

The Son of God • Mark 1:1-11

Ryan Perz • December 17, 2023

I realized how different the world we live in has changed a few years ago when I was going about the routine business of getting gas for my vehicle. It was at a gas station in the rural Midwest.

Usually it was very quiet, winds blew, and it smelled like farms. As I started to pump my gas, I heard a strange voice talk to me.

It was not a neighbor who knew me by name.

It was not a stranger pumping gas at the adjacent pump.

It was a voice on a screen giving me a rundown of all the important news of the day.

The gas station had just installed new pumps with screens so I never miss a moment—so a voice always fills the void of space and quiet.

*The world we live in has changed because there are always voices bombarding us coming through on screens.

-Some we willingly solicit; others, like at the gas pump, start talking whether we like it or not.

- The point is that with all the bombarding voices, which ones stands out?

Which one is most important?

Which ones are life giving?

Which ones are noise and garbage?

- Mark wrote this text 2000 years ago so people will listen to the right voices.
- This Advent we are taking a chapter from each of 4 Gospels to see the Beauty of our Lord Jesus.

Mark's gospel, written to Roman Gentiles, gives us the Gospel of Jesus, The Son of God (v1).

- › A strong statement of Jesus's divinity

“The divinity of Christ is the citadel and keep of Christianity.” (JC Ryle)

- This text helps us to hear the right voices when it comes to Christ:
 - A voice in the wilderness
 - A voice from heaven
- Both come together in perfect harmony so we hear the beautiful chorus of the gospel.

A voice in the wilderness (1-8)

- Marks gospel wins out with the quickest jump back to the Old Testament (OT) to grab a quotation.
- In v2, the OT is quoted. This is what is called a composite citation (3 different OT texts).

—Ex. 23:20; Is. 40:3; Mal. 3:1

- Now last week we looked at Joseph as a model of a man.
- I see the same thing going on with John the Baptist. He is a model of good, gospel preaching.

*John had a key role in Redemptive History. He is the last line of the OT Prophets.

Malachi 4:5 ESV

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”

- You may wonder why it mentions his unique diet and dress? It almost seems like a passing comment (V6). It matched Elijah the prophet so we can make the connection. (2 Kings 1:8)

John the Baptist also models Good Gospel Preaching.

How he spoke. What he spoke. Why he spoke.

1) How he spoke:

Now if we were to have a baptism service, we would say: “We are doing baptism; holding a service; having baptisms.”

But the text here reads differently.

“John baptized, and proclaimed a baptism...” (v4).

In other words, this was no ritual to attend. This wasn't a bandwagon to jump on because it was going viral. The act of baptism is distinctly tied to the message *proclaimed*.

- Twice our attention is drawn to how John spoke: proclaimed (v4); preached (v6).

Now this may not sit well in a culture so shaped by postmodern philosophy that values dialogue and conversation over lecture.

Yet the gospel is not something to sit and have endless conversations about. The nature of it demands proclamation.

**Good gospel preaching is proclamation.*

2) What he spoke:

- This ties to his calling: prepare people to be ready for God.

Isaiah 40:3 ESV

A voice cries:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

- If you were coming into the Holy Land from the East (place of exile) —the uneven terrain needed leveled out.

This is a metaphor of getting your life in order; moral and social reform.

Two specific ways this happens: Confession and Repentance

Repenting (v4)

- Repentance: when your sin really cuts you to the heart so you desire for it to be cut from your life.

You will have to beg God for the mercy and power!

- Notice that repentance and forgiveness go together.
- Confession (v5) —public, verbal

Good gospel preachers don't lose calling people to confess and repent.

I'm the type of person who likes to go all-in with hobbies. Why do anything half-hearted? As an example, a few years ago I had an urge to learn the bagpipes. How many folks can play?

I heard that you start off by playing the tin whistle. So I picked up a few tin whistles, spent time devouring YouTube videos and squeaking my way through "Be Thou My Vision".

I know how to go hard into a new hobby.

Just the other night, I asked my wife: Where are my tin whistles?

How often do we do that with the crucial things like repentance and confession.

We go into them hard for a short stint, but then it drops off and they are forgotten.

John warned the Pharisees and scribes who presumed on God.

(Mt. 3:8) "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance".

3) Why he spoke

- Some people like to talk publicly to get a platform, get noticed, to hear themselves.

Even a lot of preachers can do it since it strokes the ego.

Good gospel preachers do it for one reason: To exalt the worth of Christ.

To prepare people to see his glory.

We see this from two different angles:

1. (V7)—His own unworthiness
- Unstrapping a person's sandals was the work of slaves—and specifically Gentile slaves. (Especially meaningful illustration to Gentile readers)

- › *In other words, John sees no entitlement whatsoever—he is not demanding Green Room treatment.*

2. (V8)—The surpassing Greatness

**See the key difference is the work that a gospel preacher can and can't do.

A gospel preacher can study the Bible hard, pray a lot, and be a willing instrument.

But, a gospel preacher can't change your heart.

He can't move your affections.

He can't cause you to hate your sin, love your Savior, live in wisdom and joy and worship.

And can't make anyone born again or give you eternal life.

- V8: John could work in the external (baptism water); but knows he can't do the internal work.

“Baptized with Holy Spirit” means life-transformation.

Good gospel preaching aims at life-transformation. Not just forgiveness, but newness of life.

One test to know if you are hearing the right voice—a gospel preaching voice—is that it will call you to sincere, Spirit-produced, Jesus-centered, life transformation.

A voice from heaven (9-11)

- What's different about Mark's gospel is that we don't see Jesus as an infant. We meet him immediately as an adult man about to enter his public ministry.
- This is one of the texts in the Bible where we see all 3 persons of Trinity present.

We should not breeze too quickly past references to the Spirit and how it uniquely connects to Christ.

—An outpouring and move of God’s Spirit was anticipated in the OT when the Messiah came:

Isaiah 61:1 ESV

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

We never want to be one dimensional in our understanding of God’s Work in salvation.

- We see all 3 persons of Trinity, but hear the distinctive voice of One.
- The awesome voice that was heard was God the Father’s (also 9:7).

—It’s another composite that has two OT texts floating in the back (Ps. 2:7 & Is. 42:1)

- Hearing the Father’s voice here marks the beginning of Jesus’s ministry; It’s the divine seal of approval on His Son and the work he will do.

That work is preaching, healing, forgiving—ultimately dying.

Mark 10:45 ESV

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- › This is the gospel in a nutshell—that Jesus comes as a Suffering Servant, foretold Is. 53, to give his life up sacrificially on a cross to save many,

Who do you think would be the most unlikely person to confess Christ?

A good candidate would be one who oversaw his death.

One who helped in his execution.

A roman soldier.

But the gospel often works in such surprising ways.

Mark 15:37–39 ESV

And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

- Notice the beautiful parallels as Jesus breathes his last: Heaven is not torn open this time— but the temple curtain—same greek word used in 1:11 & 15:38.

Symbolizing that many can come in.

And then a voice: “Truly this man was the son of God.”

Some doubt that this soldier became a Christian...that’s a bunch of nonsense.

1 Corinthians 12:3 ESV

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

So why did the Holy Spirit put this in Mark’s Gospel?

—Maybe to encourage Christians to keep proclaiming the gospel.

—Maybe so that non Christians can see that anyone can confess.

—Maybe it’s to give hope to Roman Gentile Christians that their suffering is not in vain; just like Jesus’s suffering was not wasted, God does not waste suffering.

But also to see what hearing the voice leads to:

For all who confess Jesus as the Son of God, who see him by faith....

The Glory of the Lord has been revealed...that’s what we hear in the voice.

Isaiah 40:5 ESV

And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

This is what it means to be a Christian.

Not just saying the right thing; but seeing the glory of God in Jesus.

In a world of endless voices coming at us—

May we hear his mighty voice.

May our appetite for his glory and greatness increase this Advent.