

“Preparing the Way of the Lord”

Mark 1:1-3



Theme: In response to God’s initiative, receive Christ by faith.

Introduction: As I turn onto La Serena heading toward my house, there is a house at the top of the first hill that has lights spelling out Merry _____. At first, I thought they didn’t have enough length of lights to spell Christmas. Then I became more suspicious that it might be a clear statement of the effort to eliminate Christ from a “seasonal celebration.” Our attentiveness to the grace of God in sending His Son is honed during the Christmas celebration. However, our text today provides us the awareness that we also must be attentive to our own compatibility with this glorious Savior that was born to save us. In what ways are you – through God’s grace – prepared to relate to Jesus Christ? We celebrate His coming during the Christmas season and rejoice in all the sovereign work that was necessary to provide Christ – but in what ways is God rejoicing in the efforts that you put into coming to Him – not only initially, but daily? Our text provides us some key truths that will guide us in the ways for the Gospel to accomplish its intended work in our lives.

I. THE POINT OF THE GOSPEL – Jesus Christ – 1:1

A. THE INTRODUCTION TO JESUS CHRIST

1. As Mark begins the message that was being inspired by God’s Spirit, He cuts directly to the point – the message, the only message of import – is not simply about Jesus Christ, it is Jesus Christ.
2. He declares: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”
3. *“the gospel”* [εὐαγγέλιον] – meaning “blessed message” or “good news” – referring to any message in the 1st century that caused rejoicing – often with reference to something that would cause the lives of people to improve through the conquest by one’s king or the ascension of a king or Caesar that provides hope.
4. This good news of the king deals with the message about *“Jesus Christ”* – beginning with His birth.
 - a) *“Jesus”* [Ἰησοῦς] – the Greek form of the Hebrew יְהוֹשֻׁעַ – Yeshua or Joshua, meaning “Yahweh Is Salvation” – cp. [Matthew 1:21](#).
 - b) *“Christ”* [Χριστός] – “the anointed One” or “Messiah” – emphasizes that not only is Jesus the Promised Deliverer, but also the rightful Ruler of the Kingdom of God – cp. [Matthew 16:16](#).
5. The miracle of all of this – indeed the miracle of our Christmas celebration is that this Deliverer and Ruler is *“the Son of God”* – co-eternal and

coequal with the Father - cp. [Isaiah 40:9-10](#).

B. THE IMPLICATION RE: JESUS CHRIST

1. “Mark is consumed with the arrival of the greatest King ever; the messianic Monarch who will introduce His glorious kingdom of salvation and usher in a new era for the world.”¹
2. It is for this reason that Mark states *“The beginning of the gospel”* [ἀρχή] – a reference to the “commencement of the ‘good news’” – a metonymy for the entirety of what Jesus accomplished in saving sinners.
3. This serves as a summary statement that includes everything pertaining to *“Jesus Christ.”*
4. It is “merely” *“the beginning”* because the impact of the deliverance and rule of Jesus Christ will extend throughout the entirety of His life on earth, crescendo at his crucifixion and resurrection, and continue through all human history into the eternal state.
5. The *“gospel”* means that *“Jesus Christ, the Son of God”* has provided how your sin can be forgiven and replaced with the righteousness that He Himself has provided to all who come to Him in faith – cp. [John 3:16](#).
 - a) *It includes the perfect, sinless life He lived in order to gain the righteousness imputed to us.*
 - b) *It includes the profound suffering He endured at the crucifixion and separation from the Father for us.*
 - c) *It includes the glorious resurrection from the dead, conquering the last enemy to give us eternal life.*
 - d) *It includes His ascension to glory so that He could send to us His Holy Spirit who empowers us to overcome sin and live to the glory of Jesus Christ.*
6. It is in this sense that what Mark shares is *“the beginning”* – that is, the actualization of what had been God’s intention from before the foundation of the world – cp. [1 Peter 1:20](#).

- Have you considered “the good news” – the Gospel?
- In considering the gospel, have you come to understand that it is “good” particularly when contrasted with the “bad news” that we are guilty of capital crimes against the holiness of God and the consequence is capital punishment – “the wages of sin is death.”
- The point of our faith is Jesus!

¹ MacArthur, [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark 1-8](#), p. 16.

II. THE PREPARATION FOR THE GOSPEL – Prophecy – 1:2

A. THE PREDETERMINATION BY GOD

1. This reality causes Mark to continue: *“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet ...”*
2. This demonstrates that what was being introduced is something that the prophets throughout the Old Testament anticipated and spoke about in their writings.
3. Although Mark attributes what follows to Isaiah, a passage from Malachi is also included; this doesn't present any problem or error, the combination of multiple prophets under the name of the preeminent prophet among them is a common practice.
4. Mark's appeal to the prophets is designed to demonstrate that what He was sharing about Jesus Christ is the original and only plan of God for the redemption of sinners.
5. It is something that had been determined from eternity past – cp. [Ephesians 1:4](#); [1 Corinthians 2:7](#).
6. In light of this Divine determination and plan to send the Messiah, He revealed it prophetically – predicting the coming of the King's forerunner centuries before he [John] was born and prerequisite honor to the King's arrival.

B. THE PROMISE OF GOD

1. God promised *“Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way.”*
2. This first prophecy is from [Malachi 3:1](#) describing God's promise to the Messiah that He would be fittingly honored through a forerunner – and John was sent by God who was *“My messenger”* who came *“ahead of You”* – as the herald to *“prepare Your way.”*
3. John will do this as a preacher who would make the proclamation – *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness ...”* – cp. [Isaiah 40:3](#).
4. In this way, John the Baptist is a sign provided by God that Jesus is the Messiah – cp. [John 1:6-8](#).

- The Providence that determined that Jesus would come and prepared the way for Him also worked individually in your life to prepare you for Christ.
- Think back on ways that you are able to see how God was preparing you for the message of the Gospel – circumstances, people, or encounters and thank God for His attentiveness to your need for forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to Him.

III. THE PROMPTING BY THE GOSPEL – Repentance – 1:3-4

A. THE READING OF THE HEART – v. 3A

1. The aspect of John's message is designed to prompt people to ready themselves for the ministry of the Messiah – *"Make ready the way of the Lord."*
2. In ancient times, one of the responsibilities of a "forerunner" was to assess whether the avenue of travel was worthy of the King.
3. Instead of clearing literal roads, John's message is designed to clear away the obstacles of unbelief and indulgent priorities that would prevent the blessing of the Messiah.
4. Those who desire the joys of fellowship with God must allow the roadway to the very depths of their beings to be cleared from whatever obstacles would exist to hinder the entrance of Christ Jesus?
5. What do you need to do to remove obstacles to your relationship with God – what stands in the way of intimacy between you and Christ?

B. THE RECTIFYING OF THE HEART – vv. 3B-4

1. Rather, sinners were *"to make His paths straight"* – a reference to turning the twisted ways of sin into a highway into the heart through repentance.
2. As indicated in the next verse, the constant theme of John was the need that all sinners have to repent – *"John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."*
 - a) *The baptism didn't result in the forgiveness of sins but was a testimony publicly identifying with the faith in the coming Messiah and of the repentance that their expectation produced.*
 - b) *It is the repentance by God's grace that brings the forgiveness of sin – cp. [2 Timothy 2:25](#).*
3. With all the excitement that John possessed in his proclamation that the Messiah was coming is ours as we declare that He has come and celebrate the birth of that child – "news of great joy" – cp. [Luke 2:10-14](#).

So What?

- The joy of the Christmas Season is realizing how God gave the Savior to people He had no obligation to save.
- Our lives are often cluttered with obstacles and perversions that hinder the freedom of intimacy with Christ.
- We can remove those obstacles through repentance and humble faith in the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

In response to God's initiative, receive Christ by faith.