

Mark 1:9—13

January 14, 2018

Book introductions are meant to do two things—first get our attention and second introduce us to the main character. Any good writer worth his/her salt is going to want the readers to see the hero at the core of who they are.

Theodor Geisel did this when he introduced his most famous character. You know Mr. Geisel as Dr. Seuss and his hero as the Cat in the Hat,

*The sun did not shine.
it was too wet to play.
So we sat in the house
all that cold, cold, wet day.*

*I sat there with sally.
we sat there, we two.
and I said, 'how I wish
we had something to do!'*

*Too wet to go out
and too cold to play ball.
So we sat in the house.
we did nothing at all.*

*So, all we could do was to
sit!
sit!
sit!*

sit!
and we did not like it.
not one little bit.

And then something went BUMP!
how that bump made us jump!
we looked!
Then we saw him step in on the mat!
we looked!
and we saw him!
The cat in the hat!
and he said to us,
'Why do you sit there like that?'
'I know it is wet
and the sun is not sunny.
but we can have
lots of good fun that is funny!'

'I know some good games we could play,'
said the cat.
'I know some new tricks,'
said the cat in the hat.
'a lot of good tricks.
I will show them to you.
your mother will not mind at all if I do.'

That introduction tells us this Cat in the Hat will cause lots of trouble—and that is what he did.

This is what Paul Reid did in the introduction to Defender of the Realm when he said about Winston Churchill,

On June 21, 1940, the first day of summer, Winston Churchill was the most visible man in England. France accepted Hitler's surrender terms that day and, with virtually all of Europe now under the swastika, with the Soviet Union a Nazi accomplice, and the United States isolationist, Britain and the Dominions confronted the alone. Prime minister for only six weeks, Churchill was defending more than his island home. As first minister of the Crown he was also the central figure of the British Empire, then extant, comprising almost one quarter of Earth's landmass and almost a quarter of its population. The gravity of his role was obvious.

We meet Churchill and immediately recognize that he would be standing at the front of England's defense against Nazism.

Mark's book has a hero too. The hero of heroes, Jesus Christ. Today the curtain parts and Jesus the Son of God steps out, center stage.

This is how people are usually introduced. We get a picture of what they looked like and some of their mannerisms. From Mark, we know nothing of his birth, his childhood, his work as a carpenter. We know nothing of his likes or dislikes; his personality; whether he was an introvert; how he scored on Myers-Briggs. We have no idea how tall he was, whether he had hair or not, if he spoke with a strange accent or whether he liked a good joke.

From this time, on throughout Mark we are going to lock eyes on Jesus and get to know who he is at his core. And the introduction does just that,

PROP: Because Jesus is the Son of God who identifies with his people, we can and must trust him.

God has become one of us; and all of us must trust him.

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” ¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.” Mark 1:9-13

PRAY

He shows us he is worth trusting in three separate ways—

Links himself to us.

Commissioned for us.

Proves himself to us.

1. Jesus links himself to us—(1:9)

He links himself to us in baptism.

John the Baptist sparked a revival on the banks of the Jordan River in the Judean wilderness. People from all over the nation were streaming to this voice calling out in the desert.

John went ahead of Jesus and prepared a way for Jesus by declaring that people needed to repent and turn from their sins. And by getting baptized (this is NOT a Christian baptism) the people would show their desire to be made clean.

And so people flowed to the Jordan River from all over Israel, eager to make right and be ‘washed clean.’

And as the line cues up, a Northerner from Nazareth takes his place waiting his turn. Jesus came to be baptized.

Why?

Later, Mark will tell us that Jesus was sinless. He had nothing to repent of. Nothing to be sorry for. No stain of sin to wash away.

Why would he allow John to plunge him under the water of the Jordan River?

Jesus wanted to link himself to us. He wanted to identify with his people. Though he was not a sinner he came to save sinners by taking the place of sinners. And he shows us that he is with us by completely identifying himself with us.

It is striking that the very first action that Jesus takes in his earthly ministry is to go to the Jordan River and say—I am with them.

I am with the liars.
I am with the extortionists.

I am with the foul-mouthed.
I am with the addicts.
I am with the foolish.
I am with the self-righteous.
I am with the faint-hearted.

I am with the sinners.

Don't miss this. His very first action is not to call men and women to himself, but it is to identify himself with sinful men and women. He came and was saying with his actions, though I am from heaven and have no sin, I have come to save those of earth who are full of sin.

He is saying,

As the liars, extortionists, foul-mouthed, addicts, foolish, self-righteous, faint-hearted, as any of them come to me I will baptize them with the Holy Spirit and give them new life.

I am with them to make them like me.

Have you ever had someone abandon you that you thought was your friend? Have you ever been betrayed by someone you thought you would grow old with? Have you ever had someone distance themselves from you because you were, "embarrassing?"

We all have. What Pain.

But look at Jesus. He is doing the opposite. He comes to the world, becomes like us and shares in our plight. He is saying with his actions.

I am with them and there is nothing that can pry them from my hands if they come to me. Nothing.

Later in Mark, Jesus would be scorned for eating with sinners but way before that, he was baptized like a sinner.

Jesus links himself to us in baptism.

He's linked to us, we also see that he is commissioned for us.

2. Jesus, commissioned by God for us (1:10-11)

Jesus takes pains to identify with sinners, and then, we hear a voice from heaven

“And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. [11] And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Mark 1:10–11

The heavens are torn open like the curtain in the temple would be in the future, and the Spirit descends on him and the father proclaims over him—“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

He is commissioned.

Don't think this is the first time that he is filled by the Spirit, no he is commissioned by the Spirit here to fulfill his ministry. This is not when he becomes God's Son—he

had been that for all time—this is where God says that he is his son for our benefit.

After he binds himself to sinners, he is commissioned by God the father and God the Spirit to save sinners.

When the Father proclaimed, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased,” he is saying more than we might see at first.

If you say, “I have a son.” We think, you have a child that is male. ‘Son’ for us is all about family ties and connections. But there is more in the Son language at the time of the writing of Mark.

When we hear Jesus is the “Son of God” we should understand that Jesus is being proclaimed as God.

Let me explain.

In that day, ALL sons became what their fathers were nearly without exception. A father who was a farmer had a son who would be a farmer. A father who was a tentmaker had a son who would be a tentmaker. A father who was a fisherman had a son who would be a fisherman.

Always.

The sons would grow up with their fathers and be apprenticed with their fathers.

If you had a father who was a farmer, you would learn—

- Where to get your seed
- How to plant your seed

- When to plant your seed
- How to water your land
- When to harvest your land
- Where to sell your crops

You would learn these things from your father.

Your father, your family determined your vocation, your training, your identity and your very place in the world. You were expected to be just like your father.

So, to say you were the son of a farmer meant you were a farmer. To say you were the son of a tentmaker meant you were a fisherman. To say you were the son of a fisherman meant you were a fisherman.

And so, when we hear, “This is my son...” we should hear—this Jesus is God. When you hear that Jesus is the Son of God you need NOT to think that it means that Jesus was created by God. NO. God does send his son, but his son is eternal.

Jesus is God’s beloved son.

The Father had never spoken of anyone like this. There were many great men and women who preceded Christ into the world but not one of them spoke for God as God. And none of them did God call ‘beloved’ and say that he is, ‘well pleased.’

Jesus is different.

Abraham was called the friend of God.
Moses was known as the servant of God.

Aaron was said to be the chosen one of God.
David had a heart like God.
Paul was an apostle sent from God.

But Jesus was different. Those men did great things but they were also in great need. Not Jesus.

In one moment, Jesus identifies with sinners and in the next God the father is identifying with Jesus.

What man is like this Jesus?

In one moment Jesus is saying—I'm with the sinners. In the next we hear God saying—He is my son. He is with me.

We can trust Jesus because he binds himself to us and because he is bound to God.

There is no other man that would come and willingly identify with rancorous sinners but Jesus is the friend of sinners.

God commissions Jesus to come and save those who hide themselves in him. That day, the father proclaimed, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

This matters greatly because the proclamation that was spoken that day over Jesus applies to us now. Because Jesus identified himself with mankind—any who come to him are the beloved by God.

This is the way that Paul addresses his letter to the church at Rome—look

“To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 1:7

Jesus was commissioned so that we could be the ones loved by God. Jesus identifies with us and God has said—I love you like I love Jesus.

What is true about Jesus is true about us. Anything God says over Jesus he believes about us.

Jesus identifies with us
Jesus is commissioned for us

And

3. Jesus Proves himself to us (12-13)

You might say, well this sounds okay but how do we know that he is who he says he is. He proves himself by going to the place of national tragedy, failure and mourning.

The wilderness.

“The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. [13] And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.” Mark 1:12–13

Mark is only giving the barest amount of detail here, but all he says is uber-important. The Holy Spirit who just was poured out on Jesus for his earthly ministry ‘drove’ Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

This was not a random bit of information that Mark haphazardly throws in. He is telling us this so that we can see how Jesus proves himself to be the Son of God.

You see, Jesus was not the only one who was driven into the wilderness and tempted by the Devil. Another son had gone before him.

Who?

Israel.

Way back in the book of Exodus we overhear God talking to Moses telling him what to say to the nameless Pharaoh,

[22] Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, [23] and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” Exodus 4:22–23a

The nation of Israel collectively had been led by the Spirit into that very wilderness. And they failed miserably. For 40 years, the people wandered in that wilderness because they refused to trust that God could and would keep his promises.

Even Moses failed.

Their temptation led to their demise. Search throughout Exodus, you will never find God saying over his son, Israel, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

He was not well pleased.

That son complained.

That son wanted to go back to Egypt.
That son made a worshiped a golden calf.
That son failed.

And the father was not pleased.

But another son was to head off into the wilderness for 40 days to be tempted by the devil. And we see that he is a Son that God MUST be pleased with. He is a son who takes the fiery challenges of the Evil One head on and turns him away.

Satan means Adversary but he was no match for the Son of God. The Son emerged whole and ready to continue what he came to do.

He had and would prove himself.

There was a previous son to Israel that was tempted by the Adversary, and failed. His name was Adam.

Adam was lived in paradise when he faced the snake.
Adam had every advantage.

Adam failed.

And his failure echoed forth and impacted and infected all men and women that would come after him. When Adam was tempted and failed, he failed for all mankind.

Adam failed for us.

Don't be too angry, we learn in Romans that if any one of us were there instead of Adam, we would have failed too.

The snake slithered into the utopian garden and had his way.

Mankind fell, never to rise on his own again. What followed was death and condemnation for generations of men and women that followed.

Adam failed for us and the truth is we have failed plenty for ourselves too.

Jesus was different—

- God said to Adam, Do what I say about the tree—and he didn't.
- God said to Jesus, Do what I say about that tree—and he did.

But the story that Mark is beginning to tell us here does not end with the tragedy of Adam's failure. The story introduces us to the beloved son who did not fail.

Jesus did not.

Did you notice that the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to face Satan? He did not wait around for the snake to slither to him, like Adam.

The snake did not slither into a utopian garden to face Jesus—Jesus strode out into the trackless wilderness to face the snake.

Adam had every advantage and failed.
Jesus had every disadvantage and prevailed.

This Jesus did not fail like Adam and Israel.

We can trust him. He proved himself in the wilderness and you know—he will prove himself with you again and again. There are many things we could bring to mind about Jesus and how he proves himself to us—but consider this:

Jesus proves himself to us he does not ask us to prove ourselves to him. We cannot be good enough or righteous enough to prove ourselves to him—but he is good enough and righteous enough to prove himself to us.

The message of Christ is NOT be worthy of me. Live up to my ideals. NO. The message of Christ is trust me. Come to me.

He is worthy, we need only be willing.

We've journeyed to the wilderness to the place of national tragedy and we have seen with our own eyes history being re-written.

The beloved Son has come for you and me.

He has come and linked himself to us.
He has come and is commissioned for us.
He has come and proves himself to us.

We can trust him.

Jesus identified with us—

He was not ashamed to associate with mankind. Not just to hang out and eat with sinners but also to hang

condemned in the place of sinners. Any who come to him—he freely identifies with you. He will not disassociate himself from you because he is embarrassed or because you lack social skills or because you are sin again.

See this picture of the Son of God being plunged into the waters and hear him say—I'm with you. I'm not leaving you.

Jesus identifies with us AND

Jesus was commissioned for us—

The Father commissioned him to save the all the those that would come to him. And he does exactly what the Father asks him to do.

He comes and says—They are with me—so much so that I will take upon myself their punishment. I will bear the price of their sins. I am with them even to the point of death.

Just as going under the waters of baptism and coming up reminds us of dying and rising again. Jesus identified with us to the point of death but death could not have him forever.

We are great sinners—but Jesus is a greater savior.

And with that, we are introduced to Jesus the beloved Son of God.

Now that we know the core of who he is—

The one who identifies with sinners.
The one who is commissioned for us.
The one who proves himself for us again.

In other words, the he is the one we can trust.

Do you know him?

I know there are many in this room and with this number there have to be some here who have not begun to trust Jesus.

Is that you?

You don't need to prove yourself to him. You can't. But he can prove himself to you. If you look and listen you will see that he has proven himself.

He will not turn away any who come to him. Have you come?

For those of us that know him—

Isn't our Lord good?
Isn't he the best?

No one loves us like this man.
No one sticks to us like this man.
No one stands up for us like this man.
No one is trustworthy like this man.

Jesus the beloved of God is our beloved too.

PRAY

Benediction:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood [6] and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Revelation 1:5–6

