

December 29, 2019

Mark 1:1-20

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Book of Mark is most likely the first of the four gospel books to be written, sometime in the late 60s CE. This was a time of growing and great unrest between the Israelites and the Romans who occupied their land which would result in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman Army in 70 CE. Mark's gospel is simple and direct and focuses in the first half around the question of the identity of Jesus and then secondly around the theme of conflict between Jesus and the forced aligned against him.

The beginning this first phrase echoes the first words of the Bible in Genesis which begin: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

the good news εὐαγγέλιον pronounced euaggelion meaning a message of, or good news. It's come to be translated as gospel. In the ancient world it was used to represent a message of victory that was given when a military battle was won.

Verses 2 & 3 are citations of Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1. From the beginning Mark works to put Jesus in relationship with the First Testament just as the opening words invoke the first words of the Bible.

WILDERNESS ἔρημος pronounced ΕΡΕΜΟΣ meaning a solitary or desolate place, as in the desert. Often translated as wilderness it's the space and place where faith is tested because of the hardship encountered in living in such a desolate place. To survive there one had to depend wholly upon God. Think of the trials of the Israelites as they crossed the ΕΡΕΜΟΣ for 40 years on the way to the Promised Land. Consistently it's the place where the prophets lived. ΕΡΕΜΟΣ is opposed to the notion of "the city" – the place of human civilization, where one can depend upon the resources of humankind and not need God.

REPENTANCE the greek word METANOIA is the combination of two words - META and NOOS—that together describe a process of stepping out of one's existing mindset and adopting a characteristically different mindset. ...

¹ *The beginning* of **the good news** of 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 John the baptizer appeared in the **WILDERNESS**, proclaiming a baptism of **REPENTANCE** for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside 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 thong 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 on him. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "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, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

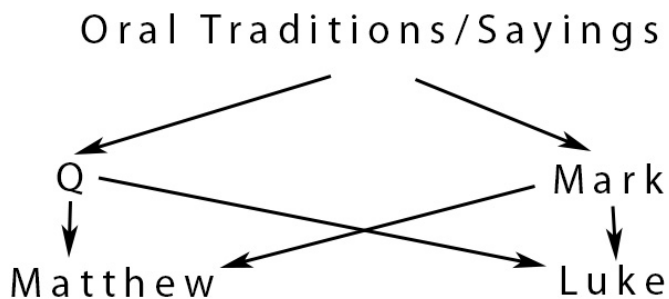
¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming **the good news** of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The **time** is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; **REPENT**, and believe in **the good news**."

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 fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for 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 THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What word, phrase or image grabs your attention?**
- **What feeling do you get as you read this first part of Mark?**
- **How is this a story of metanoia-repentance a letting go of the familiar in order to welcome a new way of thinking and being? A sort of death for new life?**
- **How are Jesus and his message one of God’s victory over the forces that diminish life?**
- **How does this text touch or intersect with your life?; or our life together?**
- **How do you hear an invitation from the Spirit of God to speak, be, act or become in this word?**

How did we end up with Mark? Modern Biblical Scholarship advances two main ideas of how the scripture came to be written down, the most common of which is called the Two-Source Hypothesis.



METANOIA has the connotation of having one’s perception of the world and of oneself transformed, adopting a radically different worldview and relating to the world in new ways. Metanoia can also mean making a U turn and changing course.

Baptize βαπτίζω pronounced baptizō is the word we translate as to baptize. Historically it meant to dip repeatedly, to immerse, or submerge (as a vessel or cup is sunk). A second meaning was to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe. A third meaning was to overwhelm such as to drown, which would lead to death. In our modern translation of the word as baptism then is the notion of death or drowning by submersion in order to be cleaned or remade.

time in Greek there are 2 words for time. **Chronos** (like chronology) which is time that lasts and endures. The other word is **Kairos** which is more specific, as in a season, opportunity, occasion, time. Here it’s **Kairos** that is used, reinforcing the experience of this moment (as Jesus proclaims the victory message of God over the forces of evil) as an opportune, life-changing, universe-transforming moment.

they left their nets easily overlooked, this description implies a radical moment. Having met Jesus, and been called by him, these men who make their livelihood by fishing give up their profession and way of life and follow Jesus into a new life without hesitation.

The "Two-source Hypothesis"

proposes that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were written independently, each using Mark and a second hypothetical document called "Q" as a source. The Q source (also called Q document, Q Gospel, or Q from German: Quelle, meaning "source") is a hypothetical written collection of primarily Jesus' sayings (logia). Q was conceived as the most likely explanation behind the common material (mostly sayings) found in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke but not in Mark. Q's existence has been questioned as a copy of such a document has never been found.