

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS THE MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD

Mark 1:1

“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God...”

Thank God for our study of Mark’s gospel over the past year. We began this study with the prayer topic to learn of Jesus, to meet him personally as our Messiah: our Savior and our King. Coming to the last study, what did you learn? I want to remind us of three things Mark’s gospel reveals about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

First, Mark’s gospel reveals Jesus’ Messianic Identity (1:1; 9:7; 8:29; 11:9; 14:61-62; 15:39). Mark 1:1 again reads, **“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God...”** Throughout his gospel, Mark records the testimonies of those around Jesus to help us know who he is. When Jesus first stepped out of obscurity in Nazareth and was baptized by John in the Jordan, God spoke: **“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased”** (1:11). God was pleased to send us his beloved Son. He testified the same thing later on the transfiguration mountain, declaring: **“This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”** (9:7) God declared that Jesus is his beloved Son. His disciples should listen and follow.

Speaking of the disciples, their opinion matters most because they were the ones who followed Jesus and were with him always. Many people can put up an act on special occasions, but not all the time. Jesus wasn’t putting up an act. Jesus, after living with his disciples, asked their testimony: **“But what about you?” he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah’**” (8:29). They all agreed, weighing all they had learned and experienced, that Jesus is who claimed to be; the Messiah. Not only his disciples, but the crowds, who, upon seeing Jesus entering Jerusalem, were so sure of his identity as Messiah they

spread their cloaks and palm branches on the road and welcomed him shouting: **“Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”** (11:9) His enemies could find no charge to hold against him, except that he is the Messiah (14:61-62). Even as Jesus was dying on the cross, having been betrayed and brutally treated, his loud cry stirred the heart of a hardened centurion, who testified clearly, **“Surely this man was the Son of God (15:39)!”**

The point of all this testimony is clear: In our world of pluralism and relativism, often we don't know for sure who we are. Even people we trust sometimes fail us, as shown through recent police brutality cases. Yet in such a world we can be sure of one thing clearly: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came into our world just as God had said he would.

Second, Mark's gospel reveals Jesus' Messianic Authority (1:15; 1:22; et. al.).

Mark introduced his gospel saying: **“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.”** Why good news? When Barack Obama was elected president on a campaign of “Change,” many young people across the country rallied to him, because we want change. We're tired of the anemic politicking that hurts more than helps. For 8 years President Obama tried to change things, but he was powerless in many ways to affect real change. His popularity has tanked. But what about Jesus? Mark clearly revealed that Jesus' authority and power to bring change is not anemic or weak. His message and preaching was one of the kingdom of God (1:15), and was proclaimed with authority that rattled the entrenched religious monopoly (1:22; 11:14-15). His authority drove out demons (1:27; 5:8-9; 7:29; 9:25), liberating those in bondage to Satan's power. He used his authority and power to heal the sick: cleansing lepers (1:42), opening the deaf ear and loosening the mute tongue (3:5), restoring sight to the blind (8:25; 10:52). Jesus cared for women and children (1:30-31; 5:29; 7:29), regardless of their healthcare plan. You want to talk about natural disaster recovery? Jesus has authority to calm the winds and the waves (4:39-41). Jesus' authority forgives sins (2:10), freeing us from guilt and reconciling us to God. Jesus even demonstrated power to raise the dead (5:41-42), and he himself was proved to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead (16:6; Ro 1:4).

Jesus' coming into this world as Messiah is good news, because his title of Messiah isn't just a title or more of the same. Our Messiah Jesus has all authority and power (Mt 28:18-20), and he is working mightily with his disciples even until today proclaiming the truth and power of his kingdom (16:20). There is no valley too deep or mountain too high. All of history is leading to his triumphant return (13), where all will be revealed and every tear will be wiped and every sorrow ended because death is defeated. Jesus' coming is the greatest news because he has authority to do just as he promises in our lives, in our families, our community, our world.

Third, Mark's gospel reveals the power of confessing Jesus as Messiah (8:35; 16:16). What is it that Jesus calls us to do in response to his coming and his identity? First he calls us to believe in him by confessing. Mark and Peter build their gospel up to a climax at Peter's confession in chapter 8. Jesus tells them to follow him, denying themselves, taking up their cross. Jesus promises that those who lose their lives for Him and the gospel will save it (8:35). In Mark 16:16 Jesus says, **"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."** What is it we believe and how should we express it? Paul clarifies in Romans 10:9-10, **"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."** For Peter, this confession was the beginning point of a whole new life in the kingdom of his Messiah Jesus. Those who are baptized into Jesus are making this confession, just as witnessed last week. It is not enough to know him as Messiah; he calls us to confess and follow him.

This isn't easy as it requires us to admit we need a Messiah; a Savior. When I was younger I didn't understand the gravity of my baptism, and lived how I pleased. I got into real trouble, enslaved in an immoral relationship, drugs, and a rock 'n roll lifestyle. I tried to stop, but I could not; I needed to be rescued. When I humbled myself through Bible study, Jesus lifted me up and set me free. For the past 17 years he has been with me, helping me to serve him and to grow in his image. It has been full of highs and lows, and never boring. Yet Jesus has led me all the way. Come, let's confess and follow our Lord, our Messiah, Jesus Christ. If you have never done so, Why wait? Today is the day. God bless us as we meditate

on all we learned, and each may renew our decision of faith to follow Jesus, our Messiah, the Son of God.

JESUS THE SERVANT OF ALL

Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

I never met someone who said, “When I grow up, I want to be a servant.” Servantship is not something we naturally aspire to. Rather, we naturally pursue greatness, fame, notoriety, recognition, promotion, leadership, authority, etc. Of course, there is a petty side to our nature in which we just want to be a small person, quietly ignored: “Leave me alone.” Jesus taught us to pursue greatness, but not in the world’s way. The world’s way is to exalt oneself, often by defeating others. Our market economy thrives on defeating the competition. Politicians often try to make their opponent look bad, even evil. Let’s review what Jesus taught about true greatness and how Jesus showed it. May we grow to be more like Jesus as his true followers.

Once Jesus’ disciples argued as they walked along the road. Maybe it went like this: Peter said, “Hey John, what’s the most fish you ever caught at once? I bet I caught more than you.” John replied, “What does that matter? Once I stayed up 3 days and 3 nights without sleeping in order to pay rent! Top that!” Matthew commented, “If either of you guys knew how to invest money like I know how, you could work half the hours with half the effort and not run after money like pagans!” Bartholomew thought to himself, “If only they knew that the wisest man is the quietest, like me.” We don’t know exactly how the argument went. But we do know what they argued about: who was the greatest?

Jesus used it as a teaching moment. He sat down with his Twelve disciples and said, **“Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all”** (Mk 9:35). Not long after that, James and John asked Jesus if they could have the seats on Jesus’ right and left in his glory. The other ten disciples became indignant with James and John. Jesus said to them all: **“Rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and...exercise authority over them. Not so with you.**

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”

In the world, great people have many secretaries and servants like maids, butlers, chauffeurs. Great people don't have time to do menial chores. One time a Christian author came and spoke at our church and was surprised to see our ministry leader setting up tables and chairs. Her speaking topic was on Servant Leadership. One time I went to a Bible conference in Russia. There were many weeds around the Moscow UBF Center. Actually, there are many weeds all over Moscow. Our ministry founder began to pull weeds with his hands for about an hour. Another time, at the conference place, there was no podium. So he began to make a podium by hand out of whatever materials he could find.

There is a saying, “People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” Jesus cared for people. He tended the sick. As we know, it is not easy to take care of sick people. Even nurses, whose professional job is taking care of sick people, usually don't like to take care of sick people. They have to change patients' soiled clothes and underwear. They have to feed them, talk to them, mostly listening to their rambling stories or trivial details or complaints. Mothers know well, since they know what it means to care for babies.

Let's think about Jesus, the servant of all. Jesus didn't just talk about being a slave of all. He actually served people. He didn't just preach to others or tell his disciples, “Do this. Do that!” Jesus set the example. Jesus washed their dirty feet. Jesus bore with their weaknesses and dullness with patient teaching.

Jesus served the sick. One time he helped Simon Peter's mother-in-law who was sick in bed with a fever. Jesus took her by the hand and helped her up. Maybe it took 5 minutes, or maybe he spent one hour holding her hand and talking and praying with her. Jesus loved and helped her very personally. A diseased man came to Jesus saying, **“If you are willing, you can make me clean.”** To touch this man would make Jesus unclean in that society. Also, it could put Jesus at risk of getting sick himself. Even to avoid passing common colds we wash our hands a lot. Jesus touched the diseased man saying, **“I am willing. Be clean!”** Jesus said to a paralyzed man, **“Son, your sins are forgiven.”** Then he healed the man so that he could walk. Jesus spent time to talk with and heal a woman with a 12-year bleeding disease. Jesus took a blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. He spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, two times, until the blind man was healed. Another blind man named Bartimaeus called out to Jesus.

People told him to be quiet. But Jesus stopped and called him. Jesus asked him, **“What do you want me to do for you?”** The blind man said, **“Rabbi, I want to see.”** Jesus said to him, **“Go, your faith has healed you,”** and the blind man immediately received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Jesus healed many people tormented by evil spirits. Perhaps the most extreme example was the man named Legion, who lived among the tombs. This man would cry out and cut himself with stones. Jesus drove the demons out of him into a herd of pigs and restored the man’s sanity. Have you ever tried to help or make friends with a person who has mental illness? A desperate father could not help his son. So he came to Jesus disciples and Jesus saying, **“If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”** **“If you can?”** said Jesus. **“Everything is possible for one who believes.”** The man exclaimed, **“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”** Jesus commanded the evil spirit out of the boy, and the boy collapsed as if dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

Jesus served hungry people. Though Jesus had no money, he prayed and fed them all with bread and fish. Jesus served large crowds of people, sometimes healing them, but most of the time teaching them the word of God. Jesus ministered to their tired and aimless souls.

Jesus’ serving life was not only to the demanding crowds. Jesus also served his disciples with patient teaching. Jesus invested his most precious time on earth to teach, to preach, to heal the sick, to drive out demons. Yet Jesus’ serving did not stop there. Jesus explained, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** Jesus explained that he came to serve, and not only to serve, but to give his life as a ransom for many. In this way, Jesus served so many more people through his death.

We have all experienced the joy of serving others in some way. We have also experienced the burden and agony of serving others. When you are hungry or tired or after hard work it is difficult to serve others. Rather, we want to be served with food or conveniences or even with words of praise or a ‘thank you.’ While preparing this message I got an email asking if I could run a 10 minute errand since I live near someone. My initial reaction was, “Do you have any idea how busy I am?” Then I repented for being so reluctant to help to serve someone for a few minutes. Jesus has called us to serve others in his name. It is a privilege and honor, as well as our duty, to serve our Lord Jesus Christ and to serve others in his name.

It might be just giving someone a meal or spending an hour with them. It might be bringing them to church or having a Bible study and praying together. Even Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. May his grace be with us to serve others in his name, even more than we imagined. Amen.