

The Person of Deliverance

Deliverance

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Bible Text: Mark 1:1-15
Preached On: Sunday, September 5, 2021

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This morning, let me encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Mark, the second book in your New Testament. The gospel of Mark. As you're turning there, allow me to share with you that of all the four gospels, the gospel of Mark is the shortest of all four, however, it just so happens to be probably the most action-packed of all the gospels. Today, we're going to begin in chapter 1 and in just a moment, we're going to read stories in the gospel of Mark that other gospels take half a chapter and here in Mark we'll just have two or three verses. And so as we walk through the gospel of Mark in this season of our church's life, understand that the number of verses that we read may not have a whole lot of quantity, however, the quality of the story, we're going to be going to some of the other gospel accounts and not necessarily reading in but grabbing some of the details therein, and the purpose of walking through the gospel of Mark is because even though the entirety of scripture testifies to what I'm about to share, it is the gospel of Mark that so clearly shows us that Jesus Christ has come to be our deliverer, that he has come to bring deliverance in our lives.

Now can we just confess not because we're in a Baptist church but because we're human, that the word "deliverance" is not a comfortable word. In fact, on one side of the spectrum when somebody says I need deliverance or I've been delivered, there is this imagery of shaking on the ground, convulsions or whatnot, and then for others of you when you hear the word "deliverance," you think back woods, banjos or something in between, all right? And so rightfully so, but allow me just to give you a very simplistic dictionary definition of what deliverance is. What does it mean to be delivered? It means to be set free. It means to have bondage or shackles removed from one's life. It means to be taken out of one environment and placed in a different one.

Now having heard that definition, in spite of how our culture has couched the word, can we testify this morning that we all need to be set free? Can we testify this morning we all need to have some level of bondage removed out of our lives? And can we testify that there are some areas and places of our life that we need the Lord to remove us from and place us in a new environment, whatever that looks like? So when we come to the gospel of Mark, what we see is simply this, that God is the deliverer in each and every one of our lives, and as we walk through the gospel of Mark, we're going to see the place in

which he delivers, and the manner in which he delivers, but it behooves us this morning as we begin in chapter 1 to lay a foundation.

Who is the person that can and is willing to deliver us, because you realize that almost every person that you come into contact with, no matter what their level of authority, in our world today they're promising some level of deliverance if you will sign up with their agenda. They will promise you some deliverance if you will walk the path that they are walking, yet how many more false paths are we going to have to walk until we finally say, "I'm tired and I'm not going to hear those voices anymore"? This morning, we're going to make a declaration that the only one who can truly set us free, the only one who can break the bondage of the shackles of life, and the only one who can remove us out of the mess of our lives is Jesus Christ alone.

So as we open up the gospel of Mark, beginning in verse 1, for 15 verses we're actually going to get four stories in a very short amount of time. It says,

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; 2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; 7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. 8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. 9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. 10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: 11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him. 14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Yes, it is an introduction to the story and the life of Jesus Christ but more importantly we have four accounts this morning that kind of set the stage. If we're going to claim that Jesus Christ is the only true deliverer for our lives, then there needs to be some validity there, there needs to be something that we can place not just our lives but our eternity on.

So taking kind of these four stories this morning and breaking them down, the first thing we see is that there is a declaration. Verse 1, what an introduction, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Now think about the purpose there. The entire 16 chapters of the gospel of Mark are wrapped up in this purposeful declaration: this is gospel. Now we use that word in our culture, "Oh, that's the gospel of truth and, hm, that's the gospel," but the word simply means "good news." So the entirety of the gospel of Mark begins, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ."

What does it mean that it's good news? Is it just me or do I feel like everybody else is inundated with nothing but good news lately? We're surrounded with destruction, we are surrounded with devastation and as you take a cursory walk through the New Testament here's what you discover, in John 10:10 Jesus Christ makes this statement, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy." You know, the bad news is that's a reality. There is thievery in our world. There is death in our world. There is destruction in our world. But do you know what the second half of that verse says, "but I have come that they may have life more abundantly." It's good news in the midst of a world of lying and cheating and stealing, we can possess what Jesus Christ called abundant life.

Four chapters later in John 14, here the disciples were struggling not only with what Jesus was teaching but how to know, "How do we know that this and you are truly the way?" Remember what Jesus says in verse 2 and 3? He says, "For I have prepared a place for you. If it were not so, I would have told you. I will come again and where I am, there you will be with me." It's good news not only that he can deliver us from this present evil world but he can deliver us from all of eternity.

You go into the book of Romans 5 and it says, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The good news is whether it be this life, whether it be the next life, our sin condition, our rebellious nature, time and time again, over and over it says whatever we're dealing with Jesus Christ has come to bring us good news.

In Galatians 1:4, if you've ever questioned what is the will of God for my life, do you know what it says there? "This is the will of God," this is verse 4, "that you would be delivered from this present evil world." The very first verse says this is the good news. All of that which surrounds us and all of that which entraps us can be dismissed through whom? Notice how it ends, verse 1, "Jesus Christ the Son of God."

You know, that phrase that's utilized there, it takes me back to Matthew 16. Let me set the stage for you. Matthew 16, Jesus Christ has purposefully brought the disciples to Caesarea Philippi. Nothing he did was by chance. Nothing was by accident. Nothing was by happenstance. The message he had, the question he needed to ask could only truly be asked in Caesarea Philippi for there was the place where every religion of ancient days was practiced. There was the place where people would come and they would meditate for days on end to somehow absolve the darkness out of their life. That was also the place where young mothers would come and cast their babies into the fire hoping to somehow appease the gods of their wrongdoing. It was a place of religion but it was a place of darkness.

Jesus Christ asked a very important question, he says, "Who do you say that I am?" Now think about where he asked that question. Everything around them promised deliverance, everything around them promised that if you got on board with whatever they claimed and preached and prophesied, that you'd have whatever is bothering you removed. He said in the midst of that, "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter, one of the very few times he did not have to insert his foot when he spoke, he said, "You are Christ, the Son of the living God." Remember what Jesus Christ replied to him with? "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father which is in heaven." What a declaration, that we can be set free, we can have bondages removed from our lives, we can have deliverance but it can only come through the person of Jesus Christ. It can't come through a philosophy, a religion, agenda, a movement. It has to come through Jesus.

Now by the time we get to verse 2, the Lord has wonderfully prepared for us how we can verify this. It's what I'd like to call the preparation. How did the Lord prepare our hearts? How did he prepare humanity for this message of good news? And by the time you get to verse 2 it says, "As it is written in the prophets." Now that's interesting because in verse 2 and 3 there are actually two prophetic statements from two Old Testament books of the Bible and they're in absolute chronological backwards order. In verse 2, it's a quotation from the book of Malachi. Verse 3 is a quotation from the book of Isaiah. You might question what would the purpose of that be? Have you ever had a conversation with somebody and you say, "Well, if you don't believe me, ask So-and-so. And if you don't believe them, ask So-and-so." And you can continue to bring sources up. Allow me to kind of give a little commentary here. When you get to verse 2, he says, "If you don't believe that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the good news we've been desiring, all you've got to do is go back 400 years ago and talk to Malachi. And if 400 years ago isn't good enough for you, how about you go 800 years ago?" In other words, all these prophets from different places and in different times all spoke the same message. In fact, if you want to get technical, your Old Testament contains 48 specific prophecies, 48 specific things that Jesus Christ would be and do through his life, his ministry, his death and his resurrection. And going back 400 years, going back 800 years, not only testifies that he was not a self-fulfilled prophet but it verifies for us, it prepares us that the one humanity has been longing for is right before them. You know, in Romans 5:6 it makes this incredible statement, "In due time, Christ died for us." It's almost as if the preparation had been laid out, the prophecies had been spoken. You could go back to the dusty shelves and you could ask yourself, "Does Jesus Christ actually match what the prophets said the Messiah would be?" Everything from his birth to his manner of death to his resurrected body.

But then there's this unique person who prepares his way, one of my favorite characters in the Bible. In fact, you know, one of those interview questions that people like to ask, if you could have dinner or supper one night with three historical figures, which ones would you pick? I just think John the Baptist, I'd want him at my table, if for nothing else, just to see how bad the stench would be. I mean, seriously, when you think about whom we know as John the Baptist, look at his description. Here is this one who according to the Bible had a supernatural miraculous birth. His dad was so disbelieving of the Lord, the

Lord shut his mouth until his birth. One of which we basically hear nothing of for about three decades and all of a sudden look how this guy's dressed. I mean, he's got a unique look and I hate to use this analogy but I think it will help us. He basically had the look of a leather-clad Jedi from Star Wars. That's the best thing I can describe it as. He's coming out of the wilderness and he's eating locusts and honey. We'll talk about that in just a moment.

But it's interesting, what does he do? He goes down to the river Jordan and he starts baptizing people. Now we're going to talk more about this in just a moment but do you find it odd what the detractors ask him? Now I know it's not recorded here in the gospel of Mark but if you go into Matthew 3 we have a very elongated story. The religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, they all show up and they ask him this question, "Are you him or is there somebody else that we need to be looking for?" You know, I don't know about you and maybe I'm just somewhat naive, but nobody in the Old Testament baptized anybody for any reason, and if all of a sudden I'm walking down the street and all of a sudden there's a guy putting people under the water and pulling them back up, I'd have to ask myself why is this happening, why is this guy...? This just... I want you to hear something: nobody questioned what he was doing, they questioned who he was. And what did he say time and time again? It's quoted in the prophet, "I have come to prepare the way." Remember John's words when they went to follow him? He said, "Behold, the Lamb of God," pointing to Jesus, "which takes away the sins of the world."

But I want to focus on his diet. It's an interesting collection. I would say that most of us would not choose to have this for Sunday lunch after church, but according to verse 6, he did eat locusts and wild honey. Now that's not only an interesting choice of diet, it's also a very preparatory diet. Let me share what I mean. You know, in the book of Exodus locusts had a very strategic meaning. When the locusts came through, when the plagues came upon Egypt, what took place? All the grass was removed. If you did not question the judgment of God when the water turned to blood, then you did when the locusts came through because there was nothing left. And I don't know if you've ever been in an environment where there is a swarm of locusts in the area, but it is one of the most frightening sounds you will ever hear.

So there is this diet of locusts. What did the locusts represent all through the Old Testament? It was the judgment of God, that if the locusts come, even the prophet Joel talked about the locusts of days ahead. He came preaching judgment but then there's also honey, honey with the sweetness of its taste. You see, the preparatory message that John the Baptist not only preached in his demeanor but in his diet was that judgment is looming unless one receives the grace of Jesus Christ. Everything he did, everything he said was to prepare us. As those individuals went into the water and came out of the water, as he ate lunch with them and supper with them, it was a consistent message that there is one coming to deliver you. If you receive him, it will be as sweet as honey. If you reject him, it will be like the locusts who stormed through Egypt.

Then there is the confirmation. You see, it's been declared that the good news comes only through Jesus Christ. It was prepared not only by Malachi and Isaiah but a multitude of prophets, and in particular the person of John the Baptist. Then we get into verse 9, probably one of the most misunderstood events not just in the life of Jesus Christ but in the totality of scripture. It says, "It came to pass in these days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and he was baptized of John in the Jordan." Now this is one of those points where typically we kind of take a step back and go, "That makes me a little uncomfortable." And allow me to help you out because today we had the privilege of witnessing a baptism, we have the privilege on a regular basis, and I think one of the problems is we see the baptism of Jesus through the lens of our own baptism.

Allow me to do what 2 Timothy 2 says, let me kind of rightly divide for just a moment. Why would anybody today, you or myself, why would we be baptized? Baptism, as you witnessed in this service, is simply a testimony of one's belief in Jesus Christ. It pictures the death and burial of Jesus Christ. It pictures that we've been buried with him in our sins and risen to new life. But there is nobody today that would ever need to be baptized apart from their admission of having a sin condition that Jesus saved them from. That's why we do it, but that's not why Jesus did, and I'll be honest with you, you can go home tonight and you can Google until you want to Google all day long and you're going to find millions of different explanations for why Jesus Christ was baptized but can I share with you the most obvious and the most simplistic that oftentimes is overlooked? Do you know the best way to interpret the Bible is with the Bible, right? And when you look back in the Old Testament, you think about those key critical figures. Sure, there's King David who established the kingdom more than any others and his throne according to Psalm 110 will be everlasting, but I think that critical figure that set the stage was a guy by the name of Moses. Moses was the one – listen – who led them in deliverance. He's the one that took them from the bondage of Egypt to the freedom ultimately of the Promised Land.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, it makes this incredible statement that the Israelites in the Old Testament were baptized unto Moses. That's an interesting choice of words but think about it for just a moment. What you saw in this service was a picture, right? It was a picture of being raised to new life out of the bondage of sin. Can you imagine the picture that the exodus gives us? Those Israelites on one side of the sea are in bondage, on the other side they're in freedom. And what took place? Even though they walked on dry land, they were surrounded by the waters.

In Deuteronomy 18:18, Moses through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit makes this statement, that there will be one who rises up in like manner as he. Here's what Moses was saying, "If you want to know who the real deliverer is, just look to the one whose ministry and life is almost a mirror image of what I did with you coming out of Egypt." By the way, back in Matthew 3, John the Baptist comes to Jesus and says, "Whoa, this is backwards. I need to be baptized by you." Do you remember what he said? "We must suffer that the scripture will be fulfilled." Jesus Christ wasn't baptized because he had a sin condition. Jesus Christ wasn't baptized to say "he had been saved." Jesus Christ was baptized to say, "Moses delivered you from Egypt, I've come to deliver you from hell." That's why he was baptized.

Then we have the persons. Look in verse 10 and 11. It's a unique place not just in Mark but in the totality of scripture. It says, "And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." All three persons of the Trinity confirm it. The Holy Spirit descends, the Father speaks as Jesus Christ comes out of that water saying, "I am the true deliverer of humanity." You want confirmation, not just the fulfillment, anybody could have gone to the river Jordan and said, "I'm the one Moses talked about," but when the Father speaks, and when the Spirit descends, you now have confirmation that everything that's been spoken for hundreds of years, everything we've been desiring to take place is this person, Jesus Christ.

Last but not least, we have the temptation. Beginning in verse 12, there's just a few verses that Luke 4 and Matthew 4 go at great length to explore. In fact, if you go into those other gospels, it will talk about the temptation to turn the rock into bread, there is the temptation to come down off the pinnacle of the temple and let the angels take charge of him, and there is the temptation to take what we might call the kingdoms of the earth if only he will bow down to Satan.

I find it interesting here in the gospel of Mark, if you allow me to paraphrase it, Jesus went in, Jesus came out, it's going to be okay. That's really how it's worded here, but let's think about that for a moment. What was the purpose? Notice what it says, the Spirit drove him. Now maybe that's never bothered you before but maybe you've struggled with some things, maybe you've walked through some difficult past. Does it bother you that it could be the Spirit of God that drove you to those places, those areas? So what was the purpose? What was the purpose for Jesus Christ being in the wilderness for 40 days? What was the purpose of him rejecting all the things that the enemy threw at him? Do you know what the purpose was? So that when you called upon him as deliverer, you would have no question at all that he was completely capable of delivering you.

You see in the book of 1 John 2, beginning in verse 15, it says, "love not the world, neither the things of the world because the things of the world are not of God." And then there's three categories the Bible gives us, "for the lust of the eyes, for the lust of the flesh, and the pride of this life are those things which go contrary to the things of God." Think about those three categories for just a moment, that which you see that you want to obtain, that's what you desire to experience that you think will make whatever you hope to happen come true, and then the pride of life, possessing whether it be things or titles or accolades.

Now again, in the book of Hebrews 4:15, there is this little nugget in scripture, it says that our high priest, Jesus Christ, was not like any other priest for he understood our infirmities and he was tempted – listen to this – in all manners as we are. Now when we look at that verse, we think to ourselves "in all manners." Jesus Christ didn't have to deal with the technology we have today. He didn't have to deal with a lot of the structures we have today. How could he understand my problem? How could he understand my

shackles? How could he understand my bondage? How could he understand the life I'm walking through? Because everything you're walking through can either be categorized as the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life.

So we look at this temptation, it is so simplistic in Mark. You say, "Why is it so simple? Why don't we have the details?" Because it goes back to verse 1, this is the beginning of the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The entire purpose that the Lord is communicating to us through the gospel of Mark is that Jesus Christ can be and desires to deliver us, and so the details are not as important as the fact that he walked out of the wilderness completely unscathed which leads us to the final two verses, verses 14 and 15. It says, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Think about that, this declaration that he is the one who can deliver, this preparation through hundreds of years of prophetic utterances, this confirmation with identifying with Moses and the Father and the Spirit being a part of all things, and last but not least, for 40 days he is subjected to a nonstop beating by the enemy and he walks out unscathed.

Why? It's that last statement, it's at hand, repent and believe. You see, when we talk about the person of deliverance whether you realize it or not, every single one of us is seeking deliverance. You don't believe me? Then why do you watch the weather channel? Because you want to be delivered from the heat or delivered from the bad weather. You want to make sure that your environment is desirous. Why do we watch the news? We want to know what to avoid, what not to avoid. Why do you watch the stock market? You want to know where to put things, where not to put things.

All the aspects of life are really wrapped up in we really are seeking deliverance, but that final statement in verse 15, do you know what the temptation is? The temptation is to find deliverance in anything and everything other than the only one who can deliver us. Let us not be guilty as many have been of seeking deliverance, seeking our shackles being taken off by another person, another thing, another accomplishment of whatever it may be. The foundation, the purpose, the person of our deliverance can only be fulfilled through Jesus Christ so why would we look anywhere else?