

Christ Community Covenant Church
Mark: Servant Leader – Kingdom Driven / The beginning of the Gospel
Pastor Dave Scherrer - October 5, 2014

I had planned to study this work with you before I left for Israel. While I was in Israel, I became taken again with the person of Jesus Christ. Of course, what else would a person expect? I began to see the landscape He walked and was exposed to a richer understanding of the times in which He lived. So I used the time to re-read the Gospel of Mark, first in preparation for this sermon series, but also to help me put the events of Jesus' life that I was experiencing into a fresh perspective. It was fun to live Jesus' life in person in two ways – visually and scripturally. It was fun and meaningful to do that reading.

But one thing that happened to me is that as I got increasingly taken with the Jesus story, I found that I wanted to spend more time with this study with you than I had first scheduled. So instead of wrapping up a *survey* of Mark by Christmas, I am now planning to wrap it up by Easter. Unless of course we continue to study the life of Christ till next summer. We shall see!

I think you are going to enjoy - actually, I think you're going to love, you're going to cherish our experience in the Gospel of Mark. And because Mark hits some events and teachings in detail and others he omits entirely, I will be bouncing back and forth a little bit into the other accounts of Christ's life. As you will see today, Mark omits the birth of Christ altogether. I'll tell you why in a minute. But as it turns out, there will be a chance to dive into the birth of Christ here in December. So not to worry!!

The reason I think you are going to enjoy this so much is that you will be spending time with Jesus, head on and singularly focused on Jesus. Over our study we will look at doctrine, we will look at faith and practice, we will look at church traditions and of course historical accounts but always we will be looking at these kinds of things within and through the account of Jesus' life. This is a big deal. I think this kind of study is critical to the Christ Follower. It is important because it helps us get to know Jesus better and that is what a Christ Follower is all about right? Knowing our Teacher, our Hero, our King as well as we can. There are benefits to knowing Christ well. It is of course good and proper to study the life of our savior, but we should also remember there are benefits to knowing Christ:

The benefits of knowing Christ

It is the will of God that we know Jesus and be saved

John 17:3

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

By knowing Jesus we better know the Father and the Spirit

John 14:6-7

⁶ Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

By knowing Jesus we better know ourselves

Philippians 3:10

¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

Let's open to the first few verses of the first chapter and read with the understanding that verse 1 is essentially the title of the book the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Let's stand for the reading of God's word:

Mark 1:1-11

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

² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,

³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ 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. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Of the four gospel accounts, this account of Mark is the most like a ‘docudrama.’ He kind of writes it as a series of ‘clips’ choosing representative events important to his theme for the book. He doesn’t go into Jesus’ birth, His genealogy, he doesn’t attempt to describe Jesus or even look too closely at His inner life. Mark is a fast paced narrative and action is important to Mark. He uses the word ‘immediately’ over 40 times. So who is this fellow Mark? Is there something about him that can give us insight into His rendering of the Gospel?

Who is this man Mark?

Well we have a photo of him . . .



Guido Reni 1620



1657 Tzanes Emmanuel



Donatello 1311

Mark is the cousin of Barnabas and is also known in the scriptures as John Mark. He is called "John" in three of the texts of the New Testament (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37). He was a Jewish man and most scholars believe he was a young man when he became a follower of Christ, perhaps one of the early 70 closest disciples. The early Christians gathered at his family's house in Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). He was not one of the chosen 12 disciples so his eyewitness account of Christ was dependent on his friend and spiritual father Peter. The book of Mark many believe is an account of Peter's sermon and teachings as an apostle of Christ. Early on in his young adult life He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first missionary journey as far as Perga in Pamphylia. Here is the deal with Mark, why you are going to like him and you are going to like his account of Jesus' life and work. He messed up big time.

Maybe you remember that he got sideways with Paul and Paul didn't want to travel with him anymore and chose instead to travel with Silas.

Acts of the Apostles chapter 12, verse 24: *'But the word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark':*

Then chapter 13 and verse 13: *'Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John'; that is, John Mark, 'departing from them returned to Jerusalem'.*

Then chapter 15 **15:36**

And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

For reasons not explained to us fully, he bailed out on Paul in that first missionary journey. He got scared, he got sick, he simply lost faith, we're not really sure. What I can tell you is that any of us traveling with Paul would have chickened out too. Mark was a failure in Paul's eyes and my guess he was a failure in his own eyes as well. That is hard to recover from.

But God broke through in Mark's life and restored him to ministry. God inspired Barnabas to take Mark under his wing and over time Peter too became an important friend in Mark's life. Peter even referred to him as 'his son' in Christ. There was a reason that Peter was drawn to John Mark. You see Peter was a failure too. He too got scared one night and betrayed his Lord. He too felt disqualified and ashamed. He too needed the touch of love to restore him to ministry. And Mark found his passion, so much so that Paul requested Mark in his last days to come to him to encourage and to help him.

Mark the broken man, felt the restoration of Christ. He was the ultimate Kingdom-minded Servant Leader. John Mark remembered the words of Christ and they became a rule of life for him:

John 10:43-45

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

If the Son of God Himself can be a servant of many then that is the lifestyle Mark would pursue.

And John Mark was convinced just like his friend Peter, that Jesus was the Christ, The Son of the Living God. Mark begins and ends his account with the same sentiment. In chapter one as we just read Mark refers to Jesus as being the Son of God in 1:1 and 1:11; and this understanding is matched by the centurion’s declaration at 15:39: “Surely this man was the Son of God.” Jesus’ identity as the Son of God is critical in Mark; this phrase appears at significant points throughout the Gospel (Mark 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6; 13:32; and 14:61).

Mark wants us to make sure that we know this Jesus and that we know that Jesus is sufficient to restore us from our brokenness and our pain and sadness. Jesus has the power and the authority to save us from ourselves and to Himself.

Booth Tucker was a staff member with the Salvation Army and he was preaching in Chicago. A man came up to him after his sermon and was really upset about his sermon. He was extolling the virtues of Christ. And he said to him, “You talk like that about this Jesus Christ and He’s dear to you and you say He helps you and He provides the needs of your life, but if your wife was dead like mine and your little babies were crying for their mother like mine, a mother who would never come back you wouldn’t be standing up here saying what you’re saying.”

A few days after that Booth Tucker lost his wife in a car accident. And her body was brought to Chicago for a funeral. Booth Tucker stood up after the funeral service and looked down into the silent face of his wife and the mother of his little babies. This is what he said, I quote, “The other day when I was here a man said I couldn’t say Christ was sufficient if my wife were dead and my children were crying for their mother. If that man is here I tell him that Christ is sufficient. My heart is bleeding, it is crushed, it is broken but it has a song and Christ put it there. And if that man is here I tell him that though my wife is gone and my children are motherless, Christ speaks comfort to me today.” And Wilson said the man was there. And down the aisle he came, knelt by the casket and gave his life to Christ. It’s not just sympathy, it’s resource we need, isn’t it? Power to overcome our trials and He can provide it.

This is the story of Mark’s Gospel. You see for Mark it is personal. It is the story of love, it is the story of restoration and it is the story of the Christ who died and rose again to give us hope and power and purpose.

Communion as the table of restoration – eating together as a sign of restoration

1 Cor. 11:23-26

The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.