

Mark 1:1-8 Final
The Gospel of Mark
Sunday Morning

INTRO

Quick show of hands: **raise your hand** if you actually made it to **midnight** on New Year's Eve. Kudos to those that made it.

My guess is that many of you that didn't raise your hand **thought about staying up, wanted to** stay up, **planned on** staying up, **tried to** stay up, but in the **end sleep** distracted you.

And if that wasn't your experience **with the New Year** I bet that it's been your experience with something at some point in your life. You **anticipated a moment**, you **wanted** to see OR **experience**, you were **expecting to see** OR **experience**, but for one reason or another **you missed it**.

And Christian, **many times** this can at times be our **experience** with God and His **careful and remarkable** working in **this world** and in **our lives**.

And the reason I'm saying this is because if we believe the Bible to be true, then God is **always at work** in everything for **my good** and **your good**, then he's always at work in and around you. He's always breaking into our individual worlds working and doing things in and around us for our good.

And **here's the thing**: I think all of us **who are Christians anticipate** God working in our lives, we **want to see** or **experience** his working in our lives, we **expect to see** or **experience** his working in our lives but for one reason or another we **simply miss it**.

And this morning we begin a **study of the gospel of Mark** and if you're wondering why we are starting a study of the Gospel of Mark, it is so that we can see the **greatest moment** of God **breaking into our world** and working for our good through the person and **work of Jesus Christ**.

And the work that God began by the sending of His Son he continues to this day in our lives and you and I don't want to miss it. We want to see it and rejoice in it.

And that brings us to Mark chapter 1 because God broke into the world in a specific way in Israel and the men and women in Judea and Jerusalem didn't see Him, they missed God's working and they didn't see what God was doing in their midst. And Christian, you and I must not be like that.

I guess that if I had one thing I'd want you to remember this morning it would be that since God is always at work in and around us for our good, we should be diligent to see his working and rejoice in it.

So, if you haven't already, turn with me to Mark 1:1-8, I'll read it and unpack it a bit, and we'll realize that we can be diligent to see His working in and around us and rejoice in it by:

I. Remembering That Jesus Has Already Worked In You

II. Making a Study of the Scriptures

III. Trusting that God Always Provides What We Need

So, to that end, let me read beginning in verse 1:

[1] The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

[2] As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,*

*[3] the voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”*

[4] John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [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. [6] Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. [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. [8] I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

John's appearing in **verse 4** comes seemingly out of the blue (at least that's how Mark writes it). For roughly **400 years** there had been no prophet in Israel and the people were in anticipation for how God was going to **work next**:

- Would he **send another prophet**?
- Would he **speak by another** means?
- Would he send the **Messiah**?

And then, **John appears**. And the original **Gentile readers** of **this gospel** would have easily **made the connection** that John's appearing in **verse 4 is the fulfillment** of the prophecies recounted in **verses 2-3**. And you and I should make that **connection as well**.

John, the **messenger** who was to be **sent by God**, to one **who's voice was crying** in the **wilderness**, whose job it was to **prepare the way of the Lord** had suddenly appeared. And he had appeared in the wilderness, as a **messenger proclaiming a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins.

His means of preparing the way for the Lord was to call people to repentance for the **forgiveness of their sins**, which **wasn't uncommon** for prophets of old. What

was uncommon, and actually **unheard of**, was the way that he was asking them to do this and that was through water baptism.

John wasn't calling the people to the practice of **ritual cleansing** which was common in that day. He was calling them to be baptized (which is why he's called **John the Baptizer** or **John the Baptist**).

This was unheard of for a Jewish person because in that day **water baptism** was reserved for a **gentile who was turning from their lives as a gentile and converting to Judaism**. This is perhaps a **sign of exactly** what he thought of the **generation** of Jewish people living in that area and what they needed. They didn't **need slight tweaks**, they needed **total transformation**.

So here John appears in the wilderness:

- Bearing a **striking resemblance (VERSE 6) to OT wilderness prophets like Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel**.
- Eating in accordance with the Law: locusts and wild honey like a **wilderness prophet**.
- Calling the people in **Judea** and **Jerusalem** to go out into the **wilderness**, symbolically thinking **back to the Exodus**, to **repent** and prepare themselves for what's about to come...more specifically for **who is about to come**, he they are to do this **through baptism**.

And **amazingly**, we see in **verse 5** that:

*[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.*

This would appear to be nothing short of **revival taking** place among the people of Israel. John is calling them to repentance and they were listening. What was taking place here wouldn't have been lost on them, especially when John was preaching to them in verses 7-8 that:

"After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. [8] I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

But, **in the end**, as we'll see in this gospel, for one reason or another, the people who went out to John, all Judea and Jerusalem **missed God and they missed Him working in and around them**. They missed God **breaking into their world**.

John whole role was to be a **sign post that God** had broken into the world, and was about to do extraordinary things in and **around the people**, working for **their good**, and they

missed it. This is one of the main themes of Mark's gospel. Over and over again people don't **know who He is**:

- Chapter 2 - [7] "Why does this man speak like that? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
- Chapter 3 they say he has a demon.
- In chapter 4 after Jesus calms the storm his own disciples wonder out loud:
Mark 4:41 - [41b]"Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

For one reason or another, the people missed the reality of God working and working in extraordinary ways. They missed John's whole point because John wasn't just a good teacher, or a prophet. His appearing in **verse 4 is the beginning of God breaking into the world** to fulfill all the **promises of the Old Testament** in the person of Jesus Christ.

We see in verse 1 that John's appearing is the beginning of the **gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**

Verse 1 is actually Mark's **thesis statement** for this whole **gospel letter**. What begins with John's appearing and continues to unfold in Mark, is the **gospel (which simply means good news) of Jesus Christ.**

What God is doing by sending John and Jesus is beginning a new and unparalleled work in this world. The scope of what God is about to do is as amazing and miraculous as Creation itself and we see this when look carefully at how Mark begins his Gospel. It has hints of Genesis...the Beginning.

You could say that **Genesis is the beginning of the beginning** and **Mark** is the **beginning of the new beginning**. The redemption of Creation through the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God as He begins his **three-year march** toward to **cross** and **empty tomb**.

This beginning in Mark is the beginning of a new and momentous beginning, the **gospel (simply means good news)** and the coming of John the Baptist onto the scene in the wilderness around Jerusalem is the point at which the good news of redemption of God's creation through **the work Jesus begins** because this is where Jesus is to begin his ministry and begin his **three-year march** toward the **cross** and ultimately the **empty tomb**.

There is no doubt Jesus was the promised Messiah, Mark calls him Christ (which means anointed one or Messiah) but for **one reason** or **another the people** missed it. They didn't see how God had broken into their world and where he was working for their good.

They should have rejoiced at John's coming and at Jesus' arrival, but they didn't see it.

And church, **this was the beginning of the good news, but we live in the good of that good news. God has not stopped working. He is always at work in and around still today, and you and I must not be like the people and miss it.**

We should be diligent to see where God is working for our good and rejoice in it.

So, very briefly, let me give us three ways that you and I can be diligent to see where God is working for our good and rejoice in it:

I. Remember That Jesus Has Already Worked In You

Verse 1 is the **beginning of the gospel**. We live in the continued **good of verse 1**.

Christian, the only reason that you **can sit here this morning** having woken up not under condemnation but forgiven. And you can come and sing these **songs with joy, and rejoice** in the **goodness of forgiveness** because God sent Jesus His Son to take the punishment for your sins upon himself:

- Living a **perfect life**
- Dying a **substitutionary death**
- And **rising** from the **dead**.
- He stands now as the **mediator of a new covenant** on your behalf, your king and Lord.

And you and I live each day in the **good of his grace**.

John's coming pointed to this, it is the beginning of **redemptive and you and I get to taste of that goodness**. What you needed most in your life was Christ. You were dead in your sins and through His work you were saved.

I love what John Newton says about Jesus:

"To know Jesus, is the shortest description of true grace; to know Him better, is the surest mark of growth in grace; to know Him perfectly, is eternal life."

If **you're not a Christian**, you need to **know Jesus** and find true grace. Getting what you don't deserve which is forgiveness. If you don't know Him, run to Him.

If **you are Christian**, then you've experienced **true grace through Him**. If you know him as your Savior, rejoice often! He has saved you by His grace. You live in the good of grace.

So, the first way to be diligent to see God's working and rejoice is to realize that he's already worked in us through Christ, and we live each day in the good of it.

A second way **to be diligent to see his working and rejoice in it:**

II. Make a Study of the Scriptures

The promises in the **Old Testament were there**. Mark provides 2 of them for us (one from Malachi and one from Isaiah) but there were many **more that pointed to the coming of the Messiah**. Most of the people in Jesus' day would have at least had a **cursory understanding** of them but not enough to **see who He was**.

Not only does **John fulfill** every single one of the prophecies made about him, but Jesus **would fulfill all the prophecies made about Him**.

And if the people were **deeply aware** of the promises of God, watching for their fulfillment, they would have seen the **God was among them doing amazing things**.

And I know that I can sit back and shake my head and **ask the question**: "How in the world did they miss it?", but I don't think that is too far off from us today. We have a cursory understanding of the Bible and the promises there but when it comes down to it we have a **hard time seeing** when they apply to us.

Listen, the **Bible is the life blood of the Believer**. It shows us **God and Christ** and the work of the **Spirit**. It makes bold promises to us that will help us to trust God and know him better. We need to **open the Word** and grasp the truths there so that when **God is working** we can **recognize the aroma of His promises and his working** because **we've bathed in it**.

And I could say more but I won't. **Make a study of the Scriptures** and find God there and His promises there.

Lastly, if we want **to be diligent to see God's working in and around us so that we rejoice in it**, we need to be constantly aware and:

III. Trust that God Always Provides What You Need

The people wanted and expected God to work for them in a way that was more to their liking and perceived need.

Jesus came to bring about transformation but it was a spiritual one. They wanted an easier life free from circumstantial hardship. God didn't see that as their greatest need. Their greatest need was a spiritual renewal and that's what the Messiah brought.

And they didn't see where God had broken into their lives and was at work because they were anticipating that God would solve what they wanted, not what they needed.

Church, the beginning of the good news of Christ was the pinnacle of all of history. All of history had been leading to these years of Jesus ministry ending with the cross and resurrection and everything afterward flows from those events. We live today in the good of this.

I fear that too often in the Christian life we live like functional Deists. A Deist is one who believes that God created the world and then backed off, not interfering with our lives or circumstances.

When we deride 2017 for being the worst ever like much of the world has done and "hope" the 2018 will be better, we are functionally believing that all the crumminess of 2017 in your life was random and unused by God.

It might not be 2017, it could be 2015 or it could be 2018. And I'm not downplaying hardship. Many of us have had moments in life that on a human level are horrific and should make us weep with sorrow.

But in the end, if we want to see God working, we need to have a perspective that God is at work even in the crumminess of my life. Do we trust that God is sovereign and in control of ALL things or just SOME things? Do we have a functional understanding that God is always working for our good and providing what we need?

You see, at times there are things that we think we need but they are just what we want. Comfort and ease are things I want...but they aren't always best for me. Am I trusting God that he knows and will provide what I need for my good and his glory?

Listen, it's on some of **our worst days that God does his best work**. We need to not assume that poor circumstances means God is absent or has forgotten about you.

Oftentimes, grumbling and complaining is simply us not getting what we want from God, forgetting that in those moments God is at work, working to provide in us **what we need**.

Church, God is active in our lives, always at work, never at rest. He is taking all the bad circumstances in life and working them all for us. He has never left the throne.

One person who knows this specifically is Mark. Mark, also know as John Mark, went on the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas and was the object of a broken partnership because Paul didn't want him to join them on the 2nd one. John Mark wanted to go home halfway through and wasn't wanted.

As we study this gospel, let us see Jesus and remember that God is at work in us.

Pray

BENEDICTION: Romans 11