

Mark 1:9-11

# Introduction

What is wealth? When I ask this question most of your minds will likely go to some picture of great sums of money. Or perhaps to the things money can buy you. But if you talk to people who are extremely wealthy, they often give a different slant on what wealth is. Often you will hear such people speak to the fact that true wealth is not the number of digits in a bank account, but rather the freedom that that money can buy you. To them, true wealth is freedom or time or mobility. Money is simply the means to these forms of wealth. Most people don't pursue money for the sake of the money itself but rather for what the money can gain them.

Despite popular perception, the Bible speaks positively about monetary wealth. Abraham was extremely wealthy and he is presented as the paragon of faith. Job too is set forth as an example and he was a wealthy man. Throughout Proverbs, the reader is encouraged toward industrious and wise living so that they might gain wealth and avoid poverty. Paul does tell Timothy that, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils." But that needs to be read in light of everything else the Bible says about money and wealth.

But the Bible also speaks of wealth in other ways. In the Bible, some forms very little to do with money. Often it has to do with relationships. The blessed man in the Bible is the man who sees his children's children ([Ps 128:6](#)). Or the man who has found a wife and obtained favor from the Lord. ([Pr 18:22](#)) There is no loving parent who upon reaching old age, would not give every penny they own to restore a relationship with their children or their grandchildren.

But there is also another, still deeper form of wealth that the Bible presents to us. The Bible speaks of the blessing of a father upon their children. There is no shortage of statistics available to show the profound impact that a father has on their children. When fathers are absent, the future of a child is much more in doubt than when they are present. Rates of incarceration, educational achievement, future earnings, and quality of relationships are all positively

effected by the presence of a father and are all negatively effected in the father's absence.

Biblically and otherwise, the presence of a good father in your life makes you extremely "wealthy" or "blessed".

And while some would argue that we live in the wealthiest civilization in the history of the world (and by some measures we do), we are very poor in this respect. In our day, many grow up without fathers. Moreover, many who do grow up with fathers in the home, are doing so where the father is only half there. This is true both inside and outside the church. This isn't a new problem for the church. Paul told the Corinthians, "For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel." ([1 Cor 4:15](#))

The problem goes back even further than Paul. Throughout the Old Testament there have been issues between fathers and their children. The good kings of Judah and Israel are often followed by wicked sons. David had his own problems with his sons, specifically Absalom. Moses was like a father to Israel, but they rebelled against him in the wilderness. This issue goes back to the very beginning. Adam was created as the son of God ([Luke 3:38](#)) but rebelled against his Father.

The break between father and child goes to the very heart of the gospel. At the heart of the gospel is our heavenly Father's intent to restore the break that exists between He and His children. Indeed, the final verse of the Old Testament speaks to this very thing when Malachi declares, "And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers." ([Malachi 4:6](#))

We see all this happening at the beginning of Mark's gospel in Jesus' baptism where God the Father declares His good pleasure over His Son.

The lesson is short this morning but I want to show two things from our passage about the Baptism of Jesus:

1. It is an answer to the prayer of God's people.
2. It shows our relationship to the Father.

## Jesus' Baptism is an Answer to the Prayer

# of God's People

In verse 9 we see that Jesus comes to the Jordan river from Nazareth which is way up in the north in Galilee. It's easy to miss these geographic details, but in the gospels Jesus has two main areas of ministry. Judea and Galilee. Galilee is up in the north and it's removed from the political center of things in Judea where Jerusalem is. The difference between these two areas is like the difference between Greenville, SC and Washington D.C..

In Mark's gospel, everything happens so quickly. Rarely does Mark set the scene in great detail. Verse 9 simply states that Jesus came and was baptized by John. There's no conversation between Jesus and John like there is in Matthew and there's no long introduction to John like there is in Luke. Because Mark moves so quickly it is easy to miss his veiled allusions to themes and patterns from the Old Testament.

One of those allusions is present in verse 10. When Jesus comes up out of the water Mark writes that ***“the heavens were torn open and the Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove.”***

In the Old Testament, there is a refrain that can often be found in various prayers in the Psalms and in the prophets. It is the prayer that God would “rend the heavens” or “tear open the heavens” and come down to save His people.

This is the prayer of Isaiah in [Isaiah 64](#) when he prays to God and says, “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—” (v. 1)

It is also the prayer of David in [Psalm 144](#) when he prays, “Bow your heavens, O LORD and come down! Touch the mountains so that they smoke!” (v. 5)

The saints of old knew what was needed for salvation to come. God needed to enter into our world and save His people. In the baptism of Jesus, Mark shows that God has answered this prayer. The heavens are torn open. God has come to His people *in Jesus* to save them.

This is what is promised in every baptism. The promise is that God has overcome the barrier that stood between God and man. He has rent the heavens and come down.

There is nothing that humanity could have done to restore our relationship with our heavenly Father. But in Christ, God has restored us as His sons and daughters.

## Jesus' Baptism Shows Our Relationship to the Father

And this is the second thing that I want to show. What does it look like to be restored to our heavenly Father?

Verse 11 makes this known. When Jesus came up from the waters, "***A voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'***"

Doug Wilson has said on a number of occasions that "words are food." This principle is built on the fact that Jesus tells Satan in His temptation that "Man does not live by bread alone." As humans, we are not made to live only on physical food. We were made to live on God's word and the word of others.

One example of this that I've heard is a man who never tells his wife that he loves her. The husband is devoted to his wife and is completely faithful to her but he never tells her of his love. One day the wife tells her husband that she loves him and he does not say it back. With tears in her eyes she asks why he doesn't love her. The husband responds, of course I love you. I told you that when we got married!?

The man doesn't understand what words are for. Words don't merely serve to exchange of information. No, a husband's words are food that his wife needs on a regular basis.

The same, of course, is true for children. Children are not shy in their desire to be loved and affirmed. It isn't a moral flaw that a young child wants their father and mother to tell them over and over again that they are loved and cherished. Children feed on these words and that is good.

This is especially the case when it comes to fathers. Children who do not receive the continuous, **verbal**, loving approval and affirmation of their fathers are left with a void in their hearts. They are malnourished of the words they need to live

by. And we live in a day where many, many, people have grown up malnourished of the paternal affirmation that their hearts long for and need.

All of this is ultimately the results of the Fall and the entrance of sin into the world. When Adam and Eve fell, they ran and hid from their Father in their shame. But even then, God was answering the prayer of David and Isaiah. Even there in the Garden God sought out Adam and Eve. In their sin, their Father clothed them and He gave them a promise of a coming Son who would save them.

When the voice of the Father declares over His Son, “**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.**” it is also an invitation. The shame of your sin drives you from God because you think that instead of hearing words of love and affirmation, you will hear words of condemnation.

But in Jesus, God is shows humanity what a restored relationship with Him looks like. When you come to Jesus you are healed, forgiven, restored, and made clean. You need not fear condemnation. For, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba! Father!”

In Christ you are restored to the Father and the Father’s words to you are the same as they are to Jesus, “You are my beloved child, with you I am well pleased.”

Let this restoration work it’s way out into all your relationships bringing healing and peace.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!