

Leader Resources for Small Groups | March 8, 2020

4 Gospels — Mark: The Gospel of Action

Focus Passage: Mark 1:1–11

Additional Context:

Corollary Scripture: Mark 8:27–28; 15:33–39

Other Passages Referenced: Psalm 2:7; Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3

Sermon Recap: The Gospel of Mark is widely recognized as the earliest written of the four gospels. Mark is distinct from the other gospels in that it is shorter, faster-paced, and repeatedly records Jesus not wanting people, or even demons, to spread the news about who He is—“the Messianic Secret”. Mark’s purpose is to persuade the audience that Jesus of Nazareth is the unique Son of God and the Jewish Messiah (Savior King). At Jesus’ baptism and during His crucifixion, Mark used the word “torn” to show that Jesus came to tear open the heavens to give us access to a right relationship with God, one that our sin had prevented us from having apart from Jesus. Jesus identified with us in our sin and calls us to identify with Him in our suffering and serving. Are you identifying with this Jesus who identified with you? Have you entered into His Kingdom?

Interpretive Helps

- The Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark. It is helpful to realize that the New Testament mentions three different men named John—(1) John the Baptist, (2) John, one of Jesus’ 12 disciples who wrote the Gospel of John, the Epistles of John, and the Book of Revelation, and (3) John Mark, more commonly known just as Mark.
- The first line that introduces Mark’s Gospel is one of the only editorial comments Mark makes. The rest of the gospel is essentially telling action stories about Jesus without further commentary. However, this first verse is packed with theological importance. “Jesus Christ” is more literally “Jesus the Christ,” where “Christ” is a title rather than a last name. “Christ” literally means “anointed one” and translates the Hebrew word “Messiah” which referred to God’s specially anointed King He had promised to send through the lineage of Abraham and King David. Not only was Jesus this specially anointed King, but He was also the Son of God.

Comments to Leaders

1. The sermon focused on three truths from Mark 1:9–11: (1) Jesus identified with us, (2) Jesus was consecrated for His work by the Holy Spirit, and (3) Jesus was confirmed by His Father. If others don’t bring it up during your group discussion, make sure to point out that since Jesus had no sin of His own for which He would have needed a baptism of repentance, He was baptized in order to identify with human beings in their sin. Also, note that Jesus identified with us in our temptation (Mark 1:12–13 that immediately follow our focus passage). Whereas the first human beings—Adam and Eve—were tempted and failed, Jesus was also tempted but did not sin (Rom 5:12–21). Since Jesus was tempted so fully, He is able to completely understand our struggle against temptation and sin (Hebrews 4:15).
2. The attention Mark gives to the Holy Spirit as part of the gospel is noteworthy. John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit. However, before Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit, Mark made sure readers know that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at His baptism to consecrate Him for ministry. The Spirit empowered Jesus to face temptation and fulfill His ministry, and the Spirit does the same for born-again Christians today.
3. Mark moves from one action description to another in rapid succession. In Mark 1, the word “immediately” is used 9 times in addition to one use of “and at once.”

Group Gathering

Connect: *Making Honest Connections with One Another (Pick one)*

1. Please share briefly one of the following:
 - a. What has God been saying to you through His word, the sermon, or other people?
 - b. A joy or answer to prayer you received?
2. Do you have a favorite or “go to” Gospel? And if so, why do you lean toward that Gospel?

Grow: *Listening to and Learning from God’s Word*

Read Mark 1:1–8 along with Malachi 3:1 (written around than 400 BC) and Isaiah 40:3 (more than 500 years BC)

1. How does Isaiah 40:3 differ from Mark 1:3? Who did the original readers of Mark’s gospel expect to come after the messenger’s announcement? ... What was the significance of Mark declaring that Jesus came in fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3?
 2. What did John the Baptist say the one who would come after him would do?

Read Mark 1:9–11

3. The sermon mentioned that in Jesus’ baptism, He identified with human beings, was consecrated for His ministry, and received confirmation from God the Father. Point out each of these claims from Mark 1:9–11.

Serve: *Serving King Jesus and Others, By Living Out and Letting Others Know God’s Word*

Read Mark 8:34 and 10:38–45

1. Mark shows that Jesus identified with humanity in our sinfulness, standing in our place of temptation and punishment. Part of our response to the gospel message is to identify ourselves with Jesus in his suffering and serving. What are some concrete ways you can think of to identify with Jesus in His suffering and serving?

Read Romans 6:3–4

2. How do these verses speak of our identification with Jesus?
3. How have you seen the Holy Spirit consecrate you for ministry?
4. What are some ways you have experienced confirmation from God the Father about His pleasure in you?

What we hope members glean from the passage:

1. Isaiah 40:3 speaks of the messenger making “straight in the desert a highway for our God.” When Mark 1:3 refers to Isaiah 40:3, Mark simply uses the pronoun “his” in “make his paths straight.” Those who were familiar with Isaiah 40:3 would have understood “his” to refer to God Himself. The people were expecting God to come establish His Kingdom, and Mark states that Jesus came to establish His Kingdom. The clear implication from the first verses of Mark is that Jesus was God in human flesh.
2. The Baptist said that the one coming after him would baptize people in the Holy Spirit. Again, Mark is declaring Jesus to be God in that only God has the authority and ability to baptize human beings with the Holy Spirit.

3. Identification with us in baptism for forgiveness ... Consecration with Holy Spirit descending and remaining upon Jesus ... the voice of God the Father from heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Further Resources

- Bible Project – <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/181310?episode=43>
- Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org