

# Gospel of Mark: The Beginning of Victory

Welcome to a new Grace Presbyterian Church Bible Study! Since Bible study is foundational to Christian life we want to invite everyone to be part of this study in 2008. To make this possible the study will be available after Sunday worship in the narthex and on the literature table in the fellowship room. It will also be on the church website.

There will be two face to face discussion groups on each study. These will be held the first and third Wednesday of each month beginning January 16 (excepting holiday weeks and summer). The first, hopefully to assist commuters, will be from 7 – 8 am (coffee provided). The same study will then be offered again from 10-11 am (coffee provided at 9:45 am). If you can't attend these sessions we invite you to do a study on your own or with friends. There will be an opportunity to share comments and thoughts on the Grace Church website. There will also be periodic Sunday evening sessions to discuss the study.

Why are we doing this? Scripture itself gives us the reason:

*“These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.” – I Corinthians 10:11*

Let's get started -

## I. Who is Mark and why is his Gospel important?

a. John Mark according to tradition is the author and there is no good reason to doubt that. Mark was

1. a cousin of Barnabas, a Levite (priestly class) whose name means “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36)
2. It was in his mother's house that the believers were praying when Peter had been arrested (Acts 12:12).
3. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their early missionary journeys. However Paul later became disappointed with him and didn't want him a part of the team. This decision led to a break up between Paul and Barnabas (Acts .12:25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-38).
3. John Mark was later reunited with Paul and worked with Peter. Both expressed high praise for him (II Tim. 4:11; Phlmn. 1:24; I Peter 5:13)..
4. John Mark may have been the young man who fled naked the night Jesus was arrested but there is no confirmation of this (Mark 14:51-52).

b. What are some specific things and themes to pay attention to as we read through Mark together?

1. "Gospel" means good news in the sense of proclaiming a victory. To say "the kingdom of God has come near" is to say that "God reigns!" (Isa. 52:7).

2. This gospel is written with a sense of urgency. The word "immediately" is used throughout beginning with the first chapter (Mark 1:13, 18, 20, 42).

3. The continuing response to Jesus in Mark's Gospel is one of amazement and astonishment again beginning in the first chapter (Mark 1:22, 27).

4. The gospel is apparently written to a Gentile audience, probably in Rome around the time of Nero. Aramaic expressions need to be translated for them (5:41; 7:34; 14:36; 15:34). Jewish customs need to be explained (7:1-5, 11-13).

5. The key themes of the Gospel are different pictures of Jesus, all of which are introduced in the first chapter. Jesus is

- a. the Son of God (1:1, 11)
- b. one with great authority ("Son of Man," cf. Daniel 7:13-14) 1:16-20, 22
- c. a powerful healer and deliverer (1:7-8, 21-26, 32-34)
- d. the gospel involves rejection and suffering (1:14). Later Jesus will be presented as the Suffering Servant who gives his life as a ransom – 10:45; 14:35-36; 15:37-39.
- d. a great teacher – 1:22, 27
- e. one who cares for the outcasts – 1:40-41
- f. one who can be easily misunderstood – 1:43-45. This fact is sometimes referred to as the "Messianic Secret," i.e. Jesus commands people *not* to tell who he really is or what he's done

## II. Let's now look at the events of chapter 1

1. title: "the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1)

2. Announced by John the Baptist, a figure representing the prophet Elijah from the Old Testament – 1:2-8; II Kings 1:8

3. John introduces the themes of repentance and the forgiveness of sins – 1:4, 15

4. Jesus is baptized by John but does not confess any sin – 1:5, 9. In the power of God the Holy Spirit God the Father acknowledges Jesus as his Beloved Son -- 1:10-11

5. Jesus is tested by Satan in the wilderness – 1:12-13
6. Jesus begins his ministry and calls his first disciples – 1:14-20
7. Jesus teaches with authority and demonstrates his authority in casting out a demon in the synagogue (Satan is not only in the wilderness) – 1:21-28
8. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law – 1:29-31
9. Jesus heals and cast out demons who know him (apparently others do not) – 1:32-34
10. Jesus prays and continues to proclaim his message. Again demons are mentioned. – 1:35-40
11. Jesus heals a leper (an outcast who under the Law should not even have come close to Jesus) – 1:40-42 (Lev. 13:45-46). Jesus probably responds with anger here rather than pity (1:41, see note).
12. Jesus commands the leper not to tell what has happened. The leper does not obey and Jesus' ministry is hampered – 1:43-45

### III. . Questions for us

1. Mark's Gospel is the beginning of a victory proclamation. How do we continue that proclamation? Do we experience "victory" in our lives? What would victory look like for us anyway (remembering this is never our victory but Christ's alone)?

b. How is Jesus an urgent issue for us ("immediately")? What does it mean to say that Jesus is urgent when so many others things keep pressing in on us (the tyranny of the urgent)? How does the urgency of Jesus' call affect the other commitments in our lives (The disciples are called to leave their nets initially but do they give up their livelihood of fishing? After the resurrection in John's Gospel Jesus helps them fish (John 21:1-6))?

c. How do we experience Jesus' authority in our lives? What does that authority represent in our personal lives, our work, our families, our communities, our world?

d. How do we experience his healing power? Jesus heals but there is nothing magical about asking him for healing (cf. II Cor. 12:1-10)? Do we believe that Jesus still heals today? Do we see his healing power around us? Are we looking for it?

e. How do we experience his power over the demonic? What does the demonic look like in our experience, in our world? Is the demonic just another name for evil?

The demon in chapter 1 is in the synagogue during a worship service on the Sabbath. Does this mean that even the church isn't protected against demonic forces? What hope do we take from the fact that Jesus is always victorious over the demonic (or evil)?

f. Why do you think Jesus sternly warns the leper to say nothing about his healing (Mark 1:43-44)?

2. What are your thoughts, ideas or questions?