

Announcing the King is Here!

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[0 : 00] Please take a seat. As Doug mentioned, we're starting a new series through the book of Mark for the next few weeks. And chapter 1, although it's only 15 verses, there's quite a bit in it.

So how about we pray before we get started? Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word, the Bible. We thank you that it continues to teach us about who you are, indeed about who Jesus is and how we might live in response to him and in response to what he has done for us. And so, Father, we ask this morning that you might give us minds to understand your word and hearts to live in light of it. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, we often hear announcements in all sorts of places, don't we?

In fact, this morning we've heard some announcements like the prayer evening coming up. In fact, one announcement I forgot to make was that we're going to be having a mission.

Some students from RMIT are going to be joining us towards the end of November. We're going to have a bit of a mission week. Now, at another church I heard of, there was a different sort of announcement, this mildly amusing announcement, actually.

[1 : 09] It comes up on the screen. It says, The senior choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir. Oops, typo.

So, or this next announcement on the next slide. The pastor will preach his farewell message, after which the choir will sing, Break forth into joy. Hey, I think you laughed too loud at that one.

I'm worried. Of course, some announcements are more important than others, aren't they? And this morning we'll hear some announcements that are among the most important you'll ever hear. As I said, as we begin looking at Jesus in the book of Mark.

But first, let me give you some brief background to the book. As the name suggests, this book was written by a man called Mark. But Mark was not one of Jesus' original 12 disciples or followers.

He became a Christian a little later on, perhaps around the time of the Apostle Paul, we think. And so it begs the question, how does Mark know what happened so that he could write it down? Well, the answer is that he spoke to other people who were there.

[2 : 13] And in particular, he spoke to the Apostle Peter. That is, we think that the book of Mark is Mark's arranging of the material, but he actually got it from Peter, who was an eyewitness, who was there, who saw Jesus, who heard Jesus speak, who saw what Jesus did.

In other words, what we have in front of us here this morning, we can be certain that it's what happened in history. It is based on eyewitness accounts.

Indeed, historians regard these accounts, these Gospels in the Bible, as reliable historical sources. They study them as history. And if you want to know more about how we can know for certain that this is history and we can rely on it, then please fill in those comment cards in your bulletin and I'll get some resources to you.

But if this is what happened in history, then it's worth listening to, isn't it? It's worth listening and pondering these announcements. And the first one that is made is made by Mark himself, point one, verse one.

It says, in, sorry, the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark announces in his very first verse with crystal clarity that Jesus is the King.

[3 : 28] Now, at first glance, it's not all that crystal clear to us, but it would have been to the first readers. Why? Well, because of the titles Mark ascribes to Jesus. He calls him Christ and Son of God, which both mean King.

As we heard just a moment ago in the children's talk, Christ or Messiah means King. I, like a lot of children and some adults as well, originally thought that Christ was simply Jesus' surname.

My surname is Price, so my name is Andrew Price. And at my last church, one child misheard my name and called me Andrew Christ. What a compliment. I gave him a lolly. But you see, he had heard the phrase Jesus Christ so many times, he just assumed it was an ordinary surname. And so he ascribed it to me. But as we heard during the kids' talk, Christ is a title like doctor or missus.

And Christ means anointed one or king. And so Mark is saying here in verse 1, the beginning of the good news about Jesus the king. And the other title, Son of God, also means king.

[4 : 33] You see, when we see the title Son of God, we immediately think God the Son, you know, the second person of the Trinity. We immediately think that it's telling us that Jesus is God.

And it does mean that. It came to mean that as well, as we'll see in a moment. But when the first century Jews heard it, their first thought would have been king. Why?

Because back in 2 Samuel 7, God promised King David that there would always be a descendant of his on the throne. There would always be a king from David's line. And that king would be God's son.

God says, he will be my son and I will be his father. And so every king in David's line from David onwards was known as a son of God. So when the first century Jews heard the title Son of God, they would have heard king.

And so if Christ means king and Son of God means king, you see what Mark is at pains to point out? Chapter 1, verse 1, the beginning of the good news about Jesus the king, the king.

[5 : 36] You see now how crystal clear Mark's announcement is. He is saying that Jesus is the king. But he's not just any old king. He's the king who brings new life.

You see the words the beginning don't just signal the beginning of Mark's book, though they do that. They also signal the beginning of something new. In fact, one Bible commentator told me that whenever Jews heard the word beginning announced in this sort of way, Genesis 1, you know, in the beginning, would not have been far from their minds.

In fact, if I can pick on Matt Wee, who's not here to defend himself, when he read the Bible, he read Mark chapter 1 this morning, and he read in the beginning. Because we're so used to hearing that from Genesis 1.

In fact, I almost read it out. In fact, I might have read it out before when I read the text. We're so used to hearing it. And the idea is, just as in Genesis 1, where God in the beginning created new life, so too here we see a king in the beginning come to create new spiritual life.

There is a new beginning, as we'll see in later weeks. And so this first announcement, although it's only one verse, it's a huge announcement, isn't it? But the second one is also quite big.

[6 : 49] Point to verse 2. Now what we have here is an announcement from two Old Testament prophets.

Verse 2 is from the prophet called Malachi, and verse 3 is from a prophet called Isaiah. Isaiah was much better known than Malachi, and so presumably, that's why Mark only mentions Isaiah's name in verse 2.

But again, this is a huge announcement that I think perhaps we don't quite grasp at first glance. And so to kind of appreciate it a bit more, I'm going to ask you to turn back to your first reading, to Isaiah chapter 40, page 581.

So just flick back to page 581 in your Bibles, to the first reading we had. In fact, chapter 40 of Isaiah is a new beginning of its own.

The people of Israel were out and exiled, and in chapter 40 signals the beginning of good news for them. In fact, verses 1 and 2 proclaim comfort and forgiveness for the people.

[8 : 08] And in verse 3 we have the quote that Mark quotes, A voice cries out, In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low. And uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places are plain. And then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

In other words, there will be a voice, a messenger. And then after the messenger will come God himself. And then verses 6 to 8 talk about the fact that this word is certain, because God's word stands forever, unlike the grass of the field.

And then come to verse 9. Now this is great news that God is coming. Such great news that in verse 9, this person, this messenger is told to go up to a high mountain, and to proclaim good

tidings or good news to Zion.

To lift up his voice and say with strength to Jerusalem, This good news, verse 9. And again this good news at the end of verse 9 is, Here is your God.

[9 : 20] That's the good news. Why is this good news that God is coming? Well, verse 10 and 11. See the Lord comes with might, and his arm rules for him.

His reward is with him, and his recompense before him. And he will feed his flock like a shepherd. And he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Verses 10 and 11 give us a picture of God's loving rule, that he will establish when he comes. In other words, they give us a picture of his kingdom, his loving rule.

And that is great news. In fact, it's great news that every Jew looked forward to. And so when Mark quotes this back in Mark chapter 1, he is saying something huge is about to happen.

He is saying the messenger is going to come, and then after the messenger, God himself will come and establish his kingdom. But who is this messenger?

[10 : 22] Well, come back with me to Mark chapter 1, verse 3. Verse 3 says that the messenger's voice comes from the wilderness, doesn't it? And then in verse 4, who suddenly appears in the wilderness?

Verse 4, John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness. Did you see what Mark's saying? In Mark's mind, John is the messenger who was promised about in the Old Testament.

And in case we're in any doubt, he actually makes an odd comment about John's fashion. You see verse 6? He says, Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

Now I'm pretty sure camel's hair was not in, the in thing during those days. It might have been earlier, but they'd gone to the fine linen wraps and things like that. Camel's hair wasn't quite in, I believe, in those days.

Kind of like bell-bottom jeans are no longer in these days. Although I'm sure some of you might have a pair in your cupboard. In fact, Michelle's father used to pick her up from ballet lessons on Saturday morning wearing his bell-bottom jeans, because that was his gardening pants.

[11 : 26] And Michelle was so embarrassed that he had to wait in the car. But imagine your dad coming to pick you up with camel's hair. It'd be a little bit worse, wouldn't it? And it's an odd comment to make about John, isn't it?

So why does Mark include this detail? Well, he includes this detail because whether John realises it or not, he's actually making a fashion statement.

For these are exactly the type of clothes that Elijah the prophet wore back in 1 Kings. And we're told in the Old Testament that this messenger is known as Elijah.

Elijah will come as a messenger to prepare people for God's arrival. In other words, Mark is again telling us that John is the messenger. He is the new Elijah who prepares people for God's arrival. But how does John prepare people for God's arrival? Well, by proclaiming two things. See if you can pick them up as I read verses 4 to 8. So John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

[12 : 33] And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. And he wore clothes like Elijah who was the messenger.

And in verse 7, he proclaimed the one. He said, The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.

I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit. Now, did you notice the two things he proclaims in order to prepare God's people for his arrival?

The first one is to proclaim a baptism of repentance. In other words, he told people to repent. That is, to turn back to God, to confess, to say sorry for not living God's way and to be baptised as a symbol of it.

Now, this would have been quite offensive to the Jews who thought they were already with God. You know, they're God's people. They don't need to turn back to God. They don't need to be baptised. In fact, baptism was reserved for pagans who wanted to convert to Judaism.

[13 : 38] But John is saying, you Jews, you Jews are like pagans. You need to repent because you've been living far away from God. Turn back to God and be baptised to show that you are

wholeheartedly seeking to live for him.

You see, if God is about to arrive, then they need to get their lives in order. Otherwise, it won't go so well for them. It would be kind of like some rebellious children who are having a party while their parents are away.

I never did this. The parents are away, they're having a party, and they get a message to say that their parents are about to arrive, and so they need to stop rebelling and get the house in order. Otherwise, it won't go so well for them.

Well, John tells the Jews to stop rebelling against God and get their lives in order. For God himself is coming. Now, although no one likes being told that they're doing the wrong thing, the people actually respond quite positively.

For in verse 5 we read, people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to John and were baptised by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.

[14:46] This is the first way that John prepares people for God's arrival. The second way is by telling people about it. See verses 7 and 8 again? He proclaimed, The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me.

I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit. See, John prepares for God's arrival by telling people about it.

John says, One more powerful than me is coming. I'm not even worthy to be his servant. I'm not even worthy to stoop down and untie the shoelaces of his sandals.

That's how great this one is who is coming after me. And he will baptise with the Spirit. That is, he will give God's Spirit to people which will mark them as God's treasured possession.

And so John says, Be ready. God's about to arrive. And I wonder, How would that message change our lives? If God was about to arrive this afternoon, Would it change the way we're living?

[15:54] Well, John doesn't explicitly say that the person who comes after him is God. But the way Mark structures his material is here, Mark says it. It's as though Mark says, Remember Isaiah's announcements?

A messenger first, then God. And we have John. And so the very next person we meet, we expect to be God himself. And so who is the very next person to come on the scene?

Verse 9. In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Do you see what Mark is telling us about Jesus?

He's telling us that Jesus is not only the King, but he's also God, the Son. He is the one to arrive. Indeed, God announces as much at his baptism.

See the rest of verse 10 to 11. Jesus was baptised in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.

[16:55] And a voice came from heaven. You are my Son, the Beloved. With you I am well pleased. God declares Jesus to be his Son. Jesus is, you see, God the Son.

And I take it that the people there would have heard the voice as they saw the dove. And we're told that that dove was the Holy Spirit who came upon Jesus to commission him for his ministry and work.

But there's actually more happening here than that. You see, God's words also echo Psalm 2 where God calls his chosen King, my Son.

And so the first part of God's announcement here where he says, you are my Son, he's actually saying, you are the King. You are my chosen King, Jesus, of Psalm 2. He's saying the same thing that Mark said back in verse 1.

And the second part of God's announcement here where he says, with you I am well pleased, actually echoes Psalm 42, which speaks about the servant of the Lord.

[17:54] In fact, the Spirit coming upon Jesus shows that he is this servant of the Lord. Now just to show you, I've got some verses from Isaiah 42 on the screen. Here God says, You see what's happening here?

This announcement of God and the Spirit coming upon Jesus identifies him as this servant of the Lord. And he has come, this servant of the Lord has come to, verse 7, to open eyes that are blind and to free captives from prison.

And so what God announces here is that Jesus is both the King of Psalm 2 and the servant of Isaiah 42. That is, Jesus is the servant King who has come to bring freedom and forgiveness to

people.

And the question is, how will Jesus do this? Well, by standing in the place of sinners. You see, why is it that Jesus is baptized? Was it because he needed to confess sins of his own?

Of course not. He didn't sin. In fact, God has just said he is well pleased with Jesus. That is, Jesus is the one person who has never sinned. So he doesn't need to confess his sins and be baptized.

[19 : 17] So why then is he baptized? Well, to identify himself as one of those sinful people who are being baptized. You know, it's to show that he will one day stand in their place and on the cross take their sin upon himself so that they might go free from the prison of judgment.

Now, I know you know this, but it's easy to take it for granted, to forget how extraordinary it is that God, the Son himself, would stand in our place and take our sin.

Our children make all sorts of announcements themselves from what's for dinner to I don't want to have a bath and so on. But one day, when our daughter got in trouble and was told she had to miss out on her special treat, I think it was some chocolate or something like that, my son Tim announced she can have mine instead and I'll miss out.

Now, let me tell you, this does not happen often. In fact, it's never happened since. And so this was an extraordinary event. One child standing in the place of the guilty one taking the punishment for the other one.

But this is nothing compared to what God, the Son, has done for us. Coming down to earth to stand in our place, to take our sin so that we can go free.

[20 : 40] It's truly extraordinary. Don't forget that. But that's what Jesus is saying he'll do. By being baptized like the others, he's saying, I'm going to stand in their place and die for their sins so that they can go free.

Well, no sooner has God declared to be well pleased with Jesus that he sends Jesus by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by Satan for 40 days. See verses 12 to 13. It says, And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

And he was in the wilderness 40 days tempted by Satan and he was with the wild beasts and the angels waited or attended him. Now, there's lots of Old Testament echoes again which we don't have time to look at.

But it's worth remembering that despite the short account here, just two verses, this was a real battle between Jesus and Satan. Something that will continue throughout the Gospel as we'll see. But where Israel failed to be faithful to God in their 40 years of wandering around the desert, Jesus succeeded in being faithful to God. He defeated Satan.

[21 : 46] He didn't give in to temptations. He won the battle as it were. And this is why I think God sends Jesus into the desert to show that Jesus is the true King who can and will defeat even Satan himself.

You see, Satan's power is to accuse us of sin and the debt we owe because of it. But when Jesus dies on the cross, Jesus pays for our sin. He pays for our debt so Satan can no longer accuse us of anything.

He's lost his power over us, you see. That's how Jesus defeats Satan. It's kind of like going out for dinner and after dinner realising that you don't have money in the bank account to pay for your dinner.

And at that point, the unloving waiter called Satan has the power to call the police on you and see you suffer because of the debt you owe. But then the restaurant owner sends his son to pay your debt for you.

And so now the waiter has no leg to stand on. He has no power over you. He cannot accuse you of anything because your debt has been paid. You see, that's what God does for us through Jesus.

[22 : 54] And so if we believe in him, our debt has been paid. Satan no longer has power over us. Now, if you were here this morning and you do not believe in Jesus, then whether you like it or not, whether you believe it or not, then Satan still has power over you.

He can still accuse you on the last day. But if we believe in Jesus, we are safe. But the point here is that in the desert we get a glimpse of Jesus' victory over Satan, a victory that will be decisively won at the cross.

And so by sending Jesus into the wilderness, it's as though God announces that Jesus will fully defeat Satan. He is the king, king of all, even Satan himself.

