



“The Gospel of Mark”
Session 1 – The Good News Begins
Mark Chapters 1 – 4
September 10, 2023

Opening Prayer

Eternal God, you inspired your servant, the one we call Mark, to write the good news about Jesus. May your Spirit now inspire our reading, hearing, and discussion of these ancient words, so they become for us new and living words that make us more faithful followers of the one we call your Son, Messiah, and Lord. Amen.

Opening Question...

What are some interesting details you know about the Gospel of Mark?

- Shortest of the NT Gospels – does not have the Sermon on the Mount (see in Matthew 5 -7), the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), nor the wedding in Cana (John 2)
- Scholars generally consider Mark to be the earliest written of the NT Gospels, dating to around 70 AD, after Rome destroyed the Jerusalem Temple (Mark is writing after Paul)
- Most early church tradition suggest that “Mark” is “John Mark”, who was Peter’s traveling companion – some scholars disagree, specifically on how the gospel writer portrays Peter, not positively.
- Mark contains no stories about Jesus’ birth or childhood (is a “Christmas story” necessary for the “good news” of Jesus?)
- Mark contains, at least in the earliest copies of the manuscripts, no stories of Jesus appearing after the resurrection.

Session 1 Video

- Which of Amy-Jill Levine's statements resonated with you the most?
- What questions did this segment raise for you?

Scripture Focus: Mark 1:1-11 (Volunteer to read, others close Bibles)

- What image/word/phrase jumped out at you?
- Mark's Gospel resembles more of an ancient biography, written less to record what happened, and more to provide "moral guidance". What do you think?
- What do the titles "Messiah", "Son of God", and "lord/Lord" mean to you?
- Malachi anticipated God sending a "messenger". Mark identifies this messenger as "John the Baptizer" (the Dipper!) "in the wilderness". What comes to mind when you think of the wilderness or desert (the same word in Greek translates for both)? What OT stories recall the wilderness? How might this affect Mark's story about John?
- What types of "wildernesses" is our world facing today?
- Amy-Jill Levine explains the baptism John practiced was not "anti-Temple protest", but an "invitation for people to repent and then rededicate themselves toward doing what God wants." It is a public testimony about a personal commitment, accountability to the community, and an indication of the urgency of entering a right relationship with God and others. How is John's baptism like or unlike our baptism in the Christian church today?
- Did Jesus need to be baptized?

Scripture Focus: Mark 2:14-17 (Volunteer to read, others close Bible)

- Amy-Jill Levine suggests first-century tax collectors were the ancient versions of loan sharks, drug dealers, pimps, and traitors. Does this change your view of this passage? What do you make of Jesus's table fellowship with people who have harmed the communities in which they live?
- Does thinking of Jesus as a physician who makes house calls change your image of him?
- Why do you think Christians, as early as the first century, stopped making these "house calls"?
- Why do you think Scripture uses eating and drinking together as a metaphor for the messianic age? How much do you think a congregation's observance of the Lord's Supper expresses this aspect of the meal's meaning?
- Why do you think Levi disappears from Mark's Gospel after this story (note his absence in Mark 3:17-18)? How do you think the rest of Levi's story is written?

Scripture Focus: Mark 4:2-9 (Volunteer to read, others close Bible)

- What strikes you about the sower's behavior?
- What is unsettling about this parable that Jesus shares? Is it okay to be unsettled by a parable, a sermon, a story, a book, etc.? Do you think you learn more from when you are unsettled?
- Let's read Jesus's explanation in 4:14-20. Does this explanation make it easier or harder for you to understand his story?
- Where do you see yourself in this parable? How might this prompt you to take action?

Closing Thought...

The opening of Mark speaks of the “Good News”. What “Good News” does Mark have for you in the opening four chapters.

Finish the following statement...

“Good News in Mark 1 – 4 for me means _____”

Closing Prayer....

Jesus our Teacher, you went to the wilderness to be baptized, and by your Spirit you enter our wilderness today, calling us to follow you as you sow your good news. May we receive your gospel with both joy and curiosity, always eager to learn more deeply what it means to us as individuals and as a community, and always desiring to embody it more fully. Amen.

“The Gospel of Mark”

Session 2 – Restoring Purity and Wholeness

Mark Chapters 5 – 7

(Chapter 2 in the Book)

5:00 PM

September 17, 2023
