

TITLE: The Gospel of Jesus Christ

PASSAGE: Mark 1:1-13

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: Jesus comes as the Messiah and saviour of the world. He is Good News for us.

STRUCTURE:

- The Gospel
- The Preparation
- The True Israelite

- Before we begin, there are Three things that we need to know about Mark's Gospel:
- A Book about Jesus - the second of four Gospels which are biographies about Jesus.
 - It's about his life, what he did, what he taught, and how he died and rose.
 - Mark is trying to communicate something very important about Jesus
- It's the earliest Gospel account.
 - Mark probably didn't see Jesus face to face, but from church history and other sources, we think that Mark interviewed a bloke called Peter who was one of Jesus' closest disciples and wrote that stuff down. And this probably happened around 60AD - that is roughly 27 years after Jesus walked this earth.
 - Which means - it's very accurate.
 - In the scheme of Ancient History - a 30 year gap from the event to the source is tiny.
 - Just think about this - let's say that someone was writing about the 1990's today. And interviewing different people...writing about the Y2K bug in the computers that were going to end the world...we would say that they could write about that pretty accurately couldn't we?
 - It's the same with Mark.
 - In fact, it was so accurate, that the other Gospel writers - Matthew and Luke were happy to take material from Mark having interviewed other eyewitnesses.
 - This stuff that we're going to see in Mark isn't the stuff of fairytales - this actually happened!
- It's fast paced (until it's not)
 - Mark doesn't waste time or energy on filler. He gets to his point quickly.
 - One of Mark's tools is the word "Immediately". The greek word is "Euthus" - he propels the narrative forward
 - We get miracles, teachings, narrative thrown at us at full throttle -
 - No time for fluff - Just Jesus Unfiltered!
 - Mark only steps off the gas when we get to Jesus' death.
 - Mark slows right down and spends 2 chapters in the space of about 24 hours.
 - That's significant.
 - It's almost as if all of this book is for explaining how this 'Jesus' could die like a slave on a cross...
 - But we'll get to that later....
- But there's a fourth thing about the book of Mark that we need to know
- It's life changing.
 - As we take this page-turner and examine Jesus for who He is, we won't just meet a person that we might read about in a text book - but we're going to meet someone who can radically transform your life now, and your eternity to come.
 - Why? Well, let's take a look...

- **The Good News of Jesus**
- V1 "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"
 - *When you write an essay, you generally always start off with a hypothesis or topic sentence which is essentially a summary statement of the whole essay.*

- And then in your separate points and paragraphs, you do the same. You tell them what you're going to tell them, you tell them, and then you tell them what you've told them.
- Well - this is Mark's topic sentence for the whole book. He's telling us what he's going to tell us.
- And it's the Gospel of Jesus Christ - the son of God.
- So then let's break it down even further,
- What is a Gospel? What does Gospel even mean?
- In the original language that Mark was writing in - Greek - the word is euangelion.
- And this word means - Good News.
- In the times when Mark was writing, this word was fairly common.
- It was often used in Military victories..
 - What would happen is that the countries would go into battle, one would win - and then they would send a messenger back to the home town to spread the Euangelion or the good news, or the Gospel - of the victory of the country or empire.
- So - Mark is telling us of the good news of Jesus. News of the events of what has happened. He's not making stuff up - he is retelling the good news.
- And notice - that it's not good advice..
- So often, people put Christianity in the category of good advice.
 - It's good advice to brush your teeth twice a day, it's good advice to get 10,000 steps in, it's good advice to eat your 2 fruit and 5 veg a day - Oh and it's good for you to go to church...
 - But no - Jesus isn't like this - Jesus is good news
- Good advice generally says do this or purchase this:
 - Try this new restaurant;
 - Purchase this new face cream;
 - Try this new gym; or
 - You should get this new robot vacuum cleaner!
 - Do this mindfulness practise
- But Good News is something that has already been done for you.
- Good advice says do this - Jesus says "It is finished"
- What we're reading here in Mark isn't a list of good morals to follow, it isn't a list of ways to live your best life now, it isn't a way to get rich fast or get good health and prosperity - It's the good news of what Jesus has done for us:
 - Which then will give us life transformation and eventually eternal life.
- This is euangelion - good news.
- And it's the good news about Jesus Christ
- Christianity is all about Jesus. Here at St John's, we are a church that is all about Jesus.
- Christianity isn't about religious rule following - it's about a relationship with God through Jesus!
- The name Jesus means 'The Lord Saves'
- And Christ means "Messiah" or the Saviour - Christ isn't Jesus' last name - but it's his title and position
- Mark is all about the good news of Jesus who saves - who is the Messiah.
- *In modern terms - a Messiah can be seen as a bad thing.*
 - *We sometimes say that people who think they are the best thing since sliced bread and is going to rescue the world - have a bit of a "Messiah complex."*
 - *Whether it be a politician, a sports coach or captain, or even a minister at a church!*
 - *A Messiah complex is not a good thing to have!*
- But with Jesus, the title and position of Messiah has its roots deep in the history of Israel, deep in Jewish history.
- The History of Israel can be found in the Old Testament of our bibles.
- And it has its up and downs - kind of on the broad perspective a downward trajectory.

- Israel was chosen by God to be his special people, to be unique in the world - and to live differently.
- And if they lived with Him as their God - it was all going to go amazingly well for them.
- But ultimately, Israel rejected God as their Lord time and time again - and so they ended up exiled from their land for 70 years, but after returning they were a small, divided nation, under the thumb of foreign rulers.
- But all throughout Israel's history - God sent messengers or prophets to the nation to tell them that there was going to be the ultimate forever King that he is going to send. This person is going to give complete victory and salvation for the nation of Israel.
- This person is going to obey God and lead his people.
- The title for this person is the Messiah.
- And so throughout the history of Israel - people were looking for this Messiah but by the time Jesus came, some had even given up looking for him!
- But here - Mark states it plainly in his topic sentence, that his Book is about Jesus who is the long awaited and promised **Messiah!**
- He is going to rescue not just the Israelites but all people! You and me.
- And he isn't going to rescue us from an earthly power or an earthly kingdom and military, but he came to save us from the power of Satan. He came to rescue us from the sin and darkness and death that separates us from God.
- He has come to give us eternal life, forgiveness, and his amazing grace!
- He came to die for us to rescue us!

- That's why he is the Messiah and the saviour.
- He is OUR saviour.
- He is good news.

- But he isn't just an ordinary human
- V1 "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, **the Son of God**"
- Now I promise that we are going to speed up eventually
- But Mark wants us to know that Jesus is the Son of God.
- He is God in flesh.
- God himself turned up for us to save us!
- He is the God - Man. 100% God, 100% Human.
- If you're new to St John's, we did a whole series on this at the end of last year on what it called the Incarnation. You can go onto the website and have a listen to it!

- So all throughout this series, we'll be talking about Jesus! Because that's what Mark is about.
- It's written so that we are left in no doubt, after sitting with a good cup of tea or coffee - that Jesus is the Messiah and saviour and that Jesus is the Son of God.
- That he is the one with all power and authority - and the one who is completely loving and gracious for all who turn to him.

- And that's what Mark talks about in this next section of his introduction.
- He talks about the preparation for Jesus.
- He gives a very brief account of the ministry of a bloke called John the Baptist.

- **The Preparation for Jesus**
- We aren't given too much of an intro to John here in Mark
- But he has a very important role - as foretold in the Old Testament as well.
- He came to usher in this new era. He came to prepare the nation of Israel for its coming Messiah.
 - V2 "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

- He is the forerunner to Jesus and to make a way for Jesus, calling people to turn back to God.
 - He was essentially saying to people “Get ready, get your stuff into order, because something new and amazing is coming! The Messiah is coming - so turn back to God. Repent. Turn away from Sin - get ready for Jesus”
- And he did this thing called baptism.
- In a river, dipping people under the water.
- This dipping in Jewish belief was a ritual of a symbol of cleaning, cleansing of sin.
- For John, it was a symbol of people turning from their sins.
 - Sin is the word that's used for rebellion against God.
 - And to repent is to turn away from sin, and turn away from rebelling against God - and turn towards living FOR God.
- And that's the way to get ready for Jesus, that's the way to make straight paths for him, that's the way to receive his salvation - repent and turn back to God!
- Because Jesus is so much greater than anyone who has lived.
- Jesus himself said that there was no one greater than John the Baptist, and yet Jesus is far greater than even he is
- V7 “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.”
- But John is saying - Jesus is so great, that he isn't worthy enough to do the foot washing...
 - A job given to the lowest of the low in the ranks of servants...
- And Jesus is going to give a better baptism as well - he is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit - he is going to give the very presence of God!
- John is essentially saying - Hey everyone - don't look at me, look at Jesus!!
- **The Obedience of Jesus**
- But the very first thing that Mark records Jesus as doing - is going to John and getting baptised.
- Mark doesn't tell us exactly why...
 - It's definitely not because Jesus had any sin to repent of..
 - But it could be Jesus identifying with us who do need to repent...
- But let's see what Mark does tell us:
- V9 “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.””
- Remember Mark's topic sentence - the Good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
- Well here are the first two proofs
 - John's statements about the greatness of Jesus;
 - And voice from heaven when Jesus is baptised - and the spirit coming down on him.
- This is the heavenly vindication and proof of who Jesus is. This is the seal of authority!
 - The Spirit symbolised in the dove and the Father in the voice - both reveal who Jesus is.
 - The Son of God.
 - The Messiah.
- And the next thing that Jesus does - is go out into the wilderness for 40 days.
- V12 “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 him.
- Yes, Jesus was tempted to sin, tempted to reject God just as the Israelites were - but he didn't sin.
- Tempted as we are - but he didn't sin.

- And yet - undeserving of it - 30 years later he died the death that we deserved because of our sin.
- So that we could have life and life eternal with God.
- This is Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.
- And Jesus is Good news.
- Over the next 10 weeks, we're going to see more and more of this good news unfold as we see Jesus unfiltered throughout the pages of Mark.
- And if you haven't yet - I want to urge you, seriously look into the life of Jesus. Take a bible, read the book of Mark - come back next week! Because Jesus is life changing and life giving.
- Some of you may know that a few weeks ago I flew down to Sydney for a night to visit my grandfather who has been in hospital for a month and probably doesn't have much time left on this earth.
- Pa as he is known to us grandchildren believes in Jesus and has been instrumental and inspirational in my walk with Jesus.
- And I get to the hospital bed - Pa's looking very very thin as no one has really seen him before - he and I had a bit of a chat and he got a bit tired and went to sleep. So as there always is with Pa, there was a bible nearby.
- So I thought "well - we're doing Mark soon, so why not read through it again"
- But as I read these very words - I wept.
- It was a mix of tears of sadness of course - but of hope and joy!
- Because both he and I know the difference that Jesus makes.
- We know that because of Jesus, the powers of sin and death have been destroyed. We know that Jesus is the Messiah and that Jesus is the Son of God.
- We know the Gospel!
- Death won't be the end for Pa - but just the beginning of a restored eternity with God!
- That's all because of Jesus!
- Jesus is the best news ever! Not good advice - but GOOD NEWS!
- It's real! It's alive - it's life changing, life-restoring, eternity-assuring
- And today - if you haven't yet turned to him, made way for Jesus in your life - Turn! Repent and believe in the good news!
- As Jesus says in these next verses:
 - 15b ““The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”