



## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Study Guide Full  
Mark 1:1-13  
September 15, 2019

Thus far, our emphasis throughout our Mark Series has stressed one of the key themes of the gospel—discipleship. For instance, in our last passage we stressed Jesus' redefinition of family in terms of relationships defined by one's active relationship to Christ.

Let us then consider discipleship as Anthony guides us through the first verses of Mark, of John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus. Here we look at the essential matter of discipleship that is baptism. As we delve into the beauty of baptism of our Lord, we would do well to open our study by **reflecting upon our own baptism** in light of Anthony's key sermon points of baptism as:

1) obedience to Christ; 2) a sign of sins washed away; 3) a public declaration of Christ; 4) entry new into life in Christ; 5) a joining of church community; 6) an invitation of the Holy Spirit into our lives; 7) an invitation for God to act in our lives.

*1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,*

*2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:*

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way"—*

*3 "A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.'"*

*4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for*



the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, 13 and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

## Mark 1:1-13

Notes:

### Commentary Notes:

v. 1. One interesting element of Greek study is to discuss "what kind of genitive do we have?" If you don't know what a genitive is, no worries—it is simply a case (a form) of Greek grammar! But know that when we say the "good news of Jesus Christ"—τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ (*tou euangeliou Iesou Christou*—we could mean the good news that is preached by Jesus; the good news about Jesus; the good news, that is Jesus; the good news sourced in Jesus; or perhaps, even, the Jesus-like good news.

### Discussion Questions:

*Discuss:* Noting the commentary notes here, and knowing what you already about the first three chapters of Mark, how would you define the "of" in the "good news of Jesus Christ"? How does the good news of the gospel relate to Christ?

No matter how we define the “of,” what is certain is that the gospel of Jesus is *good news*. (The Greek word for gospel originally had a sense of the reward of good news, as in sacrificing to the ancient gods to receive good news from the gods in return.) Isaiah, John, and Mark’s preaching is undoubtedly good news for its listeners.

**vv. 2-3.** Mark anchors the good news of Jesus Christ in history, drawing upon material that would have been hundreds of years old in his Old Testament citations here. The “Behold I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way” seems to quote Exodus 23:20—“and behold, I send my messenger before your face that he may guard you on the road”—and Malachi 3:1—“Behold, I send out my messenger, and he will look with interest upon the way before my face.” The “voice crying out in the desert: prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths” unmistakably quotes Isaiah 40:3. Note the collective emphasis on the way of preparation—food for thought (see questions)!

**vv. 4-5.** Mark makes clear the ultimate goal of repentance and baptism: “the forgiveness of sins.” Note here that John draws upon Old Testament precedent, as in Psalm 50 (“Wash me, and

*Confess:* Why would so many in secular Vancouver society struggle to describe the church and the message of Jesus as *good news*? Why does Christianity often have a negative perception among most of our non-Christian friends and family? Are there ways that we have failed to adequately describe and live out the gospel as *good news*, and might we confess on behalf of the sins of the church universal?

*Study:* Read Isaiah 40:1-12, one of the key sources of the Old Testament quotation that begins the Gospel of Mark. In terms of “making straight in the desert a highway for our God,” what other important terms and imagery are given in that Isaiah passage that might help us understand John the Baptist’s language in Mark 1?

*Discern:* What might it look like for you to “make straight the paths of the Lord” in your local neighbourhood? In other words, how might you reveal the glory of the Lord in natural, organic ways to those around you? Could it be by visiting the lonely, caring for the marginalized, teaching the young, practicing creation care, etc.? Of what is your particular neighbourhood in Vancouver, your corner, most in need?

*Discuss:* That Matthew speaks of “the whole Judean country” going out to meet John the Baptist implies, even if this is hyperbolic language, a considerable size group. If the narrative of Mark 1 were rewritten today, do you think a similar

and I will be whiter than snow”), and Ezekiah 36:25 (“I will sprinkle upon you clean water, and you will be clean from all your uncleanness”). The action of cleansing is clearly closely associated with a change in a person’s heart and attitude.

That such a change of heart, leading to the formation of a new people, would take place in the “wilderness/desert” is also deeply drenched in OT imagery (Exodus, Numbers, Deut).

**vv. 6-8.** John’s appearance clearly evokes Elijah in 2 Ki 1:8, the garments of a prophet who humbly points to the one greater, that one who will baptize *with the Spirit*.

**vv. 9-11.** These short verses carry huge theological weight, as Mark makes clear Jesus’s identity: he is Israel fulfilled, in being baptized; the one receiving the outpouring of God’s Spirit; the son who is the ultimate Davidic king (Psalm 2:7); God’s beloved; and a new creation (think Genesis 1)! (See Voelz’s *Concordia Commentary*, pp. 132-136.)

**vv. 12-13.** As soon as Jesus is up out of the water (perhaps still wet!), the dove-like Spirit actually drives him out into the desert. There, in language of Israel fulfilled, he triumphs over Satan.

size group would respond in similar fashion? Why or why not? How do you characterize our modern society specifically with regards to repentance?

*Reflect:* What might be, in this season, the wilderness of your own Christian experience? In walking through the wilderness, how can you draw on your baptismal experience as encouragement?

*Confess:* How does repentance mark your life? Do you have regular rhythms of confession?

*Study:* Why grasshoppers and honey? Read Lev 11:2, Deut 32:13, Psalm 81:16, and Isa 7:15 to get some background, and speculate together.

*Reflect:* Share about the joy of your baptismal experience, in the washing away of past sins and beginning of a new life! (Make space in your conversation for those in our church baptized as infants, and for those yet considering baptism.)

*Meditate:* How does the Father’s pleasure in the Son speak, by the Spirit, good news to you this week, as you seek to move closer to Christ?

*Pray:* To whom might God be calling you to minister and serve this week, whether in the form of a shared coffee conversation, help in running errands, or a visit with groceries? Ask the Spirit to put a particular name and face upon your heart.