

# **"MARK, WALK THRU THE BIBLE."**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA**

**March 8, 2026, 6:00 pm**

**TEXT FOR SERMON: MARK 1:1-3, 11, 17-21; 10:44-45; 15:37-39**

## **Introduction.**

Who is Jesus? That is a question that has been asked countless thousands of times by myriads of people. It gets addressed in books, on magazine covers, in conferences and seminars. And the answers all over the place.

Jesus was a teacher, even a great teacher, a rabbi, a philosopher, a sage, a social justice warrior, a visionary, a miracle worker, a healer, an end times prophet. By the world, there are lots of Jesus', hundreds of Jesus'.

What is the truth about Jesus? Who should you listen to? An excellent place to start would be to listen to the eye witnesses, those who knew Jesus personally, those who were his followers.

This leads us to the unique writings that open the New Testament. The four Gospels are objectively true records of the events and words of Jesus' life on earth. They tell us what actually happened and what Jesus actually said.

As I have said before each Gospel presents a portrait or perspective of Jesus from a slightly different angle, but all four of them (along with the epistles that follow) portray the same recognizable man. As one writer said, this "makes Jesus a unique figure in world literature: never have so many writers managed to convey the same impression of the same human being over and over again" (Thomas Cahill).

## **Author**

The unanimous testimony of the early church fathers is that Mark was the author. We know he was a relative of Barnabas. His mother's home was a gathering place for early Christians in Jerusalem. Mark also started the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas but went home early, though he later traveled with Barnabas to Cyprus for more mission work.

He later became significant in the life of Paul, being one of the last people the apostle mentioned in his final letter (II Timothy 4:11).

He was a close associate of the Apostle Peter, Peter called him his spiritual son (1 Peter 5:13).

Mark's Gospel appears to be the recorded testimony of everything Peter told him about the sayings and deeds of Jesus. One very interesting aspect of Peter's testimony is how staggeringly honest it is about himself. From Peter's lips Mark recorded all the unflattering stories of Peter and none of the flattering ones found in Matthew and Luke. Peter's broken pride led to humility and great boldness, bold confession and bold testimony.

A final note about Mark, he is believed to be young man in 14:51-52.

**Mark 14:50-52** And they all left him and fled. 51 And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

This is a unique and odd inclusion of an odd detail that doesn't appear to have anything to do with anything, except to be Mark's personal witness of himself. His own humility like Peter.

## **Book**

The Gospel of Mark is the earliest Gospel and most likely one of the first books in the NT.

This first Gospel, this unique first of its kind literature became the model, a literary influence starting a new form of literature called Gospel, a book of witness and testimony. It became the model that Matthew and Luke picked up and used. They each included about 600 verses from Mark's Gospel.

Mark is the shortest of the Gospels. It is just over half as long as Matthew and Luke. You can read the whole book in about an hour. Mark has the quickest beginning of the Gospels. He skips the genealogy, jumps over all the birth stories and goes straight to John the Baptist, the forerunner who announces Jesus. Then straight to the baptism, temptation, and public ministry and healings.

He doesn't show how Jesus came to earth, but what He did while on earth, and how His coming changed the world.

His Gospel is breathless, one long run on sentence, Mark uses "and" 1,375 times. And is the first word in 12 of the 16 chapters. It is as if there are no pauses or breaks in Jesus' ministry. This is a story told in a hurry, full of excitement, power, energy, force and beauty.

A NYT review would call it a fast paced, action-packed thriller filled with crisp dialogue, a gruesome murder followed by a surprising, completely unexpected twist at the end. It has been on the best seller list for 2,000 years (104,000 weeks).

This gospel doesn't read like some old history. It's in the present tense and moves at a fast clip. Take out your pew Bibles and turn to chapter one, I want you to see something about the style of Mark that contributes to a strong sense of a breathless, excited, enthusiastic accounting of events.

**1:10** And when he came up out of the water, *immediately* [NIV – nothing] he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

**1:12** The Spirit *immediately* [NIV – at once] drove him out into the wilderness.

**1:18** And *immediately* [NIV – at once] they left their nets and followed him. **19** And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. **20** And *immediately* [NIV – without delay] he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

**1:21** And they went into Capernaum, and *immediately* [NIV – nothing] on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

**1:23** And *immediately* [NIV- just then] there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out.

**1:29** And *immediately* [NIV – as soon as] he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. **30** Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and *immediately* they told him about her.

**1:42** And *immediately* [NIV – immediately] the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

Nine times in chapter one, 42 times in 16 chapters. Only 9 times in all the other Gospels.

If Mark's gospel was a brick wall, it would have almost no mortar, just going from brick to brick to brick with almost no sense of any time passing between events. Immediately and then immediately and then at once and then right after that and then very soon. He writes like a thunderstorm, lots of lightning flashes and thunder, one after another.

This is the redneck gospel, not a lot of style or sophistication or flourishes. This is a gospel the way John Madden might write, boom, pow, smash, crash; like a running back slicing through a defense, quickly darting here and then there, always moving, like a freight train.

Mark records more of the doings of Jesus than the sayings of Jesus, more of our Lord's works than His words. Mark's repeated inclusion of vivid details and addition pieces of information add to the fullness of our understanding of Jesus and give an authenticity to the life and words of Jesus.

He is always at work and is working even now. Jesus has always been and is even now a man of decisive action, and He calls us to decisive action. There is no neutrality with Christ. He is present, He is hands on, He is intimately involved with every detail of life. Jesus has come, it affects everything. This is Mark's testimony.

### **Purpose, theme**

Mark's Gospel has a distinctly Roman/Latin feel to it, especially compared with the Jewish emphasis we say in Matthew last week. Mark wrote to Romans and Gentiles. He leaves out things Romans would have no interest in like Jesus' genealogy. When he has to include Jewish references, Mark explains them.

Mark is writing to Christians in Rome, who were suffering under Nero. Peter had been crucified. The saints are suffering. They need help understanding their faith. Mark gives them the good news of the Gospel

in which he highlights Jesus as the suffering servant. Jesus is like them, He knows what they are going through. Jesus suffered and died for them and rose victorious. Just as Jesus suffered, so would they but because of Jesus they can be victorious.

Nero was taking the lives of Christians, but because they already had eternal life, because Jesus had already suffered and died and rose again for them, their loss was nothing to them.

Mark's Portrait of Jesus is The Son of Man, The Servant King, the Suffering Servant who calls us to suffer.

## **Jesus**

Who is Jesus?

Who is this man of whom it was said, He taught with authority, unlike the rabbis?

Who is this man who commanded the forces of Satan to leave, who had authority to forgive sins, raise the dead, feed thousands, and showed His lordship over the powers of nature and over the Sabbath?

The structure of Mark's writing from beginning to end reveals Jesus in two ways.

## **The Son of God and the Son of Man**

*First, Mark bears witness to Jesus as the Son of God.*

**Mark 1:1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This is the gospel of the Son of God. Mark follows this with four revelatory, emphatic moments. At the baptism of Christ, the Father says, "You are my beloved Son . . ." (Mark 1:11). On the Mount of Transfiguration, the voice from the cloud says the same thing again, "You are my beloved Son ... (Mark 9:7). At the halfway point in the Gospel Mark records:

**Mark 8:29** "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."

**Matthew 16:16** Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

It is interesting this moment was the hinge point in Matthew’s Gospel and it is the hinge point, halfway through Mark’s Gospel. And then at the moment of Jesus death:

**Mark 15:39** When the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Through these two confessions, one by a representative of Israel and one by a representative of the Gentile world, Mark proclaims the faith of the Gospel, God has come down, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

***Second, Mark bears witness to Jesus as the Son of Man and suffering servant.***

Mark’s Gospel is 16 chapters, almost half of his Gospel is devoted to the last week of Jesus’ life and ministry. Half of the Gospel describing Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection. This is Jesus’ mission and purpose.

The Son of Man who willingly takes on our humanity and becomes a servant, and not just a servant but a suffering servant. Three times Jesus announces His mission and purpose, three times Jesus clarifies the reason for which He was sent into the world by the Father, three times He tells His disciples of His approaching suffering and sacrifice, and three times the disciple completely miss the point.

**Mark 8:31-33** And he began to teach them that *the Son of Man* must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

**Mark 9:31-35** He was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “*The Son of Man* is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him.

And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” 32 But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.

35 And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”

**Mark 10:32-37** And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and *the Son of Man* will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. 34 And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” 36 And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” 37 And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

Are we so different. Don't we resist sacrifice and pain and suffering. We try to protect our own interests and seek our own comfort. Don't we put our interests and desires above others.

**Philippians 1:29** For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.

He had to suffer in order to accomplish God's redemptive purpose, and so would any who want to be His disciples.

Our faith only truly becomes real when it costs us something. Will we bear a family resemblance to our suffering Savior?

### **Implications and application.**

This is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not the ending.

We are in the middle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ being put on display for the world to see and hear. We are the continuation of God's redemptive

purposes in all of history. We are what God is purposefully bringing to completion.

The urgency of Mark's Gospel reminds us that this life of ours is fleeting and short, and this Jesus requires, demands a response.

What will you do with this man Jesus, the One called the Christ, the King of the Jews? Who do you say He is?

You can refuse to believe He is the suffering-servant who came to serve our souls, to lay down His life for sinners, to pay the ransom for our freedom from sin and death on the cross, but one day you will have to stand before Him and explain why you rejected so great a gift as the eternal salvation of your soul.

You can mock and ridicule Him. You can spit on Him and crucify Him over and over again in your hearts with your sin and rebellion.

You can believe Him and confess Him with confidence as Peter did to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, your Savior and Lord. Like Peter you can see how great is your sin that requires so great a sacrifice and in tears and godly sorrow, you can surrender to Jesus, take up the cross and follow Him.

**Mark 8:34-38** "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul?"

**Mark 10:43-45** But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.