

An Introduction to the Gospel of the Servant King

Mark 1:1

Pastor Jeremy, January 14, 2024

Well, good morning, everyone. If you're joining us for the first time today, I want to tell you, you've come on a good Sunday, because we are beginning a new series on the gospel of Mark. So if you would, please take your Bibles and turn with me to the Gospel of Mark, which should be easy to find. It is the second book in the New Testament, the orders of the books are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And as you're turning there, I want to begin our time with a question. I did this last week, but I want to do one more time, and that is this: who do you think Jesus is? When you hear the name Jesus Christ, what pops into your head? I ask you that because there are a lot of different ways to answer that question. Some have said He's a king to me because He's there to rule my life. And if you said that, you'd be right, you're absolutely correct. He is a prophet, priest, and King; He fulfills all those roles in His person. Others have said, when I think of the Lord Jesus Christ, I think He's a Saviour. He saves me from my sin. And if you said that, you'd be correct as well because He is the Savior of the world. There is salvation in no other name under heaven given by men by which we must be saved. Some have said He's a friend to me, keeps me from being alone. Others have said, Jesus is a servant to me. Some have said He's God. And we could go on and on. But the truth is, you would be correct if you said any of those things about Jesus. There's not one single title that defines the Lord Christ; He has many, which is why there are four gospels.

I don't know if you ever thought about this before. But the reason God gave us four books in the Bible to describe Christ is because one would not be enough. For example, The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of Jesus as King. The phrase "kingdom of God" appears multiple times in that book to show you that He is Jesus. He is the long-awaited Messiah that Jews have been waiting for all these years. In order to show you that, some key figures in the early church put the symbol of a lion in front of the Gospel of Matthew in order to explain that in this book, the visual image is that he is the Lord.

Mark, on the other hand, emphasizes Jesus as servant because Mark wants to tell you that "Christ did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many." Mark 10 :45, which is why the church often depicted him as a bull, to show the humble sacrificial nature of his writings.

Luke tells the story of Jesus as a man, which is why He was portrayed as a as a man with His arms stretched out to say, you can come to Me and don't stay away, I will receive you. John tells you, in no uncertain terms, that He's God, which is why that book was often drawn with a symbol of an eagle that started in the heavens and came down to earth just as the Son of God did.

But the point is that the gospel writers didn't all present the material the same way. And just like you and I do, they had different images in mind when they thought of who Christ is. I've heard them described as a quartet with four instruments, each one playing a different part, but each one in perfect harmony. In

order to change the image, they're like four cameras recording the same film where they all saw the same thing. But they did it from different directions, one over here, one over there, one this way.

But what I want to do this morning, is to talk to you about the life of Christ from the perspective of the gospel of Mark. Today, we're going to start our journey through this book of the Bible. We spent the last three months going through the book of Revelation to talk about the second coming of Christ. But today, I want to shift gears for a moment and tell you what happened at His first coming in what has been called the shortest gospel in the Bible. Matthew has 28 chapters, Luke has 24, John has 21, Mark has 16, almost half of some of the other ones. And not only that, it's also been called the busiest gospel because it's so fast paced. When you read the book of Mark, you're going to be panting afterwards. He puts so much information in these pages. He's like a tornado. It's been called the plainest gospel because it just starts and it just ends, no frills, no trappings in the book. But what it tells you about Christ is so amazing. And you need to see that.

Just out of curiosity, how many of you have studied the gospel of Mark in a church before? Anybody? Okay, quite a few. A number of you had them raise your hand. Adam, raise your hand; you preached on it for three years, didn't you? Yeah. How many of you are studying it for the first time today? A few maybe, okay. Well, I ask you that because if you've never gone through this book before, I think you're gonna find this is a treat. I have preached for years as a pastor and there's nothing like preaching a gospel because you feel like you're talking about someone you know, amen. Does that make sense? I mean, if I told you next Sunday, we're going to talk about someone you know, you would be very interested in that. You would come with great anticipation. And if I told you, we're going to talk about someone, you really know, your best friend, you would be chomping at the bit. And that's what you do when you study a book like this. This is the friend of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what I want to do this morning is just answer three questions with you about the gospel of Mark. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline for today. Just to just to get this series started and introduce the book, we're going to look at three questions about Mark.

The first one is who wrote it. It makes sense, doesn't it? Can't really dive into the book until you talk about who the author was? So who wrote the Gospel of Mark? And to be honest, that's not an easy question to answer for some, because if you look in verse one, the author does not give you his name and that's not unusual. All the gospel authors did that. They all wrote anonymously. So to find out who wrote this, you have to turn to history. And when you do that, you find what you would expect to find and that is that Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. It's the overwhelming testimony of the early church that he is the one responsible for giving this to us. Now, you might say, "Well, Pastor Jeremy, that's brilliant. Did you have to go to seminary to learn that?" The answer is yes, I did. And I read thousands of pages on it. Thank you very much. It came from this man; I feel very comfortable in telling you that. I got a B minus in that class.

And even furthermore, when you study Mark, you find he's a captivating person because he was the cousin of Barnabas, remember that guy? The great missionary from the book of Acts. And like many people in the New Testament, he had several names. So sometimes he's called Mark. Sometimes he's called John. And sometimes he's called John Mark, all in the same person. The first time you hear about him is when Peter escapes from prison and comes to Mark's mother's house in Acts chapter 12. In fact, if you want to go ahead and turn there in your Bibles, keep your finger in the Gospel of Mark, and turn with me to Acts 12. I'm just going to read this text to you. Because it gives you two of his names when it says, "Peter came to the house of Mary, not the mother of Jesus, but the mother of John who was called Mark." It tells you that apparently, Mark's mother was saved. He grew up in a Christian home, to the point that if you look in Acts 12:25 it says when Paul and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey, they took Mark because they knew him. He had a relationship with these men in the early church, and they thought very highly of him.

And you need to see what happens on this trip, because it's going to set the stage for who Mark would later turn out to be if you look in Acts 13:5. It shows what happens on this first missionary journey. And I want to give you some background on this, because it says, "When they reached Salamis," on this missionary journey with Mark, "they began to proclaim the Word of God in the synagogues." Now, stop there just for a moment. And tell me when Paul preached in the synagogues, how did it go? Usually pretty bad, right? When he would go in there and tell the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, the one you crucified, was it peaceful or violent? I mean, it was oftentimes violent. He did have some good encounters, but for the most part, it was hairy, to say the least. And I mentioned that because this is how the journey starts. This is Mark's first taste of the missionary lifestyle. He watches Paul go into a synagogue and kick a hornet's nest, probably.

It was said when Paul would go to a town he did not ask where the hotel was, he asked where the prison was. That's where he's going to end up. This is Mark's mentor on this trip.

And then the end of verse five says, "And they also had John," or Mark, remember he has two names "as their helper. When they had gone through the whole island as far as Pathos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet, whose name was Bar-Jesus." Now, as you're going through the story here, let me unravel this some more. Now it's getting into going from bad to worse because they're coming across a false prophet. They start off with a synagogue preaching in the synagogue, rough situation. And now they're finding a man who's into magic and he's Jewish. And he's misleading the people and he's friends with the proconsul. So you can imagine what's going through Mark's mind as is this that this is happening. He's probably wondering, what did I just sign up for? Verse eight, says the magician opposed them. "So Saul, who was known as Paul," he's got several names as well, "filled with the Holy Spirit fixed his gaze on him and said," you gotta like Paul, "you who are full of deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all unrighteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

And then look at what happens down in verse 13. “Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.” Now, I don't think it's too hard to put two and two together here and say whatever happened in this first journey, scared Mark to death. I mean, he watched Paul and Barnabas, he saw what they went through. He witnessed the confrontations and the hostility and all the violence. And he said, “No, thank you. I'm going back home.” Which causes a major rift in the early church because Acts 15 says when it was time to go on the second missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take Mark along, but Paul said, What? No, no, I don't trust him. So the two of them split up, with Barnabas going one way with Mark, and Paul going the other way.

But the point is that all this happened because Mark was just a human. I mean, he's not perfect. This is just a normal guy like the rest of us, the author of this book, how many of you have ever tried to do something for the Lord, and you left at the first sign of trouble? Anybody? We all have. How many have ever tried to share the gospel, preach to someone, witness, confront their sin, and you stopped at opposition. Everybody's done that. It's a very human story, and that's what's taking place here. Which if you think about it, it's actually encouraging in a strange way because this is something you can relate to. I can't relate to a man who goes to preach and never has any problems. I don't know what that's like. I've never had a church like that. And I can identify with a person who gets into ministry and doesn't ever flinch because it's all rainbows and sunshine, and everything's wonderful. But I can identify with a guy like this, who puts his hand to the plow and actually starts to look back.

By the way, this is the last time you hear about Mark in the book of Acts. And so if you never saw anything else about him in the Bible, you would have to be wondering how did that guy write a book in the Bible? What happens between that point and the point where you're reading about him in here in the Gospel of Mark? Well, if you would turn over to Colossians 4. To answer that question, you're going to have to read between the lines a little more because the Bible doesn't come out and tell you exactly what happens. There are some hidden years in Mark's life. But in Colossians 4 it says several years after that event took place Paul writes a letter to the church in Colossians where he gives some closing remarks. And he mentions Mark by name. What he says is intriguing. If you look in verse 10 of chapter four, Paul says, “Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and *also* Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);” I think about that for a moment. The last time Paul was with Mark, he was not very pleasant. The last time you read about the two of them together, Paul didn't want to have anything to do with him. He said, “No way no How. Get that deserter out of my face.” Now he says, “Mark sends you greetings because he's with me.” Now he's telling you in a sense, “Mark says hello because he's sitting by my side” because the two of them have been reconciled. Paul tells the Colossians, when you come to him, essentially, you can trust this guy. And we don't know why he said that, but it could be that the Colossians were wondering what to do with Mark because he was a deserter. He had a dark stain on his record. He had a reputation. And they weren't sure if he would do well in the ministry. Paul says he will; you can rely on him because he's changed.

In fact, the early church thought Mark changed so much that not only did he minister with Paul here, but many believe after he went on the missionary journeys with Barnabas, he started traveling with Peter because the two of them became close. If you want to write this verse down 1 Peter 5:13, Peter calls Mark his son. So Mark would walk with Peter and talk with Peter and listen to his stories about Jesus. And with that, he gave us the words of this gospel. Mark didn't put the gospel of Mark together on his own, but he did it with Peter's help. One ancient Bishop named Papias writing in the second century a few years after Mark died, said that Mark was the scribe of Peter, and he wrote down accurately all he remembered for posterity's sake, so that we would know the Saviour just like Peter did.

But the lesson here, I think in Mark's life is that God moves in mysterious ways. It doesn't mean He doesn't do things the way you and I would do them. If you are going to write a book of the Bible, you wouldn't choose someone like Mark in your mind. In our minds, he was a flake, this guy's a loser. He had messed up. And God said, "I know but I'll forgive him because I'm the God of second chances." Where Paul said, "you had your chance, and you blew it." God said, "I'll give you another chance Mark." Where Paul said, "you had your opportunity and failed." The Lord said, "That's okay. I will show mercy because that's what I do." There's been debate throughout the years about whether Paul did the right thing in turning Mark away and I won't get into all that for the sake of time. But personally, I'm not sure that he did. Because the Bible doesn't tell us to shoot people when they're wounded. It tells us to restore them. So when they fail, restore them. When they run away, forgive them. When they let you down, and they leave you stranded in a foreign country somewhere with no one to support you, but a few people, you do the same thing. The church is not in the judgment business. We're in the forgiveness business, Amen? We're all a little too quick to pull the trigger when someone fails and say, "Did you mess up? There's no more mercy for you." I tell you what, if we did that, we'd have a very small church. We all make mistakes.

You know, as Mark stood in this fork in the road, he really had two options. He could quit, or he could throw himself on the mercy of others. And that's what he did. May we learn from that example.

You know, I just told you the early Church used to depict Mark as a bull to demonstrate that this is the gospel of service. And I'll say a few words about that in a moment, but I didn't have the chance to tell you that they often drew him with tears in his eyes to demonstrate this is a broken man because they believed as he heard the stories about how Peter betrayed Christ and received forgiveness. Mark couldn't help but weep because he said, "That's me. He's talking about my life." Friends, when you read the Bible, have you ever wept because you said, "That's talking about my life."? You're not the only person to ever flake out on Jesus. Others have done it too. And we need to be encouraged by what we learn from their lives.

And that brings it to another question to ask about this book. We've talked about who wrote it. That's Mark, the disciple of Peter and Paul, cousin of Barnabas, man who received a second chance. Let's talk about why he wrote it.

The second question to follow up with is why did he write this book? What compelled him to put the words on paper? And that question is easy to answer because Mark comes right out and tells you why he wrote this gospel. If you look in Mark 1:1, this is the why of the book. Mark 1:1, the very first word in the Gospel says that "This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Now, as you read that one standalone sentence, you can tell just right off the bat, the gospel of Mark doesn't sound like the other gospels, does it? When you look in the Gospel of Matthew, he starts off with Jesus' genealogy to tell you that this is the King, the one who comes from the son, the line of David. Then Luke starts off with his birth or writing to Theopolis. But Mark begins by telling you about one thing and one thing only, and that is the gospel, which means good news. Mark says, "I'm not writing this book to give you bad news, you have enough of that already. I'm writing it to bring you something better."

And to do this, if you look in the verse, He gives you three titles for the Lord here. I don't know if you picked up on this or not, but if you look at these, the first one is that he calls Him Jesus, see that? Now we see His name so often in the Bible, we don't think about what it means, but the name Jesus is the Hebrew word Joshua, it means Saviour. If you want to put this verse in the margin of your bibles there, Matthew 1:21, says the angel told Mary, she will bear a son, and call His name, Jesus, for, here's the reason why, He will save his people from their sins. That's what the word refers to. Jesus would be someone who would rescue us from disaster.

A second title here in the verse is Christ, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that's not His last name, that's a position He would uphold. He would be the Christ or the anointed one, or the Messiah that Jews had been longing for all these years.

And the third title here is that He would be the Son of God. Not godly or God like but God Himself, the second member of the Trinity.

But the idea in this first verse is that Christ is someone who would fulfill all these descriptions. And when you read the words of this gospel, you can tell He's not one or the other, He remained all of these every single day throughout His life. For example, with regards to the first one, when it says He's a saviour in this gospel, that's an understatement almost. I mean, Jesus saves all kinds of people in here. He saves paralytics, cripples, and prostitutes to name a few. He saved the helpless, the poor, and the disabled. He saved sinners, He saves legalists. He's just saving, saving, saving. With regards to the second one, Christ, or ruler, He rules all sorts of things in the book. He rules the winds and the waves, stops the storm with His mouth. He rules death and disease; He rules sickness, misery, suffering. He

rules the demons in this book, He tells them to go, and they go. And as He does that, He proves that He's the Son of God. In this book, Jesus will say He can forgive sin, only God can do that. He will say He can send out angels, only God can do that. He'll say He can raise the dead, only God can do that.

But the idea here is that Mark talks about this in the opening verse because he's giving you a foretaste of what you can expect to read in the rest of the chapters. You could look at this as his introductory statement for the book. And to be honest, we don't have time to go into every story in the Gospel of Mark to show you how it displayed these elements.

One story that's always hit home with me is the conversion of Matthew, the author of the first book in the New Testament. So this is another guy that wrote a book in the Bible. If you look over to Mark chapter two, it tells us in Mark 2:14 a little bit about Matthew. It says he's sitting in a tax booth, which means he's a publican, one of the most hated jobs in Israel. He collected taxes for Rome, the enemy of the Jews. He took money from the Jews' homes to line his pockets with them, which made the people of Israel so angry, they would have put Matthew on the same social level as a prostitute. He would have been excommunicated from the synagogue; he would have been banned from any normal, decent home. No one would speak to him, visit him, go to his house for a meal. And what does Jesus do? If you look in verse 14, if you have the words of Jesus in red, they stick out to you there. He says, "Follow me." He goes to his tax collector's booth and says, "Follow me. Be my disciple." And then He goes into his house and eats with him. If you were Jewish, your mouth would hit the floor. What are you doing? Why? Down in verse 17 he tells you why. He says, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." In other words, Jesus says, Jesus, the one whose name is Saviour says, "I've come to save people. And that's why I went to Matthew's house. That guy needs saving. If there's any man in Israel right now who needs to be delivered from his sin, it's him. He's a wicked man, and he's exactly the kind of person I'm looking for. I didn't come to save those who think they're perfect. I came to save those who know they're going to hell."

Now, as you read that, tell me something, is that good news? You bet it is. Does that put a smile on your face? It should. Mark says in the first verse, that's why I'm writing this. This is the gospel, the beginning of the gospel, or good news of Jesus Christ. This is not the bad news. This is not the calamity of Jesus Christ, or the tragedy. This is the hope. And as I tell you that I've got to say, I think if the church in North America is failing anywhere, it's failing here. We don't give people good news like we should anymore. I mean, so many times in churches, it's the opposite. Because all we tell them is bad. They show up for our church or services, and we tell them their sin is bad, and it is bad. And they come through our doors, and we tell them that the temptation is awful, and the culture is wicked, and it is wicked. But the problem is, that's only half the story. The other half says that we have Jesus, and He's come to give you good news in the midst of that. In this gospel, what you're going to find in the weeks and months to come is that Jesus is going to step into a world that is just as messed up as yours is. It had tax collectors and prostitutes in it. It had sinners and wicked people. And when He meets them, Christ

does not throw His hands up in the air and say, “I quit.” He starts helping them. I believe there are churches today, that would never help a man like Matthew. They wouldn't let him walk through their doors unless he went home and changed his clothes first. Well tell me something. Where's the good news in that? Where does Jesus tell Matthew to go home and change his clothes? He just said, “Come.” That's what Matthew did. We make it harder on people. We tell them you can't come to Jesus until you get your act together first and join a church, read a Bible, pray a prayer, walk out, clean up your life and get rid of your earrings, tattoos, cigarettes, movies and games. Jesus said, “Follow me and as you get your eyes fixed on Me, it will take care of all that other stuff.”

By the way, the change in Matthew must have been pretty dramatic. We just talked about the change in Mark, but it had to be the same way here because Mark 2:1 says all of this happens in Capernaum. That's where Matthew's tax collector's Booth was, and it wasn't a massive town. It had several thousand people in it, but it was small enough that everybody would have known who this guy was. And they understood what he did. And when they saw him with Jesus, they had to be watching him and wondering, “Is this thing for real?” In fact, two of Jesus disciples, one was Matthew, the tax collector, the other one was a guy named Simon the Zealot. And that could be translated Simon, the terrorist because the Zealots were people that hated anything that was Roman. And those two guys as His disciples would have wanted to kill each other. Or at least Simon would have wanted to kill Matthew, Matthew would have to sleep with one eye open with that guy. But Matthew, just like Mark, changed, because God gave him good news.

Have you believed the good news this morning? Friends, do you know the Lord has given you a gospel? I know many of you do. But for others, maybe you came from a place like I just described, and you were told your entire life, you can't get to God unless you work for it. And it's only made you miserable. Can I tell you why it's made you miserable? Because God never intended for you to go to heaven like that. He wants you to follow Me. Just like Matthew, you point your eyes toward Jesus Christ, and He will save you. And that's it.

And that brings you to one more question to answer about all this. We've talked about who wrote it, Mark, one of the least likely people probably to do this. Second one is why, and he tells you in the first verse, He's gonna give you the beginning of the gospel, or good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; that's the same good news Mark experienced. And that is that if you come to Christ, He will forgive you. Bad news would have told Mark, “You don't have a chance.” Bad news would have said to a guy like that “there's no hope for you.” Bad news would have said “it's over. You're done. Throw in the towel.” Good News said, “God forgives sinners.”

Brings me to one more question in this introduction, and that is how did Mark write it? We talked about the who and the why. Let's talk about one more question, and that is the how. What was the style Mark used to put this together? And I've already said a little bit about that, but I want to tell you some more.

I told you earlier Mark received this information from Peter; that was the source of his writing. When the New Testament was canonized, there were three standards you had to meet in order for a book to get into the Bible. One was that it had to have sound doctrine, and it couldn't have anything fishy. Another one was it had to be written in the first century, the timeline around the time of Christ. A third one was it had to be written by an apostle, or an associate of an apostle. So they could confirm that this really came from an inspired work of God. Mark was an associate. That's how the book got in; Luke was the same way as well. He was an associate of Peter.

And as he wrote, he developed a unique way of expressing himself that actually reminds you of Peter. One commentator said, "If Matthew and Luke wrote like engineers building a car, Mark writes like a driver. He just gets behind the wheel and says, 'Let's go, go, go.'" Don't mind all the other stuff; let's just do it. Tell me about the Lord. That's how Peter was. Peter was kind of an impulsive guy. When you read about him, he had the foot shaped mouth, he would speak and then think later. This is a very quick moving book.

For example, the term "immediately" appears 42 times in this gospel, more than twice per chapter. It's one of the most popular terms because Mark is saying, "This is how Jesus saves, immediately. And this is how He helps, He does it right away, just like that." If you look in the first chapter of Mark, I'm gonna give you some samples of this Mark 1:10 says, "And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon Him." That means He did not delay coming out of the water and He didn't hesitate. He did it instantly. You can see the visual image of that as you read it. And then down in Mark 1:18 it says that when Jesus told the disciples, "Follow Me" "Immediately they left their nets and followed Him." They did what the Lord wanted them to do without a second glance to it. Jesus said, "Come after Me" and they did it right away. Delayed obedience is not obedience, and they did not delay. Mark 1:21 says, "They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath *Jesus* entered the synagogue and *began* to teach." Mark 1:28 says, "Immediately the news about Him." Mark 1:42, says Jesus healed a leper and immediately the leprosy left him. When Christ did a miracle, He didn't stand up on stage and pray for hours and all that kind of charismatic stuff. It just happened.

But I tell you that because the gospel of Mark, it's a fast-moving book. Man, as you read this, you're going to be left breathless because of the influence of Peter. I can imagine Mark sitting in a room as a scribe listening to Peter talk, and Peter just pacing the room back and forth. "And then this happened. And then this happened. Can you believe that?" That's just how the book sounds.

You can also see this in the way it's laid out. If you look in your bulletins, we've created a handout that gives you an outline of this gospel, you might want to hold on to that. We tried to put all the events in there that we could, but it shows you in the outline that the book is evenly divided up according to Jesus movements, because He was constantly on the go in here. All throughout His ministry in chapters one through seven. It says that His ministry took Him on the go all throughout Galilee, and the surrounding

regions where He baptized, was tempted, preached, called the disciples, cast out demons, healed people. Stilled the storm, walked on water, and fed the 5,000, all in just a few pages.

And then in chapters seven through nine, He goes through Galilee and the Gentile regions. This is when He talks to the non-Jews. And He has the encounter with a Syrophenician's daughter, and He heals the deaf and dumb, and He undergoes the Mount of Transfiguration, and He heals a demon possessed boy.

Then in Mark 10 through 16, His ministry takes him to Jerusalem for pretty much the last week of His life, which is the fullest by far. He does more during that seven-day period than any stretch of time. He speaks to the rich young ruler around that time, does the triumphal entry, curses the fig tree, cleanses the temple, teaches in parables teaches on prayer. And then He's arrested, crucified, and resurrected.

But all of this shows that if you're going to follow Jesus, you're going to follow a busy Saviour. And if you're going to be His disciple, He will save you by His grace and mercy like we've been talking about, but it won't lead to necessarily an easy life. He didn't have one. His life was hectic. When you read the gospel of Mark, you find the Lord worked so hard that He almost really collapsed at times. And He gave so much of Himself that He passed out on a boat in the midst of a storm. And the disciples had to wake Him up and say, "Don't you care if we drown?" Well, of course, He cared if they drowned, but in His humanity, the work of the ministry wore Him out to show it's going to wear you out. You can't just come on a Sunday and think that'll be enough for God. There's more to it than that.

One verse that's important in all this is Mark 10:42. If you just want to go over there for a moment, I want to read this to you because it says this in Mark 10:42. It says,

Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles domineer over them; and their people in high position exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you; rather, whoever wants to become prominent among you shall be your servant; For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

The reason I wanted to show you that is because some believe that's the most important passage in the Gospel of Mark. And it tells you Jesus came to serve you, so you need to serve Him. He gave his life for you; you give yours back in response.

I know some people are kind of confused about what this is saying because they think passages like this teach that you need to earn your way into heaven and work for salvation. But that's not true. It's teaching that you are saved by grace alone, so you go work. And Jesus paid it all, He did everything to bring you to heaven, and you respond by honouring Him with your life. And you need to do it, remember the key word, immediately. Don't wait. If you find an area where you can help someone, just do it. This should be easy by the way because when you understand what this is saying, it's saying that you can serve Jesus

in so many ways. For example, sweeping the floor, cleaning the gym, and taking out the trash, handing out bulletins before church begins, cleaning up the nursery, setting out chairs, helping as an usher, making coffee, passing out doughnuts, giving someone a ride, visiting them in the hospital, the list is just really endless. The reformers said that you could honor the Lord by washing dishes. And the book of Mark is telling you, you should act that way because this is what Christ has done for you. He met you in your deepest needs, so go out and meet the needs of others.

And having said that I really can't end this sermon without going back to the way that we started all this and asking you the question: Who do you think Jesus is? When you hear the name Christ, what goes into your head? Does your mind go back to the things that are found in the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, because I think we all understand you can't make up your own ideas about Jesus and go to heaven. You have to believe the things that are in this book taught by these men in this Bible. So are you doing that? When you come to the Gospel of Matthew, and it says that He's a king, well, that's wonderful. But is He your King? Is He sitting on the throne of your heart. And when you come to the Gospel of Mark, and it says He's a servant, giving His life for you? Is He your servant? When you come to Luke and Luke says, "Come," have you come? When you come to John and John says, "He's God," Is He your God? Is He everything? Or do you have a tendency to say, "That sounds interesting Pastor Jeremy, but I don't want to get too serious about this." Because if you are, I want to give you a warning, and that is that you need to be serious about this, or you'll be lost. A Christian is not someone who says Jesus died for sin. A Christian is someone who says Jesus died for my sin. It was my sin that put them there. It was my wickedness and nailed Him to the cross. I should have been the one hanging on it. It's gotta be personal. No one is born again because you say Jesus is nice. Muslims say Jesus is nice. Atheists say He's nice. Christians say, "He's my Saviour and my God. I've been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Amen?

You've got to remember this because there's a danger in starting a series like this. And that is that some of you are going to hear these stories about Jesus and not take it seriously because you'll say, "I've heard it before." And you're going to listen to all these sermons on Mark and tune it out because you'll tell yourself well, "I've read it a million times." Maybe you have. A lot of you've grown up in church. But the question is, have you believed it? That's all that matters. The issue is, has it made an impact in here? If not, you've got to go through it again.

You know, I told you the word immediately is found a lot in this gospel. There's another word that's found a lot. And that's the word "listen." Jesus uses it almost 10 times: Mark 4:3, Mark 4:24, Mark 7:14, Mark 9:7 because He's constantly telling the Jews, "It's not enough for you to show up to My sermons, you need to listen to them." Pay attention. The words of Jesus need to go through your ears into your brain until they reach deep down into your soul.

Apparently, this was a problem for the Jews in Jesus day. That's why He keeps saying it. This is what religious people do. They don't listen. Religious people, they don't often go out and murder somebody,

but they'll come to church and ignore everything because they think they know it all already. Don't let that be said about you. I don't want that to be said about me. The Bible says faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, which means no hearing no faith. You don't listen, you can't be forgiven. So you want to avoid that mistake as we come to this book.

In my studies this week, I came across a story of the time a woman came up to Martin Luther after church in Germany. And she asked him, "Dr. Luther, why do you keep telling us the gospel every week?" You know, so many other things, you have so much good deep theology, why do you keep saying that? To which he told her, he said, "Because, Dear woman, you forget it." I think that's why we have to hear the gospel of Mark again. Even if you've read it before, you don't want to forget it. In fact, as we go through this book, I really want to challenge you, not just to hear the sermons, but to go home and ask yourself, did I learn the lesson in here? Am I getting the point of what Jesus is saying? Jesus told Matthew to follow Me, but am I doing that? He told the synagogue official to believe. Am I believing? He looked at the disciples and He said, "Take up your cross." Am I taking up mine? All this has to be personal. That's the tone that I want us to have as we approach this. And I would appreciate it if you'd be praying for that for our church. I am excited about going through this book with you.

Next week, we're going to look at John the Baptist. He's a very fascinating figure, He's not someone you would want to invite to the church potluck because he ate locusts and wild honey. And that's just one interesting little tidbit about him, but we'll talk about that next time.

For now let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we really want to come to this book with the tenderest of hearts. Lord, your Son, Jesus Christ is infinite. We can never get to the bottom of studying a person like Him. We could read about Him from now until eternity; there's always more to learn. And yet for so many of us, we've studied Christ so many times that a lot of this can seem so redundant. And our hearts can become hard and cold, to who He is and what He's done.

So Lord, I pray for our church, as we approach this series, that we would have a different response. That we would come to it like we're coming to water or come to it like a hungry man coming to bread. And we would say that this is where our all our hope lies; it is in Him. We need to personalize all these things. And Lord, we just need your grace for that.

And Father, I want to pray a special prayer for any who might be lost among us or those who are struggling with the things of the faith because they're discouraged. Would you remind them Lord, after what we've talked about today that there is good news for the sinner. There's bad news. Bad news is if you reject Christ, you will be lost. But the good news is, He has His arms open wide to receive those who would come to Him. So Lord, I pray that they would be drawn to such a Saviour. May we all be drawn to Jesus Christ because of His tender mercy and love?

And as we come to the Lord's Supper today, Father, would our hearts be in the right place before you as we receive them? Would they be humble and tender, as we remember the bread that symbolizes His body, the juice that reminds us of His blood that was poured out for us. And we take this with a heart full of faith pointing straight to the cross and what He's done for us.

Lord, we thank you for this book. I pray you would show us grace in the months ahead that we would learn so much about Christ as we study it. And we pray this all in His name. Amen.