

Mark 1:1–15

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Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 0 0] Mark chapter 1 verses 1 through 15. Please stand out of reverence to God's Word. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it was written in Isaiah the prophet.

Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way. The voice of the one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight.

John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem was going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

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.

[1 : 2 4] 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. 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 them. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good afternoon.

It's great to be with you on this Sunday where we begin what is our fall series in the gospel of Mark. Every week we spend between 25 and 35 minutes reading and explaining the Bible.

[2 : 4 3] And if you are only recently coming on to church services for the first time in your life, or perhaps you've been away from church for many years and are looking to reconnect in some manner, this requires some word of explanation.

Why some central moment in the service where we read and listen to God's word? Well, three things really quickly. We believe that when you read the Bible, you're reading what God has said.

Even the reading today after he read, the phrase was, This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. That when you read the Bible, you're reading a book unlike any other.

This is what God has said. Not only that, when you read it and hear it explained, you begin to understand what God has done supremely in his Son, Jesus.

But you might say, Well, but does he have anything yet left to say? And this is the fundamental conviction of Holy Trinity Church.

- [3 : 56] That he does have something to say when we read what he has said and what he has done. There's a wonderful moment in Hebrews chapter 3 where the writer says, As the Holy Spirit says, present tense.
- And then he quotes some Old Testament writer who's long dead. Fascinating. That God is speaking yet in and through this word long ago written down.
- So I welcome you to these weeks. And we make no apology for our time looking at this word. For we all want to know, don't we? Does God have anything to say?
- And the answer, hopefully over these coming weeks, is he does. He has much to say as we look back into the Gospel of Mark to see what he has said. And learn from it what he has done.
- Asking that the Holy Spirit would then apply it into our own lives today. Well, I welcome you then to these talks on Mark.
- [5 : 10] Who was Jesus? And does he still matter? I mean, where do you go today to get a fresh look at Jesus? Some would turn to the Shroud of Turin.
- Maybe if that were to be authentic and validated, that ancient piece of cloth, if it were proven to be at the time of Christ, could be the earliest relic, really, to the death of one and indeed the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Of course, in 1988, there were carbon-14 tests done upon the Shroud. And it was proven to be a medieval document, not a document, a medieval cloth, that probably was somewhere in the 12 or 1300s.
- And the battle will yet rage on today. For many who want to hear God speak today or wonder if he spoke in Christ, look to that kind of image.
- I want to invite you to an image more concrete and with greater attestation to its authentic reliability, and that is the Gospel of Mark.
- [6 : 30] We are looking in this book at the earliest of complete records the world has on who was he and does he matter.
- This is better than the Shroud. Although if I brought the Shroud in here today, the place would have been packed. Both Luke and Matthew in their Gospel rely, borrow, use as a source, this one.
- And while Mark himself must have had sources from which he brought his composite before us, nevertheless, here it is. 16 brief chapters.
- The earliest look at Jesus. Well, that's invigorating. We're led now into great waters in the coming days together.
- Three takeaways from the text so that you'll have some sense of when I'm winding up. The first that Mark wants you to know is that Jesus is worthy of your attention.
- [7 : 46] And then we're going to see, because Mark is sure-footed to show, that not only is he worthy of attention, but that he comes highly recommended.
- And then finally, there are these subtle, almost hidden, yet-to-be-revealed-in-his-gospel moments, where you'll see that the death and resurrection of Christ, even at this early moment, that the death and resurrection of Christ does something to help you reconnect with God.
- He's worthy of attention. He comes highly recommended. And there's something significant about his death and resurrection in regard to becoming spiritually reconnected.
- So, let's take a look. It doesn't take long for him to let us know that he's worthy of attention. Look at verse 1. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- I mean, that's a declaration. That's a banner. I love his beginning. He opens even with this whole movement toward Jesus' baptism. Mark's not Luke.

[9 : 07] He's not taking you back to the creche in the early days of his birth. And he's not Matthew. He's not listing this genealogy from which you are to derive an understanding of who is Jesus.

Mark is like a ballad writer. He's going to launch you right into the middle of it all. He's already full grown. 30 years of age.

Entering into his ministry along the way. But for him, it's the beginning. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He wants you to know he's worthy of following.

Two phrases there declare it most succinctly. He calls Jesus Christ. That's not his last name. When I was young, I thought it was.

Well, he was Jesus Christ. But it's not his last name. It's a title. It's a term in the Greek that is to parallel what was meant in the Hebrew by Messiah.

[10 : 11] Messiah. It was the one who is anointed and rules for God in the world. He's saying he's worthy of your attention.

He's the ruler. Indeed, he goes on, Son of God. In other words, that in Jesus we have the promised ruler worthy of your attention.

What a declaration. That's why he calls it the gospel. Or in the old days when this church would have been built, they probably still would have referred to it as glad tidings.

I mean, it sounds like you're rolling right into Christmas. Good news! Good news! So if you're here today and you're beginning to reconsider whether or not Jesus has a place, he would like you to know he's not merely the center of things, as if you need Jesus to fill out an already pretty well put together life.

Mark's not interested in that. He wants you to know that he's the Son of God. That he's the one come from God to rule the one promised.

[11 : 32] Think about all the ones we have to follow today, whether they be in the city or in the state or in the country or in the world.

Think about those who have to follow you for goodness sake. We all have these great limitations on our worthiness. But here is the worthy one promised to rule for God.

So, what's the purpose of the Gospel of Mark? He's taken all of one verse to say the purpose of Mark is to make a declaration. This early manuscript, I am writing to declare Jesus ruler in the world God's Son.

And look what happens. That good news, that placing yourself under God's rightful ruler is called good news. And look at the bookends 14 and 15 how that word gospel reappears.

Now after John was arrested Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God. What a fascinating way to speak of it. At the beginning it's the gospel of Jesus Christ but by the time it comes at the end of verse 14 he wants you to know that if you want to hear from God something good well what you hear of Jesus is equated with the very good news of God.

[12 : 59] Don't miss that. What a declaration. But then look at the demand. Verse 15 Jesus comes proclaiming the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe in the gospel.

You need to know this right out of the gate. Mark is not a bait and switch kind of writer. He's not going to lure you in to his church setting set some fabricated interest that might pull you along for a while and then spring his trap later on that he's going to require and demand life change.

That's not Mark. I love that about Mark. He treats you like an adult. Wouldn't it be nice to go to church and be treated like an adult? Well in the gospel of Mark we are treated like adults.

He declares something. It's very clear. But he wants you to know right out of the gate lest you misunderstand anything Jesus demands something of you. I will declare something of Jesus but Jesus will demand something of you.

Verse 15 Isn't that wonderful? Two words imperatives commands repent and believe. Turn around you've been following the wrong ruler yourself or someone else get in line with what God is doing in the world and believe that I am the one who brings it.

[14 : 21] Now he's going to lay that out or in other words before you're 15 verses in and you say what is Mark about? It's a declaration of the good news of Jesus who is the Christ the Son of God but there are demands of Jesus he wants you as a disciple.

That's just a fancy term for he wants you to follow him. In fact he doesn't even want to be part of the discussion he demands it. Don't get that wrong with Jesus.

He doesn't merely want to be part of the dialogue as if we've accomplished something when Jesus becomes part of the discussion. Jesus says repent quit living your life under your own rule turn around get in line God has something he's doing and he does it through me and believe in the good news.

He's worthy of your attention. Now if you're like me you might say well those are before I'm beginning to follow this who says I mean think of it even in your own terms somebody comes to you and they want you to do something or they're declaring something to you or they're going to place demands upon you or they're going to tell you I've got something really good for you good news great news well we've all been led astray haven't we by people and by pursuits and things that we thought were the right thing that would somehow reshape who we were we've all seen the charlatans and we have our antenna up it's not enough to be told that someone is worthy of my attention who says because according to the witness so too the credibility Mark knows you he knows your need for this recommendation and it doesn't take him long at all to begin to demonstrate to any reader that he comes that is

Jesus highly recommended can I show that to you in the text look at verse 2 it begins as is written in Isaiah the prophet I'm going to tell you about Jesus let's begin with Isaiah now who is Isaiah Isaiah is the long winded much ink spilled writer whose prophetic book totals 66 chapters he's one of the five therefore that they call the major prophets because he's so big so long I'm going to tell you about Jesus and I'm going to do so by putting Isaiah the great head of the major prophets on his feet and he is going to testify about the one who would come to prepare the way for the one who is that's pretty high recommendation maybe maybe not to us in our day but think of it this way

[17 : 44] I love the State of the Union address I like political and governmental things in our country and I'm not very well versed in it but I rarely miss the State of the Union address because there's that moment where we are hearing from the President of the United States I love that day every year I look forward to it and when you think about what happens in the chamber is all the great ones assemble so the older aged ones who have written law and written law and legislated they're there they have 10 20 some of them 30 years of weighted experience and they are the ones that when the president enters are on their feet but they're not the only ones on their feet you've got the the freshman senator or even the members of congress the what we call the young bucks who are still you know rubbing the moss off their antlers trying to make their mark in the world they're there there are members of the judiciary committee the highest court in the land they're there every branch of the military represented in the front they're all there all assembled and then that little guy comes out of that side door

I love that little guy I can't remember what his role is Ben you could probably explain it to me the sergeant of arms the door opens and the sergeant of arms comes and what does he say something to the effect of ladies and gentlemen!

everyone rises the great ones are rising that's something of what unfolds here in the opening verses you've already seen Isaiah on his feet but did you know that Malachi is also on his feet you know that quote in verse two behold I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way it actually leads with Malachi not Isaiah which is why some translators when it even says as it is written in Isaiah the prophet they just translate it as it is written in the prophets because they realize that that what Mark is doing is he is taking one moment from Malachi and one moment from Isaiah and he's throwing them together in a composite and what he really wants you to know is that all of the prophets are here I'm going to tell you about Jesus and to do so all the prophets rise the great weighty Isaiah and the last prophet

Malachi and thereby grabbing everyone in between and putting them on their feet to recommend Jesus through the ministry of John it's fascinating that he starts then with Malachi because if you go back and read Malachi in his context he is calling for the day when the ruler will come he refers to him as Elijah they were looking for one like Elijah we sang of it earlier even today Elijah who was he well he was the great the greatest wonder working prophet prophet and you can't miss that the cry of the voice in verse 3 that is wedded to this wonder working prophet becomes embodied through one named John who appears verse 4 in reference to John the Baptist and he is the greatest actually in the room so

Isaiah is on his feet Malachi is on his feet all of the prophetic host is on their feet Elijah is on his feet John the Baptist now enters the preeminent one of the first century if you were to ask in the first century hmm a special dinner to honor me tonight wonderful who shall I get to introduce me if you had the ability to have John the Baptist introduce you you would not think twice about any other in all the world Josephus the great historian he will give the world three times as much data on the Baptist as he does on Jesus why because he was the great luminary of the day so that even when you get to Mark 6 it begins to say that the name of

[22 : 45] Jesus had become known at this time but it's in reference to a description on how John himself died because John was the great one that's why he's the one that takes center stage here if he's going to come highly recommended Mark cannot do any better than John and so John appears he takes center stage he is the most significant figure in first century Palestine and while he will exit the stage quietly in verse 14 it is his voice that stuns the first century reader when he says after me comes he who is mightier than I the strap of whose sandals I'm not worthy to stoop down and untie I'm doing one kind of baptism with you with water I am preparing you for the ruler to come but he will actually change you from the inside out he will bring the blessings of heaven they will open and the spirit himself will be yours imagine that is the witness of

John the Baptist how why was he of such a significant character well the ruling class feared him and the man on the street revered him I mean when you read the bible for any length of time you find he's that kind of character so Herod he's actually in jail and then eventually beheaded because he was willing to look at the ruling class the leader and say the marriage you're in is wrong he took on the political powers to be it's a very difficult thing to do think about even doing it in our own country anytime you begin to take on the political powers bad stuff happens to you it happened to John but it goes on to say at that moment in Mark 6 that Herod feared John the ruling class feared him not only the political establishment the religious establishment so that he calls the crowd but it's a crowd that was appealing to

Abraham as their father I'm religious and I'm with God and I'm okay he looks at them and he goes you bunch of brood of vipers you better start living a life according to the way in which you teach your people so he's taking on the the pastors aren't happy with him the politicians aren't happy with him but the man on the street reveres him so that the tax collectors in Luke 6 these are the godless businessmen who are trying to make a living and get ahead these are Chicagoans at their best they wouldn't listen to anybody but they listened to John John what do you think!

we're supposed to do the soldiers would look for his wisdom according to Luke so in other words the man on the street the man with steel toed boots the working man revered John the ruling party feared John he is the preeminent voice in the first century and he is the one that Mark brings forth in the midst of Isaiah in the midst of Malachi John is there testifying to Jesus he's worthy of attention he comes highly recommended it goes on look at what happens in verses 9 through 11 it isn't just this litany of personages that recommend

Jesus to the reader in those days Jesus came from Nazareth the Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan and when he came up out of the water immediately he saw the heavens opened 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 I mean this is astounding the heavens are in a sense this curtain that separates us from God and you wonder does God have anything to say to me to anyone is there any pathway here at the baptism of Jesus the heavens are rendered open ripped and the spirit descends in the form of a dove and a voice it's the voice of the father given what he calls him comes out and says you are my beloved son with you I am well pleased stunning

[27 : 54] God himself the voice you have the voice in the wilderness the greatest man of the first century you have the voice from heaven telling us to listen to Jesus in one sense even Satan himself makes an endorsement a surprise appearance in the chamber doesn't he verses 12 and 13 after the baptism the spirit drives Jesus out into the wilderness and he was there 40 days tempted by Satan in other words implicitly as soon as there is this celebratory moment in his anointing there is this confrontation with the enemy his combatant is on the scene why because he is that important the whole universe then is there he comes highly recommended and I would say therefore to you and to me we don't have the liberty to say you know what

I don't really think I should have to look at that figure of Jesus and consider whether he has meaning for me today Mark could not have come out of the canon any more emphatically with a declaration and drawing your attention by way of recommendation well let's take a look at the third aspect of the text not only is he worthy of attention not only does he come highly recommended but as we close I want you to see that there is something subtle in the text regarding his death and resurrection as critical to us making spiritual connection or reconnection to God look at verse 4 John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins whatever

John was about and therefore Jesus who follows it is something that goes to the depth of our problem with God namely a need for the forgiveness of sins but the more astounding hint in the text that Jesus through his death and resurrection reconnects you to God comes out of that baptism moment in verses 10 and 11 and take a look at this it is phenomenal when he came up out of the water immediately he saw the heavens opened and the spirit descending on him like a dove and a voice came from heaven you are my!

beloved! Son! Don't skip too quickly over the word beloved! This is a term that in the day of its first readers would have hearkened memories of Abraham who was asked by God to take Isaac your son your only son the beloved one and through his death make demonstration of the work of God in the world this is the term beloved that Jude will fix on in verses 3 and 17 beloved when the Christian community of his day was undergoing persecution to the extent of martyrdom and he calls upon them beloved in the context of having seen

Moses protected from the evil one in what was an ugly situation after his death beloved is a term associated with this death and the hint is already there and the voice that comes from heaven says already here in the text although we don't understand it fully there is something about Jesus as the beloved that it should move us to consider we reconnect with God in some way through his life and his death and if we would miss it he makes it clear I just got to take you to the end of the book take a look as we close today in Mark 15 verse 37 Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last and what happens right there at the moment of his death verse 38 the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom and when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last he said truly this man was the son of

[33 : 14] God what amazing parallels in the beginning and the end of the gospel at the beginning the heavens are ripped open and the voice of the father says this is my beloved son listen to him and at the end the holy of holies that curtain that separated again people from God is ripped and the beauty of the gospel is there's a man a working man on his feet giving this subtle hint back to the beginning of the gospel truly this man was the son of God what a witness to the artistic endeavor literary endeavor of Mark and so we come today to our conclusion and we come to the question that we began with is there any way to get a fresh look at

Jesus who was he and does he matter does God have anything to say to you yet about his purpose for the world and your life Mark wants you to know he's worthy of your attention he comes highly recommended and his death is the means by which there is spiritual reconnection so you need to come back and see how it is that God accomplishes all of these things that will send you into your life on a completely unified course our heavenly father we thank you for your word and we pray that you would apply it to our hearts we ask Lord that as we we look to live well that your word would be alive in our hearts we commit our time to you in

Christ's name amen