice from the first 15 verses here, three simple things about the good news that Mark announces, that he introduces for us here.

[5 : 08] And the first is the preparation. And then there is the provision. And finally, the proclamation. So first of all, really, from verses 2 through verse 8, there is the preparation.

Now, a vitally important thing about Jesus Christ is simply that he was all that he claimed to be. And Mark is conscious of this.

If people aren't going to shrug their shoulders and to say, so what about the Gospel? There need to be witnesses witnessing that what is claimed for Jesus is true about Jesus.

And it is true. And Mark brings these witnesses before us. The first witnesses he brings are prophets, the prophets of the Old Testament, whom he quotes in verses 2 and 3, Malachi and Isaiah.

The prophets witness to the one who was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. And John the Baptist witnesses to him.

[6 : 27] You see, the prophets prophesy about the forerunner, about Jesus' forerunner, who would prepare the way for the coming of Jesus, who would introduce Jesus.

And John the Baptist prepares the way by his preaching. And his preaching is Gospel preaching.

Look at the elements of it here. He preaches a baptism of repentance and a remission of sins. He preached, in other words, that men and women should repent of sin and turn to God.

He preached that when they do so, this will be their experience, that they will know the forgiveness of sins. When you confess your sin, when you feel and express sorrow for sin, then all your sins are washed away.

That is the experience of the one who is truly repentant, sorrowful for their sin. That is what remission means, that the sins, your sins are washed away.

[7 : 36] This is what baptism indicates. This is what men and women and young people and boys and girls need. Because we're sinners.

This is what the Gospel brings. Forgiveness of sin. And the message simply is, turn your back upon sin, and you'll know forgiveness from the Lord.

John is preparing the way. He's preparing the way in calling for repentance, in calling for turning to God.

Look at John. John the Baptist. There he is in the wilderness. There he is on the western shore of the Dead Sea.

And in many ways, that's symbolical. Because it's telling the people, who were coming to him, you are in a spiritual wilderness.

[8 : 40] And that is a far worse wilderness, than any physical wilderness might be. Who is going to save you, from your spiritual wilderness? That is where the Gospel comes in.

There comes one after me, who is mightier than I, whose sandal straps I am not worthy, to stoop down and loose. John's message, and John's baptism, are comparing the way for Jesus.

And in the same way, sinners need to be pointed to Jesus Christ. But you see, how John focuses there, on the essential, on repentance, on the forgiveness of sin.

The essential message of John, confession of sin, and turn your back, upon sin, and a sinful lifestyle.

What John expresses here, is a preparation, for Jesus Christ. And it is an essential part, of the Gospel. But notice the provision, that there is, in the Gospel.

[10 : 05] Jesus is the provision, for men and women. He is the one, through whom there is forgiveness. He is the one, to whom John pointed, as mightier than him, who would baptize, in the Holy Spirit.

And this is all demonstrated, as we read in verses 9, through 13, in Jesus' baptism, and in his temptation, in the wilderness. In the, at the river Jordan, there, the Spirit comes upon him, as a dove.

The Father speaks, from heaven, and identifies, Jesus, as his beloved son. And the Father, expresses pleasure, in his son.

Now, why was Jesus baptized? baptized? Was he baptized, because he needed, cleansing, the sort of thing, that baptism points to?

Not at all. He didn't allow himself, to be baptized, because of any sin of his own, because he had no sin. Not because he needed, to repent, because he didn't.

[11 : 16] Jesus allowed himself, to be baptized, to identify himself, with sinful men. And it is the first indication, in the ministry of Jesus Christ, of himself, standing in the place, of sinners.

Jesus, you see, left heaven's glory, and he identified himself, with sinners. He identified himself, with them, in his birth, of course.

And he identifies himself, with them, in his baptism. He identifies himself, with sinners, in his life. And of course, above all, in his death. He identifies, himself with sinners, in his temptation.

He endured that also, for sinners. So that we can say, he is God's, provision, for sinners. He is the promised, Savior.

He is the mighty, one of whom, John speaks, who is far above, John. Who is far above, anyone. Because he is, the Son of God. No mere man.

[12:22] And the good news is, that there is, provision for sinners. Not in a sinful man, but in a sinless, Son of God.

This is the Jesus, of the Gospel. This is the Jesus, that Mark, is introducing, us too. This is the Jesus, who has provided, for the forgiveness, of sins, in himself.

This is the Jesus, who claims, belief. Who claims, trust, from sinners, like us. Who claims, new religion, this morning.

And being a Christian, what does it mean? It means, accepting, the kingship, of Jesus. It means, accepting, his authority.

Being a Christian, means, accepting, him, in whom, God the Father, was well pleased. As the letter, to the Hebrews, puts it, we do not have, a high priest, who cannot, sympathize, with our weaknesses, but who was, in all points, tempted, as we are, yet, without, sin.

[13:42] This, is the Jesus, you see, whom Mark, introduces, to us. This is the Jesus, presented to us, in the Gospel. This is the Jesus, I offer to you, this morning, for your belief, for your acceptance.

The preparation, the provision. I'd like us to notice, in the third place, the proclamation.

And I'm thinking here, of verses 14, and 15. Because we see here, how Jesus himself, begins his ministry, as Mark records it. How Jesus himself, as it were, sets out his stall.

What is important, in religion, to Jesus himself? What is important, in religion, to Jesus himself?

Now there's a fair bit, of confusion, these days, about what are the fundamentals, of the faith, what are the fundamentals, of the Christian religion. there's not a little confusion, and there's not a little doubt.

[15:00] And there seems to be, a bit of hesitation, about being extreme, one way or the other. Was Jesus extreme? Well certainly, he was this, he was radical, in his demands.

See his first priority, it wasn't social work, it wasn't fundraising, it wasn't debating, about the existence of God, or any such thing.

His first priority, was simply proclamation. Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel, of the kingdom of God. And what did that consist, preaching the gospel, of the kingdom of God?

It consisted of this, the time is fulfilled, in other words, the time has now arrived, and the kingdom of God, is at hand. Repent, and believe, in the gospel.

Now it's simple, isn't it? Essentially, the same message, as the one, who had prepared the way, for Jesus, as John's message. Jesus' message also, the kernel, the core, the fundamental, of the faith.

[16:10] For you, and for me. For folks out there, for your neighbors, for every man, this message. Repent, and believe, in the gospel.

That's all. That's all that is required, to become a believer, to become a Christian. Repent, and believe, in the gospel. It is a command, of course.

Jesus expresses it, as a command. It isn't a debating point, for him. It is a command. It is radical. It involves a change.

A change in your lifestyle, a change in your heart, a change in your mind, a turnabout. But then, this is why he came.

He comes with authority. He comes with authority, of God himself, who looking upon his son, said, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

[17:11] He comes with authority, and he says, nothing less than this, you surrender to me, in faith. Friends, he didn't come, for a political revolution.

He didn't come, even for an ecclesiastical, reorganization. He didn't come, for social justice. He came, with the gospel, of repentance, and faith.

And he is, at the heart of it. It is the gospel, of the kingdom, kingdom. Because faith, in the Savior, brings you, into his kingdom. And his kingdom, is simply, where he rules, where he is king, where he rules, in people's lives.

And it is the gospel, of Jesus Christ, as Mark says, here in verse 1, because he is, at the center, of it. Without his life, without his death, without his resurrection, there is no good news.

Only one gospel, it centers, on Jesus Christ, on what he did, for people. This is the gospel, we proclaim too.

[18 : 37] It is the gospel, of the historic, Christian faith, which we maintain. It is the gospel, of all, who receive, God's word, as his word, to ailing, sinful, humanity.

The question is, have you obeyed, yet, his command? Can you claim, for yourself, this morning, as you sit here, the forgiveness, of sins, in Jesus Christ?

Can you say, with Charles Wesley, thou, O Christ, are all I want, more than all, in thee I find, raise the fallen, cheer the faint, heal the sick, and lead the blind, just and holy, is thy name, I am all unrighteousness, vile, and full of sin I am, thou art full, of truth, and grace.

Let me just say, a word in conclusion. You know, my dear friends, it's a great responsibility, to get up to a pulpit.

It's a great responsibility, because of the importance, and the seriousness, of the message. What is the concern, of the pulpit?

[20 : 17] Simply what we have here, introduced, and announced, by Mark, the gospel, of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And this is my concern, for being here, the proclamation, of this message. I was hearing, just this week, somebody told me, of, a father-in-law, who was a godly man, and he was laid aside, in sickness, and somebody, who had been preaching, in the kirk, an old man himself, actually, came to visit him, this Lord's day.

And the old man said, the man on his sickbed, said to the other, old man, who had been preaching, in the kirk, he said, never go up, the pulpit steps, unless you have, the gospel.

That is the concern, of the Christian faith. It is the concern, of the word of God. And it means this, showing how God, has provided salvation, through Jesus Christ.

It means, it means, urging people, to confess sin, and to turn around, and put their trust, in Jesus Christ, and to believe in him, with all their heart.

[21 : 39] This is fundamental, to the Christian faith, and it is my task, and it is my privilege, in being here. It means, good news, for sinners.

It isn't a dreary message, the forgiveness, of sins, can never be, a dreary thing. It is good news. At least, it is good news, for those who receive it.

Because it is only, those who receive it, who will know, the forgiveness, of sins. Ultimately, there is no, other motive, for preaching, or for teaching, the word of God.

Jesus, is the need, of mankind. Jesus, is the only, beloved, son of God. Jesus, is the one, who endured temptation, for his people.

Jesus, is the one, who endured the cross, for his people. Can you say, Jesus, the very thought of thee, with sweetness, fills my breath?

[22 : 45] Does the thought of Jesus, fill your heart, with sweetness, this morning? This is the concern, of the gospel, of Jesus Christ, the son of God, that you and I, might know him, that you and I, might have him, as saviour, that you and I, might turn around, and lay a hold, upon him.

He is here, he offers salvation, it is full, it is free, it is for you. I just want to end, with a story, I think I've just about time, and it concerns, the great Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

I don't know, if many of you folks, know how Spurgeon, himself was converted, but one day, he was going, along to church, and it was, a day of, quite inclement weather, in the winter, there was a snow storm, and he didn't get to the place, he intended to go, instead of that, he went down, a side street, in this town, that he was in, and he found, a little, Methodist chapel there, a primitive, Methodist chapel, and I suppose, the preacher of this place, had difficulty also, getting there, because, it wasn't the minister, who was preaching, it was, just an ordinary, old man, and there he went, into this congregation, and there were only about, 14 or 15 people present, and he went, and he sat, under the gallery, at the back, and the man, didn't have much, competence, in his preaching, and he stuck, very close to his text, says Spurgeon, which was, look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends, of the earth, and he was, urging the people, to look, to Jesus Christ, and Spurgeon, said, he seemed to come, to the end, of his tether, and his eye, fixed upon himself, there under the gallery, and this preacher, said, young man, you look miserable,

Spurgeon said, he was miserable, really, but he'd never been, addressed that way, from the pulpit before, and he says, you will remain, miserable, in life, and in death, unless you obey, this command, look, unto me, and be ye saved, and he repeated it, he said, look to him, look to him, and be saved, and Spurgeon said, that if he got nothing else, out of the sermon, he looked, salvation became clear to him, he said he looked, till it seemed as if, he'd looked his eyes away, but

he found the Saviour, and dear friends, this is the concern of the Gospel, to look, to Jesus Christ, the one who is presented, to us here, this is the essence, of the Gospel, and of the Christian faith, it is for me, it is for you, it is for all men, the beginning, of the Gospel, of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God, is at hand, repent, and believe, in the Gospel, may the Lord bless, these thoughts, upon his word, let us pray, eternal, and gracious God, our Father, we lift up our hearts, in worship, and in praise, this morning, we thank thee, for the Gospel, of Jesus Christ, that it is still, the power of God, unto salvation, to all, who believe, and we thank thee, O Lord, for Jesus Christ, that he is not, a dead man, but a living Saviour, so help us, to look to him, and be saved, O Lord, guide us, this day, in all that we do, and think, and say, help us, Lord, to follow thee, and to trust in thee, and cleanse us, from all our sin, in Jesus, precious name, Amen. [27 : 22] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.