

This morning I am beginning a new sermon series called Savior and Lord. We'll be going through the entirety of Mark's gospel, looking at what it means to know to Jesus as both Savior and Lord. This being the first sermon in the series, I want to begin by talking a little about the book: who wrote it, when it was written, where it was written, and so on.

It was written by a man named Mark, who is called Mark or John Mark in the book of Acts. Most famous as the traveling companion of Peter. Papias, who was the Bishop of Hierapolis and lived from about 60-135 AD, knew John, one of Jesus' disciples, and wrote about Mark:

Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, he followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.

We see in both Peter's and Paul's letters how close he was to both of them:

1 Peter 5:13 - *She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.*

And Paul wrote:

2 Timothy 4:11 - *Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.*

Mark is essentially Peter's eyewitness testimony. Peter is always present in Mark's gospel.

What about the where and the when? Tradition is that Mark wrote from Rome between 60-70 AD. His was the first gospel written. Up until this point the life of Jesus was told mainly through oral history, but as the eyewitnesses were aging, they wanted to write it down in order to preserve it accurately. And so as Peter got older, Mark wrote down the account of Jesus.

Now that you know the background, let's read the first 20 verses this morning:

Mark 1:1-20 - *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* ² *It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"--* ³ *"a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"* ⁴ *And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.* ⁵ *The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.* ⁶ *John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.* ⁷ *And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie."* ⁸ *I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* ⁹ *At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.* ¹⁰ *As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.* ¹¹ *And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* ¹² *At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert,* ¹³ *and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.* ¹⁴ *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.* ¹⁵ *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"* ¹⁶ *As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.* ¹⁷ *"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."* ¹⁸ *At once they left their nets and followed him.* ¹⁹ *When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets.* ²⁰ *Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

I want to answer three questions today: According to Mark 1, who is Jesus, what did he come to do, and what do we do in response?

Who is Jesus?

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² *It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"--* ³ *"a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"*

1) The Christ

The Messiah, the Christos, who would come and administer God's rule on earth and rescue Israel from all its oppressors and troubles. Here is one of the most comprehensive Messianic prophecies:

Jeremiah 23:5-6 - *"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.*

2) The Son of God

This is a title of divinity: second person of the trinity. From the beginning, God has been three-in-one:

Genesis 1:1-3 - *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

Genesis 1:26 - *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image,*

What is the Trinity and why does it matter? God is not a unity. Love is part of his nature. He created us not out of need but out of the overflow of his love and glorification and enjoyment. The Greeks used the word "Perichoresis" – the circle dance – to describe this. The three persons of the Trinity are eternally glorifying, deferring, enjoying, and loving one another.

John 17:1 - *After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.*

3) The Lord.

Verses 2-3 draw from two OT passages:

Malachi 3:1 - *"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.*

Isaiah 40:3-5 - *A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley*

shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. ⁵ And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Both are claiming that a messenger will come and prepare the way for God Himself to come. So who is Jesus? Jesus is God, the eternal second person of the Trinity, and the promised Old Testament Messiah, all at once, taking on flesh. Or, as Isaiah put it:

*Isaiah 9:6 - For to us **a child is born**, to us **a son is** given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

How's that for an opening three verses? So that is who Jesus is, according to Mark's opening. So next question:

What has he come to do?

1) Identify with sinful humanity

And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

John comes to baptize, to call people to repent and prepare for the coming of the Lord. John the Baptist had come in the style of Elijah, who called the people to repentance.

2 Kings 1:8 - They replied, "He was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist." The king said, "That was Elijah the Tishbite."

Jesus has no sins to repent of, but he comes to identify with sinful humanity.

***Philippians 2:5-8** Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!*

He comes to identify not just by being baptized, but by undergoing temptation:

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, ¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

You think of the parallels to creation. There was the Trinity at creation, as well as the Trinity at the beginning of Christ's redemptive work. And this was followed by temptation in both cases. Adam & Eve in the garden with the friendly animals; Jesus in the desert with the wild animals. Jesus is tempted – he undergoes all that we do, but without sin.

***Hebrews 4:15** - For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been **tempted in every way**, just as we are-- yet was without sin.*

2) Proclaim the good news

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

Gospel is a term that refers to an announcement about something that has happened. It is news, not advice. This is what has been done, not what you have to do. How do you get to God? Not by the 4 pillars, or the eightfold path, or the ten commandments. It's not good advice about what you should do to reach God. It is good news about what has already been done for you. Jesus lived the perfect life we could not live. He died the death we should have died. He rose from the dead to conquer sin and death. He has come to make a way to God.

3) Bring the kingdom of God to earth

¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

The kingdom is the reign of God. You can enter into God's reign. You can know Him as Lord. Repent – change direction, turn from your sins, and believe the gospel. Believe what Jesus has done for you!

In his first coming, the kingdom of God breaks in – healing, deliverance, salvation, peace, restoration, reconciliation. When he returns, we are told that:

Revelation 11:15 - **The** seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "**The kingdom of the** world has become **the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.**"

4) Call people to follow Him

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Pupils typically chose rabbis, but this rabbi has the authority to choose people. Look how disruptive he is – I want priority over your family. Priority over your career. Everything else comes second.

Luke 14:26-27 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-- yes, even his own life-- he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Hate comparatively. Follow me so fully that every other attachment will look like hate in comparison.

We are called into relationship with Him, but one where we follow Him.

What must we do?

1) Repent and believe the good news

¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Not just believe, not just the positive stuff. We are sinners who need a Savior. Instead of God being our servant and us being the center, we live as we were intended to live. Confess that you are a sinner. Turn from your self-centered way of life to receive Him as Savior and Lord. Believe He died for you, and commit your life to center around Him.

2) Be restored to a right relationship to the triune God

Remember the Trinity. You were created to live for His glory. you were created to glorify Him, to center your entire life on Him, to find Him beautiful for who he is in Himself. You will find your joy, love and be loved. The triune God created the world out of overflow of His perfect love, so that we would enjoy Him.

What is the promise of romantic love? That you would find someone that you adore, that you enjoy, that you want to praise and love and serve and enjoy, and that they also adore you. They also think the world of you. They also enjoy you. They also want to love and serve you. Is that not heaven? That is what the Trinity is all about. That is perichoresis. That is what it means to enter into a relationship with God. You are invited to be restored to a relationship where we glorify and enjoy Him, and where He shares His glory and joy with us. Where we hear the words spoken to Jesus in v. 11: This is my child whom I love, with him, or with her, I am well pleased.

There is so much more that can be said about this, to come to a place where you are not the center, where God is the center, and where you know and love and enjoy Him, and glorify Him, and that is what your life is about. And in Him you find all the love, joy, and peace your heart has been searching for in this world. This is the promise of God. John the Baptist got this:

John 3:26-30 *They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan-- the one you testified about-- well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him." ²⁷ To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.' ²⁹ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and*

is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰ *He must become greater; I must become less.*

Oh, it's not about me. It's about Him. Less of me and more of Him.

3) Leave it all to follow Him

¹⁶ *As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.* ¹⁷ *"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."* ¹⁸ *At once they left their nets and followed him.* ¹⁹ *When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets.* ²⁰ *Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

Just what this will mean will be spelled out in more detail as we make our way through the gospel of Mark, but the essential call of Jesus is to discipleship, total life commitment. To come to Him not just as Savior but as Lord. My life is yours. My money, my sexuality, my career, my marriage, my singleness, my children or lack thereof, my relationships, my free time – it is all yours. I am willing to lay it all down or give it all up to follow you. The call of Jesus is to leave your nets and follow Him. To leave your father in the boat and follow Him. To be willing to lay it all down for Him, because you know He knows you and loves you and you trust that He knows what is best for you.

Some of you need to come to Him as Savior today. Repent and believe the good news!

Some of you need to come to Him as Lord today. Be willing to leave it all and commit everything to Him.