



‘Now!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #2

Sunday, April 14th, 2024

‘A Cousin Clears the Way!’

Mark 1:1-8

Last week in ‘NOW’ sermon series:

- Last Sunday we began our ‘NOW’ sermon series with an overview sermon on the book of Mark.
 - ***Last Sunday we looked at:***
 - Authorship
 - Date
 - Location
 - Recipients
 - Purpose
 - Key people in Mark
 - Interesting facts about Mark.
 - Thing Mark leaves out

- And, how can this sermon series flip FBCG upside down in a ‘good’ way?

- ***I know that last week’s sermon was not the flashiest or the most attractive, but I do believe that it is important for us to have an overview sermon like we did last week, so that we have a strong foundation for our verse-by-verse study through the Gospel of Mark.***

- In a way, it’s a vision casting for the duration of this Sunday morning sermon series.
- But this morning, we begin our verse-by-verse exposition of Mark’s Gospel.

‘A Cousin Clears the Way!’

Mark 1:1-8

Sermon in a Sentence:

We can see that John the Baptist (the cousin of Jesus), clears the way for His first coming to earth by fulfilling the Foretelling of the Prophets, the Forerunner then Preaches, and the Facts about Christ are then Presented.

Intro:

- Last week as we began this series, we read Mark 10:45 as we as Mark 1:1.
 - ***In the first verse in Mark’s Gospel, we clearly see that Mark confesses that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.***

- *Before he says anything else about Jesus' life, ministry, and mission, he confesses that Christ is the Son of God.*
 - We touched on this verse last week and its impact on our lives.
- *But as we will see this morning, Mark goes straight into discussing a person that cleared the path for Jesus Christ to come.*
 - John the Baptist wanted to clear the way so that people would be able to make room in their hearts and lives for Jesus. ***Behold, the King was coming.***
- **Illustration**
 - What we know today as the Cumberland Gap that goes from Roanoke Virginia, all the way up to Lexington Kentucky was once called 'The Wilderness Road.
 - ***As far as we know, the earliest beginnings of this road were created by herds of Buffalo and greeted trails.***
 - Native American tribes such as the Cherokee and Shawnee used these trails to attack one another.
 - Part of the Wilderness road, goes through some of the thickest and toughest terrain in the Eastern United States, *specifically through Eastern Kentucky.*
 - In 1773, frontiersman Daniel Boone, led his family and other families to settle in

the 'west', which at that time was Kentucky.

- *During this expedition, Cherokee Indians attacked the group and two in the group, including Daniel's son James, were killed.*
 - *In 1775 a wealthy land investor named Richard Henderson from NC wanted to colonize the lands of Kentucky and make it the 14th colony.*
- ***So in order to accomplish this, they hired Daniel Boone to create a trail through this rough terrain that would lead settlers through the difficult lands into the nice area of Kentucky.***
 - This part of the wilderness road, came to be known as the Cumberland Gap.
- *They wanted Daniel Boone to confront the Cherokee and literally go through miles and miles of woods, with axes and cut out a road.*
 - Along with 30 other men who had axes, they cut through much of the trail.
- ***It wasn't long after this that Daniel Boone and his crew completed the clearing of the wilderness road.***
 - From 1775 to 1810 over 300,000 settlers traveled the wilderness road and began settling in western lands that had not been accessible up to that point.

- *In 1792, Kentucky became the 15th state.*
- The fact that Kentucky became a state, and that the west was now accessible through the wilderness road, was due, in large part, to Daniel Boone and his crew.
 - *They cleared the way for generations to come.*
- **Point of this Illustration**
 - What we find in our scripture text this morning, is that someone paved the way for Jesus 1st coming in ministry.
 - *What we will find in our text this morning is that John the Baptist cleared the way. Fulfilled the scriptures, and pointed to the Messiah.*
 - He (John the Baptist), did not let people get entranced to following Him, but he pointed them to follow the one who would come after Him, which was Jesus.
 - *Without John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus, it's possible that Jesus would have faced more opposition that He ended up facing.*
 - John, a cousin of Jesus, wanted to prepare the way, and wanted others to make room for the coming Messiah. Will we do the same?
 - **Read Mark 1:1-8**

Question to Ask:

How does Mark begin his GOspel by showing us the relevance of Jesus' cousin, John, and how he cleared the way for Jesus?

Point 1: *The Foretelling by the Prophets. (V. 2-3)*

- 'As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,[b] "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare[c] the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" Mark 1:2-3
 - *Mark's Gospel does not contain hardly any quotations from the OT, which makes it that much more intriguing that Mark opens up with a quotation from the OT.*
 - Mark sets the stage for the Forerunner (John), by showing that it was prophesied that he was coming.
 - *I want us to break down what Mark says here, in order to fully understand and connect John the Baptist with this.*
 - **Word Study**
 - So the phrase 'It is written' comes from the greek word '*Grapho*':-*γράφεται*
 - *This word literally means to write, engrave, and inscribe.*

- *The significance of this word choice is that it is in the perfect tense in the Greek Text.*
 - *Which means for us that Israel's scripture are not texts that are only relevant for the past, but are also relevant in the present.*
 - *Which is why it's extremely important to note that this word is in the Present Tense.*
- Even though Mark is not a Jew, he still wants his gentile readers to know that the OT scriptures are still very much useful and relevant.
 - I believe there is one important truth that we must pull from verses 2-3.
- *Mark Confirms the OT prophecies.*
 - *Mark is quoting 3 different OT scriptures yet only mentions Isaiah as a reference.*
 - I want to take us through each phrase in verses 2-3 to see which verses in the OT are quoted.
 - #1: *'Behold, I send my messenger before your face,'*
 - *This first sentence that Mark gives, is a quotation from Exodus 23:20.*
 - "Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared."

- #2: *'Who will prepare your way'*
 - *This is a quote from Malachi 3:1, that we studied during our 'Wake up Series!' through Malachi last year.*
 - 'he will prepare the way before me.'
 - *Mark makes a change here, by changing 'my way' to 'your way' that allows for a messianic interpretation.*
 - Eckhard J. Schanabel stated *'This implies that Jesus, who is thus directly addressed by Yahweh, is the embodiment of Israel's God.'*
- #3: *'the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare[c] the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'*
 - This is a quote from Isaiah 40:3.
 - 'A voice cries:[a] "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'
 - *Isaiah is predicting a new exodus when the Lord is going to return to earth to lead His people.*
 - The **VOICE** that is mentioned here, is the voice of John the Baptist, who calls God's people

to repentance and prepares the way for Christ.

- One may ask *‘Why is Isaiah’s name attached to a quotation that is from 3 OT scriptures, and 2 OT prophecies?’*

- ***John McArthur gives a possible answer***

- ***‘It was not uncommon at that time, when citing multiple OT prophets, to refer only to the more prominent one and tuck in the others. BC these two prophecies fit together so perfectly and both refer to the same person, they may have been frequently used together by early Christians.’***

- In looking at the Foretelling of the Prophets, we can know that God keeps His Word. God is going to do what He said He’s going to do.

- ***Mark quotes these 3 OT texts to show that the fulfillment of these 2 prophecies had come true, in the person of John the Baptist.***

- ***The Cousin, who cleared the way.***

Point 2: *The Forerunner Preaching. (V. 4-5)*

- Not only did John the Baptist fulfill the OT prophecies concerning Him that he would pave the way for Jesus, Mark tells us how he did so.
 - ***He did so by preaching the Word of God.***

- ***In John the Baptist’s ministry, I believe we see the importance of preaching the Gospel.***

- This reminds me clearly of what the apostle Paul said in [Romans 10:14](#):
 - ‘How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?’
- ***Preaching the truth of Jesus leads other people to Christ.***
 - It’s an age old method that has worked time and time again. Yet why do we attempt to water it down and abandon it from time to time?
- ***The fact that John appears and begins preaching, signals a new day in the redemptive history of Israel.***
 - Israel had gone 400 years where there had not been a prophet.
 - ***Meaning, they had not heard from God for a very long time.***
 - Some of the people of Israel initially thought that John was the Christ, but we know that wasn’t the case.
- ***Mark mentions a man named ‘John’. The fulfillment of the OT prophecies already discussed.***

- I believe there are 2 important aspects that we need to look at concerning the forerunner's preaching.
- **Repentance. (V. 4)**
 - 'John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.' Mark 1:4
 - While Mark does mention John very early on in his Gospel, it's important to know that Mark doesn't mention as much information on John as other Gospel writers do.
 - **Scholar, James Edwards, says 'Omitted in Mark are the wondrous circumstances of John's Birth (Luke 1), his thunderous challenge to the dominant Pharisaic and Sadducean schools of Judaism (Matthew 3:7-10; Luke 3:7-9), and his call for social reform (Luke 3:10-14).'**
 - *I think it's crucial to understand that John is not wanting to baptize people just so that they can be saved. He is baptizing people because they are saved, meaning they've repented of their sins and asked for forgiveness.*
 - ***Word Study***
 - *Some translations (such as the NASB), translate this as 'John the Baptist', while others, like the ESV, translate it as John was actively Baptizing.*
- Among other denominations, this word for baptizing is often a high issue, which is one reason why Baptist's became their own denomination.
 - **The greek word for 'baptizing' is the word 'Baptizo' -βαπτίζω**
 - *This word literally means to immerse fully in water.*
 - To follow in a Biblical baptism, is to do so fully in water. Not by sprinkling and not by the means of salvation.
 - **John is baptizing people who are repenting of their sins and believing in God.**
 - We are not baptized to be saved, but because we are saved.
 - *Just as the ring on your finger is a symbol of your marriage commitment, baptism is the symbolism that you have been washed by Christ Jesus.*
 - **JM states 'John's Baptism was a onetime act, distinguishing it from other ritual Jewish washings. In Jewish practice, the closest parallel to John's baptism was the onetime washing of Gentile proselytes, a rite that symbolized both their rejection of**

paganism and their acceptance of the true faith.'

- We must realize that what John is doing here is radical. Calling for Jews to be baptized.
 - ***The fact that John was baptizing was clearing the way for Jesus due to the fact that John was confronting religious hypocrisy among Pharisees and Sadducees.***
 - ***John's call for repentance and then baptizing challenged first century Jews to realize that they could not get to even by phariseedic laws or by being a descendant of Abraham, they had to put their faith and trust in the one who was to come, Jesus.***
- Notice that verse 4 notes the location ***the wilderness.***
 - Verse 5 tells us that John was doing this in the Jordan, due to this detail, we can determine the geographical region that John was ministering in.
- ***This would have been between the lake of Galilee and the Dead sea.***
 - ***The fact that the crowds came from Judea and Jerusalem suggest the southern section of the valley, which***

would be where the Jordan river meets the dead sea, near Jericho.

- Scholar Eckhard Schnabel noted ***'The location of John's activity in the wilderness has theological significance. Yahweh had led Israel into the wilderness when he liberated them from bondage in Egypt and made them his people, meeting them at Sinai and giving them his holy law, and Israel experienced God's presence, provision and protection in the wilderness before they reached the promised land.'***
 - ***The fact that the location of John's ministry is given, shows there's a new beginning, hope and that the message he's bringing is a part of that.***
- Mark 1:4 clearly shows us what was required for baptism.
 - ***Repentance.***
- ****Word Study****
 - ***The word Repentance comes from the Greek word 'Metanoia'-μετανοίας and literally means a change of mode of thought and feeling, and to genuinely turn from sin and self to God. (Occurs 22 times in NT).***
 - We know that when true repentance occurs, fruit will follow.

- When John preached, he preached a message of repentance, as should we!
- **Reception. (V. 5)**
 - ‘And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.’
 - **When Jesus is really and truly preached, people WILL respond.**
 - *John was preaching something contrary to what most of these new converts had heard their entire lives.*
 - *Most of those from Judea and Jerusalem had heard their entire lives what they had to DO instead of who they had to KNOW.*
 - **Another important part of receiving the Gospel, is the confessing of sins.**
 - I do not believe that you can be saved by God if you do not first know and admit what it is that separates you from God.
 - **How can you repent and turn from something that you do not know you are doing?**
 - *When the Gospel is preached, repentance and confessing of sins can and will follow.*

- So far this morning we’ve looked at how the cousin of Jesus cleared the way in the Foretelling by the Prophets, the Forerunner Preaching, but the last thing that we need to look at this morning, is how the facts were presented.

Point 3: *The Facts Presented. (V. 6-8)*

- What we find in these last 3 verses that Mark gives us concerning John the Baptist’s ministry, are several different facts that Mark chooses to share with us.
 - *The facts that are given here in verses 6-8 have to do with personal facts about who John was and what he was like and the Gospel that he preached.*
 - I believe there are 3 different facts that are presented in the texts that we need to look more deeply at.
- **A Different Person. (V. 6)**
 - ‘Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.’ Mark 1:6
 - **Mark wants his gentile readers to know the appearance that John the Baptist had.**
 - Even for this time period, John the Baptist fits the bill for what you and I would call ‘different’, ‘odd’, and even ‘peculiar’.
 - *I believe that Mark is not just giving these appearance and appetite details for us to see*

that John is a different kind of person, but that we would also see that John truly was a prophet.

- *2nd Kings 1:8 tells us of the attire that Eliah had.*
 - “He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist.”
2 Kings 1:8
- *This is important to know WHY Mark includes these details.*
 - *We know that John is the messenger mentioned in Malachi 3:1, but this also takes us to Malachi 4:5 where John is identified as Elijah of the last days.*
 - Meaning that John was the prophet just before Jesus would begin His ministry.
- *John is certainly a different person than the ‘norm’, but I want you to see this morning that God can use anyone that He chooses to use.*
 - No matter how they may look or act in the eyes of the world, God made us all different and we are all meant to be apart of serving God in His kingdom.
- *A Definite Purpose. (V. 7)*
 - ‘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.’ Mark 1:7

○ *While there are many jews who mistakenly identified John as the Messiah, some people would take that and run with that.*

- *They wouldn’t admit the truth, but they would lavish and enjoy the fame that came with being identified as the ‘potential’ Messiah.*
 - John does not do that, instead he points to the one who is to come, Jesus Christ.
- As far as what John says concerning his sandals, Scholar James Edwards has a good piece of information on this *‘The loosing of sandals and washing of feet were duties of slaves, indeed of only Gentile slaves, in first century Judaism. The metaphor bespeaks John’s humility and subordination in relation to the Messiah.’*
 - John has a purpose. It’s to make way for the Christ and His ministry. John doesn’t want to make much of himself, rather He wants to make much of Jesus.
 - *Is that our same purpose?*
- *A Distinct Potential. (V. 8)*
 - ‘I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’ Mark 1:8
 - *What John states here, is extremely powerful.*
 - John’s baptism was symbolic and provisional, he knew that the Holy Spirit was to come.

- In the OT, the bestowal of the Spirit belonged only to God.
- *But here John states (according to Mark), that the bestow of the Spirit will belong to Jesus.*
 - *This shows that Jesus is the greater one.*
- To be saved, you must be baptized by the Holy Spirit.
 - *Meaning when you accept Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit comes and indwells in you.*
- This is a distinct potential that all of us have if we are believers in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion:

- Just as John cleared the way for Jesus to come in and begin his ministry, you and I are to pave the way for Jesus today.
 - *We can do this in how we witness daily to others, pray for others, study God's Word and ultimately share the love of Christ.*
- *We can pave the way for Christ's second coming by making more people aware.*
 - Sharing with all those that we come in contact with that the Second Coming is Foretold in the NT.
 - So, we should be preaching and sharing the Gospel like John was. Not pointing to himself, but pointing to Jesus.

- Then, John clearly states the scriptural facts of what Jesus is coming to earth to do.
- *Like John, we should be clearing the path so that more people will want to follow Jesus because of how we live and our personal ministry.*
 - *We do not want to clear the path in such a way where others want to get out of the way, and not hear a thing about Jesus because we are pushy or obnoxious, but we want to clear the path so that they will want to follow the true King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*
- This morning we saw the cousin of Jesus clear the way for Jesus by:
 - **Point 1: *The Foretelling by the Prophets. (V. 2-3)***
 - **Point 2: *The Forerunner Preaching. (V. 4-5)***
 - **Point 3: *The Facts Presented. (V. 6-8)***
 - We can do the same.