

Mark 1:1-20

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION FOR EVERYONE

¹ **The beginning** of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, ² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you

who will prepare your way,

³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness

‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight,’ ”

⁴ So John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. ¹¹ And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into **the wilderness**. ¹³ He was in **the wilderness** forty days, *tested* by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The beginning : the first word of the book is Ἀρχή pronounced /Archē/ meaning: beginning, origin. It's the word used in the Greek translation of the First Testament for the Hebrew for the Hebrew word בְּרֵשִׁית pronounced /bereshith/ (meaning in the beginning). The book literally begins in the same way as Genesis and the whole Bible. What’s Mark saying by writing it in this way that echos with Genesis?

the good news: The Greek word translated “gospel” or “good news” is εὐαγγέλιον pronounced /evangelion/. It can range in meaning from general good news or report (as in, “we heard good news today from the doctor”) to an official political proclamation about a ruler or king. In this latter sense, there is an interesting inscription dating from around 9 BC regarding Caesar Augustus. It contains references to Augustus (whose very name means “revered one” and who was also called divi filii, “Divine Son” or “Son of God”) as the savior and bringer of peace. The inscription says that the birth of Augustus was “the beginning [arxen] of the good news [evangelion] for the world”. This is very similar to the incipit of Mark’s gospel: “The beginning [arxe] of the good news [evangelion] of Jesus the Anointed, Son of God...”

Here is the text of the Priene Inscription:

‘It seemed good to the Greeks of Asia, in the opinion of the high priest Apollonius of Menophilus Azanitus: “Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by **giving us Augustus**, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him **as a savior**, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since **the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning [Archē] of the good tidings [evangelion]** for the world that came by reason of him,” which Asia resolved in Smyrna.’ .

verse 2 quote: this quotation is made of 3 verses in the First Testament: Exodus 23:20; Malachi 3:1 & Isaiah 40:3

“I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; **repent**, and believe in the good news.”

¹⁶ As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “**FOLLOW ME**, and I will make you fishers of people.” ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged, enraged, or surprised you in the text?
- Mark begins the story rhyming with Genesis and moving quickly into a battle that Jesus wins. What kind of story is Mark telling?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be, or change, through this word of scripture?

... the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.” - Exodus 23:20;

“See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 3:1;

“A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” - Isaiah 40:3

tested: The Greek word here can be translated as to test or to tempt. It’s used in the Bible to talk of the Devil who tempts us, to lead us astray, or away from the way of God. It’s used in the Bible to talk of God as tested, as in that God tests or refines us in order to perfect or grow our moral character and courage.

camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey: these are traditional clothing and foods eaten by prophets in the First Testament. It shows that John is in the line of the prophets of God.

time: In Greek there are 2 words for time. Kairos (used here) means an particular instant, a moment of change, decision, or transformation; a good or proper time for action. The other word is Chronos (like chronological) referring to refers to chronological or sequential time. Chronos time is how we measure our days and our lives quantitatively. Kairos is the qualitative time of life. To grasp kairos time we have to release some of our anxiety around chronos time. Jesus is saying that the kingdom of God is near, or here, so make a choice, let go of the past. It’s a call to action.

We then see a repetition of the word *immediately* when people encounter Jesus and react, as if they’re getting that it’s a kairos moment, one in which you have to make a choice or act.

the wilderness: This is the place outside of human civilization, the wilds where one has to depend upon God to survive. It’s also the space that the power of darkness control or inhabit: the fallen world. The story of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is like Jesus going to battle with the powers of darkness, rhyming with the parable of the binding of the strong man in Mark 3:27 “But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.”

FOLLOW ME: curiously the disciples are called not to repent and believe (Mark 1:15) but rather to leave their nets and follow.