

# Why Mark's Gospel: An Introduction

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Date: 10 January 2021

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

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

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

So may God bless the reading and the preaching of his word. John Lennon of the Beatles once said, we are more famous than Jesus Christ.

Sadly, many people do not know who the Beatles are anymore. I tried to educate our young people at Brenner and said, buy one of the albums, listen to it 20 times, and come back and talk to me because I love the Beatles so much.

[ 1 : 13 ] But the Beatles are, they're yesterday's news. But Jesus Christ is the most influential person ever. Jesus has more followers right now than ever before, making up a greater percentage of the population than ever before.

Over 2 billion people claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. And an estimated 70,000 turn to Jesus Christ every day. That's pretty rad.

So even though the growth of Christianity is declining in the West, it's not throughout the world. And his influence, though, as you know, is not just on people that know him.

His influence exceeds that. Innumerable paintings, sculptures, books, movies, music are about him. It's no exaggeration to say that he is the most popular person who has ever lived.

And we're familiar with him. But if we take a step back, his life and influence are completely staggering. One of my greatest or my favorite quotes about Jesus Christ was by James Allen Francis, last century.

[ 2 : 22 ] And he said, Jesus was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant. He grew up in another village where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30. Then for three years, he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book, never held an office, never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never lived in the big city. He never traveled 200 miles from the place where he was born.

He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself. He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against him.

His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his garments. His only physical property left.

While he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

[ 3 : 25 ] Listen to what he said. 20 centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as one solitary life.

Isn't that good? All we know of this one solitary life is in the Gospels. They're the only pure pictures of Jesus Christ.

We as Christians are commanded to know him. It's in these pages we read of who he is and what he came to do. And so this Sunday I'm pumped because we get the privilege of diving into one of these Gospels to learn more about Jesus Christ.

In a word where we're going is Jesus is the king who takes up the cross, and all who take up their cross will stand with the king in the end. I know that's a mouthful, but Jesus is the king who takes up the cross, and all who take up the cross will stand with the king in the end.

And so this message is going to be a little bit different. I'm going to do a little background work, and one of my friends encouraged me pretty strongly to give you all plenty of background work. And I found it very fascinating in studying this stuff, and so if I bore you to tears, next week it won't be like this.

[ 4 : 54 ] So there's your hope. First point is, who is Mark? The Gospel according to Mark. Who is Mark? Well, the author of Mark, the author of this book, obviously, is Mark, an early follower of Jesus Christ and a co-worker with the apostles.

He's known in the New Testament by two names, by his Hebrew name, John, and his Greek name, Marcus. Now, if you remember that, as we went through Acts last year and some of the year before, sometimes he was referred to as John in Acts 12, often as John Mark, but more often just Mark.

That's what we see in Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, and Peter. The Scriptures tell us Mark was Barnabas' cousin. You remember Barnabas, the son of encouragement?

So he's Barnabas' cousin. And if you remember, Paul and Barnabas had a little spat on their way out of Antioch because Barnabas wanted John Mark to come with him, but Paul did not.

I don't know why, but evidently it was a family squabble. But wonderfully, the New Testament tells us they made up. If you remember in 2 Timothy 4, Paul writes, Timothy says, bring Mark with him to Rome because he had found him useful.

[ 6 : 13 ] And so this seems to be, this is Mark. That's Mark. But the second question we'd ask, the next question we'd ask, is how can we be sure that the Mark referenced in the New Testament is the Mark that wrote this gospel?

Well, I'm glad you asked. Many claim it is not. Marcus was a very well-known name in Rome. You know this, Marcus Cicero, Marcus Brutus, Marcus Aurelius, Mark Antony, right? You know some of those names, at least know them by the hearing, so it was a common name among Romans.

But interestingly, Marcus was not a common name among Jews. Before 200 A.D., out of 2,500 male names sampled, Marcus only occurred five times.

2,500 male names, Marcus only occurred five times. I mean, John and all these other names, they're just like hundreds of times. It's very likely that among Christians in the first century, there was only one Mark.

[ 7 : 16 ] Mark. Which is why, in the later books, John was dropped, and he was just known as Mark. Does that make sense? So, these early books, in Acts, John, Mark, but Mark is dropped.

In the epistles, I believe, it's because everyone knew who Mark was. And that Mark is the same Mark who wrote the gospel of Mark that we hold in our hands.

All right? It gets better. But even if we believe that this is the gospel according to Mark, who was the Mark in the New Testament, how can we receive a gospel from him?

He was not an apostle. He was not an eyewitness. Should we throw it out? This is where the story of Mark's life gets very interesting.

Mark was a close friend and a co-worker with Peter. When Peter writes his letter, his first letter, you know, we have two letters from Peter in the New Testament.

[ 8 : 15 ] When he writes his first letter from Rome in 62-3 A.D., Mark was with him. So, he's writing from Rome and Mark's with him and he sends his greetings.

We have this verse for you. Look at this. And I don't know who she is here, but she who is at Babylon sends you greeting and so does Mark, my son. That's pretty cool.

So, it reveals how close he is. He says, he's my son, but I send you greetings from Mark. So, quite obviously, Peter's dictating or writing out this letter and Mark is sitting by his side.

But in addition to that, while in Rome with Peter and after hearing Peter's many stories, Mark writes his own gospel. He writes this gospel in about 65 A.D.

or shortly thereafter to share Peter's stories. Now, I don't know about you guys, but Peter's like the best from the gospels behind Jesus Christ. But you're just so fascinated with him.

[ 9 : 16 ] Can you imagine hearing all his stories? And that was the idea. Mark wanted to write out Peter's stories to preserve his eyewitness testimony. And in fact, at the beginning of the, well, about 105 A.D., Papias tells us that's what happened.

In his book about the gospel, the commentary on the gospel, he says this. Look at this. He says, John the Elder, that is the apostle John, used to say, isn't this incredible? This is a guy that interacted with all these people.

I mean, the New Testament is more trustworthy than this guy. But still, but John the Elder, that's John the Apostle, used to say, Mark, in his capacity as Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately as many things as Peter recalled from memory.

I mean, I love the simplicity of that, though not in an orderly form, so obviously I had a little criticism about the way it was ordered for Mark, of the things said or done by the Lord Jesus Christ.

For Mark had neither heard the Lord nor followed him. See, I told you he wasn't an apostle, so he neither heard the Lord or followed him, though later on, as I told you, he followed Peter. Isn't that really, really cool?

[10:30] Here's the idea. Mark writes what Peter told him in about 65 A.D., okay, from Rome. In about 85 or so A.D., the apostle John, who lived longer than all the apostles, we know that because he stayed in Ephesus and would tell stories until probably 95 or 100 A.D., he sees Papias in about 85, he tells him, Mark wrote the gospel, and then when Papias kind of writes his commentary in 105 A.D.

and unpacking the books on the gospel, Papias tells what he learned from Mark. This means the gospel of Mark is eyewitness testimony from the apostle Peter.

The gospel of Mark is Peter's gospel, okay? Now, this discovery is really, really important for our study of the gospels, really, really important for our understanding of the New Testament.

Have you ever played the game telephone? Like, if we started this, if I whispered in Rachel's ear and we kind of went around the room to joy, you know, maybe I'd say something like, I want to go to Kansas City to eat ribs because I would actually like to go to Kansas City and eat ribs because they're known for their barbecue.

I haven't been there yet. And then it gets over here and, you know, it might say, like, Kansas City is known for their baby bibs or something like that. You know, it would change. Something would get lost in translation by the time it made around the room.

[11:54] And sometimes people purposely change it when you play the game. But the idea is this stuff gets lost and it's very common right now in universities. And I know because I went to one of these universities and for the past several decades to argue that the gospels were kind of passed down like that.

So kind of the first century, everybody's kind of, they got converted and they told their co-worker, told their neighbor, told their friend about Jesus Christ and gradually those stories just spread around and so they reached Paul and, I mean, reached Mark in 85 or 90 AD and he just kind of wrote down some of the things he heard as best he could.

And, you know, maybe he tried very well and he wrote it down but surely we can't have much trust that that was exactly what did or happened in Jesus' life.

But what Papias is saying and what this book, so I've just been reading this book that's incredible and I'm not going to tell you how incredible it is, Jesus and the eyewitness, the gospel as eyewitness testimony, what Papias is saying and what that book persuasively argues is that in the first centuries that's not the way it went down.

The apostles stayed and operated among the church preaching all the good news about Jesus Christ, telling stories. As I told you, John remained in Ephesus until he's well into his 90s sharing stories about his time with Jesus and then when they came near death, they wrote down their eyewitness testimony for future generations.

[13:23] They only wrote it down at that point so their eyewitness testimony would be preserved and so the gospels are not the product of the telephone game. The gospels are not the product of oral tradition.

The gospels are eyewitness testimony. The same thing, if you permit me this illustration, the same thing is going on with the Holocaust right now. For years, we could hear, Elie Wiesel, other guys, women, we could hear their stories, but they're dying out.

Survivors of the Holocaust are dying out. In 50 years, if you want someone to know what the Holocaust was like, the eyewitness testimony must be recorded.

Now, it's not as if the apostles were surprised by this. God, all throughout the Old Testament, when he did dramatic acting, he told the people to record it. And so the apostles knew that's the way it was going to go to record it so that it could be passed around the church.

So the same idea, though, is going on in the New Testament. So therefore, the gospel is Peter's gospel. It's likely the first gospel written from Rome in 65 A.D.

[14:37] Because it was based on Peter's eyewitness testimony, unsurprisingly, it mentions Peter more than any other apostle. In fact, nothing happens that does happen in Mark's gospel where Peter is absent.

Time doesn't permit me to tell you all the ways we see this as Peter's gospel. But I want to point out one. Mark, or besides those two, Mark told stories vividly like through the eyes of an eyewitness. 21 times, he uses this weird form of a plural, so he would use a plural noun to describe movement and then a singular noun to describe what happened in the place.

And I promise this is not going to bore you tears. This is actually kind of cool. So plural, like the disciples went somewhere and then he did this. Jesus did this or someone did this. We have an example for you in Mark 14, 32.

I think we have that for you. And they, so that is the disciples, went to a place called Gethsemane. You know that. And he said to his disciples, sit here and pray.

[15:46] Now Luke and Matthew treat the same verse and they say, he went to a place called Gethsemane with his disciples. And he said to his disciples, but the idea is the contrast between the they and then the he is that they go, they all go, and then he does something.

So do you see how that, rather than just Jesus and his disciples went somewhere describing an event in which you were not present, they all went and then suddenly he did something. Does that make sense? So 21 times that combo happens.

That's incredible. Because Mark is trying to situate you into an eyewitness account. Now I know I like to nerd out on things like that, but I think that is amazing.

Amazing. And so the gospel of Mark is the record of Peter's eyewitness testimony of all that Jesus said and did. Point to, what is the gospel of Mark? What is the gospel of Mark?

Verses 1 to 8 form an introduction or a prologue to the whole gospel of Mark. Verse 1 is the heading, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

[17:00] Mark is writing, what Mark is writing is gospel. You know, sometimes we say that, it is truth, this is gospel. The idea is that before the gospel was a book talking about Jesus Christ, the gospel was just a word that meant good news.

You know that, right? The Greek form of this word just means good news. It's a common way to refer to what's preached about Jesus Christ, but in the first century it meant something else. It meant good news about the kingdom.

And so the idea is that Roman rulers in those days and Peter, not Peter Paul, Mark is writing from Rome with Peter. The idea is that Roman rulers would officially publish good news in the empire. And we do the same thing. Several months ago I was at a McMinn-Marville football game. And it was the last regular season game and the last, I don't know if it was the last game, but it was the last regular season game in which the voice of the Cherokees, Johnny Kaufman, was going to announce the game.

He'd done so for 48 years. And when the team was in the locker room in the second half, several of our local leaders, Mike Bell, John Gentry, Mark Cochran, made an official announcement or pronouncement is what the Daily Post Athenian said, and they declared it Johnny Kaufman Day.

[18:19] And you've seen these statements, kind of, whereas Johnny Kaufman has been a faithful citizen of McMahan County, whereas Johnny Kaufman has been faithful to proclaim the Cherokees, whereas his blood bleeds yellow and black or whatever it is.

He kind of went through all these whereas we declare this Johnny Kaufman Day. Right? That's the way these good news were done. So in Rome, in those days, if the heir was born, whereas we've been waiting on this baby to come, whereas he was born last night, whereas he's going to take over and rule in the years to come, and that's the way it was done, or whereas a war had just been completed.

And so you get the idea. We don't work out this whereas language very often, but we still do it in those moments, which is fascinating. And so what Mark is saying is that's what this is. This is an official pronouncement.

This is official news. The king has spoken. He has news for you. Mark has written it's good news. It's from God. It's all that he planned to do for his people before time.

It's good news about Jesus Christ. And we see that right there in the opening, the beginning of the gospel, the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ. Now, Joseph was not the son of Joseph Christ.

[ 19 : 38 ] Or Jesus was not the son of Joseph Christ. Christ was not his last name. So already, Mark is showing us who this guy is. Jesus, Christ just means Messiah.

Messiah. I like the way our statement of faith said that we found that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the Messiah. The idea is that he's the anointed one.

And so this good news about Jesus Christ is that he's the promised king who will rescue his people forever and for good. Mark is saying this book is not a biography.

Mark leaves out many things that would be interesting in a biography. Although he does tell us that Jesus had four brothers and many sisters, which I think is really cool, in 6.3. It tells us the good news about Jesus Christ.

All that he says and does in his life and death and resurrection is secure salvation for us. It's good news for everyone, as you know, for the poor, the sick, the outcast, the sinner, the Jew, the Gentile, and all who are far off as Peter preached in Acts 2.

[ 20 : 44 ] Interestingly, when Mark writes down good news, so this is official pronouncement, he begins a new thing, a new genre, a gospel.

Does that make sense? Bless you. So soon after, Matthew, Luke, and John follow suit. So they write good news too.

Got eruptions everywhere. I love it. So what makes the gospel of Mark unique? In a word, Mark shows rather than tells.

Now he does tell us right here in verse 1. He's the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Kind of tells you where he's going.

But in so many ways, the gospel of Mark doesn't tell you Jesus is the king. The gospel of Mark shows you. Mark's writing is simple and unsophisticated. It contains no fluff.

[ 21 : 50 ] It's fast-paced and fat-free. Or maybe carb-free because I think it has the fat. It gets right to the point, right to the action.

It skips the virgin birth, all that shenanigans, you know, the shepherds and the angels and starts with John the Baptist, this weirdo, you know. And then it cuts out the long teaching section, the Sermon on the Mount.

I'm sorry, it's not in here. It turns from scene to scene often with this word immediately. You see it down there. It's actually nine times in chapter one.

Look down to ten. And when he came up out of the water, immediately. In twelve, the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And it keeps going from there. The idea is, Mark moves from dramatic scene to dramatic scene.

He just keeps pressing forward chapter after chapter after chapter. He doesn't break his gate. And the rush of activity wonderfully slows down when Jesus turns his face to Jerusalem.

[ 22 : 56 ] There's so much more I could say just about it. But you get the idea. What is the gospel, Mark? Snooze. Point three, why Mark? Now, this question, why Mark? This question is a bit more pastoral.

You know, since there's 66 books in the Bible, and since we go verse by verse with these books, and since Mark has 16 chapters, you should be asking yourself, hey, why Mark?

Somebody asked me if we had journals for all of them. I said, I'm buying you this one. The other 65 are on your own dime. But maybe we'll get you a few more. Several initial reasons here.

We spent 50% of last year in the Old Testament. So I wanted to pivot over to the New Testament and study a New Testament book. We've been in existence as a church for two and some odd months of a year, years, whatever, two and a half years.

And we've not studied one of the Gospels and they're pretty important. And so I wanted to study a Gospel because we need it. But narrowing down from the Gospel of Mark or from the other Gospels to the Gospel of Mark is primarily for pastoral reasons.

[ 24 : 08 ] Mark's Gospel, as one commentator put it, is a pastoral response to stressful times. It's a pastoral response to stressful times.

The early 60s AD was a stressful time for Christians, for followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, Christian was a derogatory name. We might wear it as a badge of honor.

Even in a quote I'm not going to read to you this morning, yet Christian is used derogatory. It's only used in a derogatory way in Acts or a pejorative way. The apostles were dying out. Christians were the object of gossip and slander. That's well documented in 1 Peter 2.15, 3, 13-16, 4.12. Christians were accused of all sorts of crimes on the subject of much suspicion.

And in 64 AD, things got worse. Just before the Gospel of Mark was likely written, a disastrous fire swept through Rome on July 13, 64 AD.

[ 25 : 19 ] Much of Rome was burned. Suddenly, three days after the fire began, the fire got bigger and consumed more of Rome.

Many believe Nero, Caesar, kept the fire going, incited the fire so that he could be celebrated as the one who restored Rome to its former glory.

And that's very warped thinking. Right? Well, when the criticism kept coming, what did you do? And he kept trying to find someone to blame.

Nero said Christians did it. Nero blamed them for starting the fire and began to persecute them severely. He watched them.

He wrapped them in the skins of animals and watched them be dismembered by dogs.

[ 26 : 14 ] He nailed them to crosses. He set them on fire to serve as lamps for the night. This is a deeply wicked, wicked man.

It was a stressful time. And right now, in case you didn't notice, it's a stressful time. There's a lot of frustration, fear, and fretting about a lot of things.

And with the remaining time that I have, I want our appetites to be wet for how the gospel of Mark is for us. It was written for a stressful church.

And that's what we are. We need this gospel. I believe God's called us to. First, the gospel of Mark shows us the glory of Christ.

The gospel of Mark shows us the glory of Christ. Even though Mark does not begin with some dramatic introduction like John, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God, it's loaded, though, with glory.

[ 27 : 23 ] It's loaded with the glory of God. And, you know, that glory is one of those Christian words that we don't quite know the meaning. I think the idea of glory is just the greatness of God made public.

It's just God going forth, announcing how great, showing how great He is. And the gospel of Mark is a tour de force of the glory of Jesus Christ going public.

Jesus is stronger than demons, stronger than disease, stronger than death, stronger than anything this natural world might throw at Him. Let's just look at one example.

Flip with me to Mark 4, 35. One of the most famous examples. On that day, when the evening had come, He said to His disciples, let us go across to the other sea. And leaving the crowd, they took Him with them in the boat just as He was.

And other boats were with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

[ 28 : 24 ] Let's just love that. I just need a little bit of rest. I mean, and they woke Him and said, Teacher, do you not care that we're perishing? Not a good question to ask Jesus Christ.

And He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was great calm. And He said to them, Why are you so afraid?

Have you no faith? And they were filled with great fear. And said to one another, Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?

Mark is chock full with encounters like this where the disciples aren't so much encouraged as terrified. Stunned. You know, we see this throughout the gospel.

Even in the final verse, the very final verse, Jesus is raised from the dead. The women go to the grave to see if He's there. He's not there. And they run away, not so much gripped by comfort and joy as gripped by terror.

[ 29 : 29 ] It reminds me of Lucy in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe asking of Aslan, the Christ figure in there, Is he safe? No, Lucy.

He's not safe. But He's good. Why? Why is Mark so loaded with this fear? Why is he so loaded with this terror?

Why is he so loaded with this astonishment? Why is there so much astonishment, fear, and trembling when they see Jesus Christ? Because when Nero comes with his band of brothers, when

he throws the cuffs around their hands and lights them with fire, they will say, I will rise. Because Jesus Christ said I will. He said His glory depends on it. If I am raised, you too will be raised with me.

That's the idea. We need to see the glory of Jesus Christ. His glory is not just the things that make us comfortable, but make us solid in shaking days that make us strong in stressful times.

[ 30 : 31 ] Fear is on the rise. Fear of the virus. Fear of the mob. Fear of the government. And so we're anxious and agitated and annoyed. That's why we need to be gripped with the glory of Jesus Christ.

It's not okay to live as if Jesus is not in complete control. It's not okay. It's sin. He upholds all things by the word of His power.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, whether in heaven or on earth or under the earth. And He's exalted above every rule and authority and power and dominion.

All things do His bidding. Everyone answers to Jesus Christ. That is His glory. Are we fallen into the hands of a mob or are we safe in the hands of Jesus Christ?

That's what He wanted to tell them. Are you stressed out? Oh, you're in the hands of this one. Even the waves answer His commands.

[ 31 : 33 ] So when fear's on the rise, when the news feed keeps spinning, when the worries keep mounting up, we need to slow down, stop talking, and lean in to see the glory of Jesus Christ. The gospel, Mark, is just loaded with it.

I can't wait. I can start tomorrow. I mean, I just love it. We need to see the glory. J.C. Ryle wonderfully says it like this. It would be well if professing Christians in modern days studied the four gospels more than they do.

Why do I say this? I say it because the gospels were written to make us acquainted with Christ. His ways, His manners, His feelings, His wisdom, His grace, His patience, His love, His power are graciously unfolded to us by four different witnesses.

Ought not the sheep to be familiar with the shepherd? Ought not the patient to be familiar with the physician? Ought not the bride to be familiar with the bridegroom?

Ought not the sinner to be familiar with the Savior? Beyond doubt, it ought be so. Surely, we cannot know this Christ too well.

[ 32 : 46 ] Surely, there's not a work nor a deed nor a day nor a step nor a thought in the record of His life which ought not be precious to us.

That's what this is. The story of Mark's gospel is the story of Jesus Christ and His glory just explodes from it. Point two, the gospel of Mark teaches us whom to call family.

There's a powerful thread in the gospel of Mark. I told you already that Mark tells you who Jesus' brothers or half-brothers and half-sisters actually because He was born of the Holy Spirit. Let's not get technical.

It tells you who that is but then there's this powerful interplay between His family and Him. Jesus went out and was preaching the gospel and healing people in Galilee and when He came home things didn't go well.

Mark 3, and we have this for you, His mother and His brothers came and standing outside they sent to Him and called Him and the crowd was sitting around and they said to Him, Your mother and brothers are outside seeking You and answered them, Who are my mother and brothers?

[ 33 : 57 ] And looking about at those who sat around Him He said, Here are my mother and brothers for whoever does the will of God he is my brother and sister and mother. Now we know from early in that chapter they thought He was out of His mind.

They're going to have a little family meeting, get things back online, make sure everything aligns with the family mission, straighten Him out. But Jesus' response is a little harsh, right?

Come on man, she's your mom. Jesus knew that following Him one of the biggest obstacles would be family. So He says, Whoever does the will of God he is my brother and sister and mother.

Now that's incredible. It's instructive to Jesus' family quite obviously but also to His disciples it's instructive for us as well.

Jesus says, My family are those who do the will of God. He says, we should say, my family are those who do the will of God. My family are those who bow down low and follow Jesus Christ.

[ 35 : 06 ] Christ. The implication of this is that what binds us together is not a similar view of liberties or politics or child rearing or money spending or anything else.

What binds us together is a similar allegiance and loyalty to God and to Jesus Christ. It's the deepest source of our unity. Ephesians 4 says, there's one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all in case you didn't get the message is one. Right now, our culture is sadly divided along many different lines and if we as a church divide on the same lines, we just show that our real allegiance and loyalty is no different than that of the world. And we will, if we do that, be nothing different than a social club and fade into insignificance for the purposes of God. Leave that with all my heart. We're sitting on a hill.

It's the light of the world. Flight is covered with a bowl or there's a saltiness, it's differentness.

[ 36 : 22 ] It ceases to do anything. We are a place where people of many differences gather together because of a common, a shared allegiance allegiance to Jesus Christ.

It's just vital. I feel like everybody on social media is wanting you to stay down how you're different, you know? And I don't really care.

We all have so many differences. I don't really care what you do with so many things provided this one's above them all. that's who my family is.

That's amazing, isn't it? But there's another really, really, really interesting thing here. Notice, only, can we put that back up actually? Only brother and sister and mother are mentioned.

for whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. Okay? And then look at the promise of reward in chapter 10.

[ 37 : 25 ] We have that for you too. Truly I say to you, there's no one who's left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake or the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions in the age to come.

Father as mentioned as someone they leave but not someone they gain. The idea here, this is cool. Not only are those who do the will of God Jesus' brothers and sisters but Jesus' father is their father. There's no human fathers in the kingdom of God.

There's only one father. The God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I read this morning a prayer about the fatherless. I said, that's right.

I am fatherless. But I have a father in heaven and you do too. That's incredible.

[ 38 : 32 ] Now, I'm so thankful they didn't take out mothers because I need all the moms of my life to straighten me out all the way but this is our new family. This is the family of God. The people who have allegiance to Jesus Christ.

I just love this. Thirdly, the gospel of Mark teaches us how to suffer. The gospel of Mark teaches us how to suffer. Within, written just a few years before his gospel, Peter says, don't be surprised when fiery trials happen to you.

You remember that? Whether it's because of our missteps or our mistakes or tragedies or targeted gossip and slander or whatever, suffering is a sad reality of life under the sun in a fallen world.

But the gospel of Mark, it does begin by warning us about suffering. You know, when it tells the story in the parable of the soils or the parable of the seed, it says, some fall away, the seed on the path falls away because of tribulation and persecution.

And even in that reward we just talked about, you inherit all these things with persecution. Did you notice that? That's a nice little add-in, Lord. But, you know, with persecution, you have to pass through those things.

[ 39 : 34 ] The idea is that suffering is coming, but in so many ways the gospel of Mark doesn't just warn us that suffering is coming. The gospel of Mark introduces us to the suffering servant. Jesus, the Son of God, is the one who suffers in the gospel of Mark.

Everyone else runs away. There's one sufferer for us to identify with and it is the Lord Jesus Christ. And as Christians in Rome and throughout the empire face tribulation and persecution, they take up the gospel of Mark and they read of one who suffered.

They read of Jesus Christ who was bullied, betrayed, beaten, mocked, spat upon, who was persecuted, who was drugged into a kangaroo court in the night and was sentenced by death to crucifixion.

Gloriously, Peter tells us, he suffered once for sin, the righteous, for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. G.K. Chesterton, years ago, they had a newspaper article, what is the problem with

the world?

Everybody could write in and sound off kind of like, dear Abby, what's the problem of the world? G.K. Chesterton wrote in, dear sirs, I am. I am.

[ 40 : 51 ] And that's what the gospel of Mark unfolds for us. Jesus' suffering first and foremost was a suffering for us, for our sin, the great problem of the world. It'd be wonderful if the great problem of the world was out there outside our house, but the great problem of the world is within our home and within our hearts and Jesus delivers us from it as the gospel of Mark makes vividly clear.

Lord willing, and the creek don't rise and 2021 doesn't get too crazy, that's what we're going to do in 2022, beginning in January, we're going to march down to the cross and then on Easter Sunday morning we'll land in Mark 16.

We get like 16 weeks of his descent to Jerusalem. That would be rad. Anywho, that was free. But he also suffered, so he suffered for us, but he also suffered to teach us how to walk.

How do we live as Christians in a broken world? How do we bear up under injustice and persecution? We follow the familiar footsteps of Jesus Christ.

This is not complex. Everything's not going to pot. 1 Peter 2 says, for to this you've been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example.

[ 42 : 20 ] I've never, I've never really understood why Peter plowed into Jesus' example so much in 1 Peter. But after studying this context, this is why.

Paul quite obviously spends a lot more time on his death for us. For our salvation, Peter spends tons of time in his death as our example.

That you might, leaving you as an example so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return.

When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. Follow the way of the steps.

No wonder Jesus decisively said at the high point in the Gospel of Mark, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross. The gate is narrow, but the way is hard that leads to life.

[ 43 : 31 ] We shouldn't be surprised when we face trouble. We should be surprised when we don't. That's why we need the Gospel of Mark. Jesus is the king who takes up the cross and all who take up the cross will stand with the king in the end.

We've titled this series The King's Cross. You Harry Potter fans know that reference. King's Cross is a subway stop in London, England, made famous by Harry Potter books.

It's the way to Platform 9 and 3-4s and the way to Hogwarts. It perfectly encapsulates the Gospel of Mark because chapter 1 through 8 captures Jesus who is the king.

chapters 9 through 16 captures Jesus who takes up a cross. The king's cross. But there's another parallel.

The king's cross is not just for the king. The king's cross is for everyone who follows the king. The cross for me.

[ 44 : 34 ] The cross for you. And all who take up their cross will stand with the king in the end. May God bless us.

Father in heaven, we praise you and worship you. You have not left us alone, but you have given us your word. Your word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

In your light do we see light. So much in this world is distracting, distressing, and debilitating. But when we take up your word, we see.

Oh Lord, our Lord, keep us in your steadfast love. Keep us in your purposes. Would you guide the study of this gospel, this book of the Bible, so that we are left more amazed, more staggered, more in love and in awe of Jesus Christ.

That our lives would be poured out completely for Him. That there would be no rival allegiance and no rival loyalty because Jesus Christ is our Lord.

[ 45 : 50 ] Oh Lord, come and do that work which only you can do. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [trinitygraceathens.com](http://trinitygraceathens.com).