



THE GOSPEL OF

MARK



Sermon Series Notes

“The Blessings of Repentance” (Mark 1:1-6)

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Intro: The gospel of Mark was penned by John Mark, cousin of Barnabas. John is his Jewish name, and Mark his Latin name. Barnabas of course became a great missionary alongside the apostle Paul. Mark became a part of their missionary team, but deserted them and went back home prior to completing the first missionary journey (Acts 13:13). Barnabas wanted to reinstate Mark on the team for the second missionary journey, but Paul objected because Mark had deserted them on the first. The dispute between Paul & Barnabas was so great that they parted company, Barnabas taking John Mark and Paul choosing Silas (Acts 15:36-40). Years later, Paul desired Mark’s help in ministry (II Tim.4:11). Mark was not only reinstated into ministry alongside Paul, but he would later have the amazing privilege of penning this gospel.

Right away we should be encouraged, because the writer’s life alone teaches us about the grace and mercy of God. Though Mark failed, he obviously repented, was restored to ministry, and was used by the Lord in ways he no doubt could ever have imagined.

Read Mark 1:1-6.

Mark begins with one lone voice that prepares the way for the Lord. That one voice reaches a handful of unschooled, ordinary men. They spend three years with Jesus, then He ascends back into heaven and leaves them with an incredible command. We call it The Great Commission. See Mark 16:15-16.

The lone voice in our text has been dubbed “John the Baptist,” not because of his denominational heritage (Baptist as a denomination has been traced back to the early 1600’s), but simply because he baptized people who responded positively to his message.

John was a bit of a miracle child, born to a priest named Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, who had all but given up on having children due to their age. But Zacharias prayed, and God heard his prayer & sent an angel foretelling of John’s conception and birth (see Luke 1:14-15). John had the unique privilege of introducing Jesus to his world as the Messiah.

Some suggest that John the Baptist was part of a Jewish group known as the Essenes. The Essenes were a mystical sect similar to the Pharisees, in that they lived lives of ritual purity and separation from the common culture. The Essenes likely were the ones who recorded and stored the Dead Sea Scrolls. They lived in the desert, citing Isaiah 40:3 as their reason to do so (“a voice of one calling in the desert, make straight paths for him.”). They practiced baptism, but only after one had displayed a true change of heart. Though there are similarities between John the Baptist & the Essenes, there are also significant differences. John had a much stricter diet (Luke 7:33, no wine or regular meat). John did not organize his followers as Essenes, something they were very strict about. But the most important difference was that the Essenes did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. They believed the Messiah would be an Essene.

What was the significance of John's diet? Locusts are still commonly eaten in Arabia, and are the source of nutrition and a variety of vitamins. Lev.11:22 allowed locusts among the kosher foods of Jews under the Mosaic Law. John's diet was that of one who dwells in the desert, or the wilderness. See Luke 1:80.

Why ministry in the wilderness? For one, that's where God prepared John for his ministry. He is not the only one whom God prepared in the wilderness. Moses spent forty years on the backside of the desert. Saul of Tarsus was sent to Arabia. And Jesus himself was in the wilderness for forty days before he began his public ministry.

John's clothing is interesting. It is similar to that of Elijah the prophet.

II Kings 1:8...He had a garment of hair and a leather belt around his waist .

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

See Matthew 17:1-13; It is mysterious, but evidently if Israel as a whole had responded properly to John the Baptist's message (repented), it would have paved the way for the restoration of all things.

An Elijah/John the Baptist style prophetic ministry will occur prior to the return of Jesus Christ. See Romans 11:1-15, noting verse 15; Zech.12:10; 13:9; Rev.11:3-7.

The beginning of the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ begins with hearing and responding to the message John the Baptist preached.

- It is the same message Jesus preached; Matt.4:17
- It is the same message the disciples preached; Mark 6:7, 12; Acts 2:36-38; 3:15-20; 17:29-30; 26:19-20.

Everyone needs to repent (Luke 13:1-5; Rom.3:23)

- Acts 17:30...he commands all people everywhere to repent.

God desires that everyone repent (II Peter 3:9)

- Ezekiel 18:32...I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!

What repentance does:

- Repentance removes obstacles between me and God (Isa.40:4; Luke 3:5)
- "Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways made smooth."
 - Valleys filled in ("You're a low life"); A person considered morally unacceptable by their community.
 - Mountains and hills made low (Pride/arrogance); They are "too big for their britches." This phrase was coined by Davy Crockett, referring to Andrew Jackson.
 - Crooked roads made straight (Dishonest; a crook)
 - Rough ways made smooth (You're tough; a rebel)

Repentance is a prerequisite for salvation.

- Repent and believe the good news.
- Drugs and alcohol once stood in between me and God. There was a time I loved pot more than I loved girls. If you're in that particular situation, you really got a problem!
- Back in the day, my girlfriend stood in between me and God. For a long time I was not at all interested in repenting of the sin I was committing as a result of my relationship with her. But after a while I began to really be convicted. During some of my times of conviction I would get

moody and she would ask me what was wrong. Finally one night I said, "I'm not right with God." Despite the conviction, and my confession to her, I still did not want the relationship to end. But end it did. She broke up with me. I was devastated! But as I look back now, I'm very thankful. First of all, she was not God's will for my life. Also, had our relationship continued, I might never have gotten right with God. That break-up ultimately paved the way for Jesus to come into my life, and the rest is history.

Is baptism important after salvation? See Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-38; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 22:16; Rom.6:3.

- Note: Baptism does not save someone. The thief on the cross was not baptized. But if that thief could have come down from the cross, based on the above Scriptures, he certainly would have been baptized.
- A baptism of repentance; John's baptism was more than some religious ritual, and he made sure people coming to be baptized by him understood that. See Luke 3:7-14; Matt.3:7 tells us this strong address was toward the Pharisees and Sadducees, who lived by very strict religious standards, but whose lives did not bear the fruit of genuine repentance.
- There was this painter (we'll call him Jock) who was really into making money, and he found a way to make more money in his painting business, but it was dishonest. You see, what he would do is thin the paint to make it go further, but obviously the paint job did not last as long because the quality was inferior. Jock got away with this for some time, then one day he won a bid for a restoration project on a big church in town. Dollar signs danced in his mind when he found out he had gotten the job. So he set out erecting the trestles, setting up the planks, and of course, buying the paint, then thinning it down where no one could see him. One day he was up on the scaffolding, painting away, when suddenly there was a horrendously loud clap of thunder. It was so loud, Jock fell off the scaffolding. Luckily, he wasn't high enough to be hurt seriously, and he landed right on the church lawn. Rain began to pour from the sky like a river, washing the paint away all over the building. Jock was obviously no saint, but he was also no fool. He knew this was God's way of warning him that he needed to change his ways. So got down on his knees right there and began to cry out, "Oh God forgive me! What should I do? And from the thunder, a mighty voice spoke: "REPAINT, REPAINT, AND THIN NO MORE!"
- Repentance has to do with conduct, not just confession. Balaam confessed, King Saul confessed, even Judas confessed!

Repentance?

- Repentance = A change of mind & purpose
- A change of mind that leads to a change in action.
- More than tears/emotion (Hebrews 12:16-17)

The mystery of repentance

- It is a gift of God
 - II Timothy 2:25 Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.
 - Acts 11:18...God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.
 - John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...

- It is a personal choice
 - Jer.5:3; Rev.9:20; Matt.21:32

Repentance can be resisted

- Heb.3:7-15; 4:7; Acts 7:51 (always resist the Holy Spirit)
- Rev.9:20-21; 16:9

Repeated resistance can result in potentially damning conditions:

- Calloused heart
 - Isa.6:10; Matt.13:15; Acts 28:27
- Given over to a sinful lifestyle
 - Romans 1
- Destruction
 - Prov.29:1 Whoever remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy.

Repentance is needed even after salvation

- We live in a culture where people are looking more for psychological answers to our problems than a simple and straightforward message of our need to repent.
 - Bill & Lon Barclay
- For the Christian, repentance removes the obstacles between us and God regarding fellowship, peace, the fruit of the Spirit, God's will for our lives, our witness in the world, etc.
- 5 of the 7 letters to the churches in Revelation
 - Ephesus: Left your first love; What does it mean that they had forsaken their first love?
 - A personal passion for Jesus Christ
 - Increased in knowledge but not in love; Ephesus was a well taught church, Paul spent two years there teaching & preaching (Acts 19:10). But if knowledge increases without love, we have lost our way (See I Cor.13:1-3; I Cor.8:1 Knowledge puffs up, love builds up).
 - Serving took priority over sitting at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:38-42).
 - Intimate fellowship with other believers
 - Numerical growth made it easy to get lost in the crowd.
 - Relationships became strained over time (Eph.4:2-3)
 - Think about how relational you used to be, but now you park in the back, get here just in time to come into the service without having to engage anyone personally, leave immediately after we dismiss, or as soon as you know I'm wrapping things up.
 - Pergamum: Compromise with unbelievers that led to sexual immorality; bad company corrupts good character.
 - You've begun to hang with the wrong crowd; That's what happened to me around the age of middle school.
 - Note: For King David, it was not the wrong crowd, it was simply an occasion where he let his guard down for just one night, and there was Bathsheeba. It is

interesting to me that when Nathan the prophet confronted David regarding his sin, he did so by telling him a story about two men, one rich and the other poor. The rich man took advantage of this poor man by taking his only sheep for himself. David was enraged by this man's actions. Doesn't this tell us something about ourselves? When others sin the same way we do, we tend to look at their sin as worse than our own. Jesus said, "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye when you have a plank in your own?" Taking someone's wife is far worse than taking someone's sheep!

- Thyatira: Same failure as Pergamum; note Jesus tells this church that he had given them time to repent; Prov.29:1 He who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. For some of us, this is not our first confrontation about our need to repent. Don't be fooled, God is not mocked. A man will reap what he sows.
- Sardis: Reputation that does not reflect reality
 - These are people who continue serving in the church, attending the meetings, but behind the scenes they are not living in obedience to Christ.
- Laodicea: Lukewarm
 - This is comfortable Christianity; Laodicea lay at the juncture of two major trade routes between Rome and the Orient. One of these routes was the great Roman Road, which ran right through Laodicea. It became a prime place for trade and commerce. It was the wealthiest of all seven cities of the seven churches. It became a popular place for wealthy people to retire. The city was known for its banks, and it became the banking center for the region. There was a medical school in the city that produced an eye salve, something quite unique in this day, and as result very valuable, and in much demand. Entertainment was a big thing in Laodicea, and still today there are standing ruins of a 30,000 seat amphitheater. Health resorts were built just outside of Laodicea to take advantage of the many hot springs in the area.
 - David said, "Shall I offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing?"

God uses a variety of life situations in order to motivate people to repent

- Rom.2:4 God uses kindness in order that people might repent
- Jer.31:17-19; God disciplines in order that people might repent
- Amos; Rev.9 & 16; God uses calamity in order that people might repent

People who repent never regret it

- Acts 3:19 Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.
- When we repent, God is able then to baptize and fill us with his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who brings the times of refreshing.
 - Refreshing = A cooling; recovery of breath; revival.

- II Cor.7:10-11 (Read); Note that even though verse 11 refers to repentance that leads to salvation, verse 11 refers to repentance *after* salvation.

CONCLUSION

- Do you need to repent and receive Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior? Do you need to repent as a Christian?