

## Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

Mark | *The Gospel in Action*

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### CONTEXT

- Most scholars believe that Mark was the first gospel written & that both Matthew and Luke used Mark's Gospel as a source for their own gospels. This is why you have maybe noticed that some of the stories & sermons in these three gospels are **similar** to each other.<sup>1</sup>
- They are also **different** from each other. Matthew and Luke aren't simply copying Mark's Gospel. It is likely that they used Mark's Gospel as a reference, but they also told their own stories of Jesus from their own *perspectives* – and their own *personalities* – and their own *purposes*.
  - **Matthew** was an *apostle*. He was a Jew, and he was telling the story of Jesus in a way that would have been especially meaningful to His primarily Jewish audience.
  - Given the clues that **Mark** gives us in his gospel, he was probably a close companion of the *Apostle Peter*. So, he was writing what he had learned from Peter, and (if you remember anything about Peter) he was a unique, energetic individual – and so Mark's gospel is a reflection of Peter's personality (and Peter's energy 😊). His gospel also has some significant differences from Matthew because Mark was writing to a largely Roman audience, and so some of the things that Matthew focuses on in writing to his Jewish audience wouldn't have meant as much to Mark's Roman audience.
  - **Luke** was written by a physician who was a traveling companion with the *Apostle Paul*. As a physician, he really appreciated detail and order, and so his gospel is a reflection of his personality, of his profession, of Paul's influence, and of his broader Gentile audience.
  - And then **John** is significantly different from all the other three...

But, even though all four of the Gospels are different from one another, there is absolutely no contradiction in anything that they wrote. The differences are essentially four men telling the story of Jesus from four different angles. And when we put them all together, we get a beautiful, full picture of the life, ministry, and gospel of Jesus Christ.

I titled the message “**The Gospel in Action**”. I have several reasons for this title.

1. **Mark's Gospel is most action-packed of all the gospels.**

If you sat down and just read all the way through Mark's Gospel in a single sitting (which would take you right about an hour), you get the feeling that you are **FLYING** through Jesus' life.

- Matthew spent a lot of his gospel recording the sermons & the teachings of Jesus. Mark, on other hand, wanted to show all the things that Jesus was doing.
- Both Matthew & Luke begin by giving the genealogy of Jesus and then talking about His miraculous birth, but Mark skips all of that and jumps right into Jesus' ministry!
- Mark's favorite word is *euthus*, which means “**immediately**.”

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<sup>1</sup> The technical, scholarly way to describe the similarity of these three gospels is to refer to them as the “**Synoptic Gospels**”.

## IMMEDIATELY...

- 1:12 | He was baptized, and “**immediately** the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness”
- 1:18 | He called his disciples and “they **immediately** left their nets”
- 1:20 | And “**immediately**...they left their father.”
- 1:28 | “And **immediately** His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee”
- 1:42 | Jesus speaks the word to a leper and “**immediately** the leprosy left him”
- 2:12 | Jesus heals the paralytic and “**immediately** he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all...”

If you have ever watched an “action movie” (where the camera angle is always changing and things are happening fast) that’s the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark is **the Gospel in Action**.

2. The second reason for titling this as “The Gospel in Action” is because of **what Mark wanted us to see about Jesus’ ministry**.

Jesus didn’t just come with *divine words*; He also came with *divine power*. Yes, Jesus came to *preach*,<sup>2</sup> but Mark wants us to see that Jesus *lived* what He preached.

But He said to them,  
“Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also,  
because **for this purpose** I have come forth.”  
And **He was preaching** in their synagogues throughout all Galilee **AND casting out demons**.<sup>3</sup>  
~ *Mark 1:38–39*

Mark wants us to see that Jesus’s words were always *accompanied by action*.

- 1:21–28 | Jesus teaches, (21) and then He casts out unclean spirits (25–26).
- 1:38–39 | Jesus preaches (39), and He was casting out demons in the process.
- 2:1–12 | Jesus preaches (2), and then He heals the paralytic (11–12).
- 2:13–17 | Jesus teaches (13), and then He is making disciples (14–15).

And then Jesus sends out His disciples to do the same thing:

Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him  
and that He might send them out **to preach,**  
**and to have power**  
**to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons**.<sup>4</sup>  
~ *Mark 3:14–15*

I think the point that Mark is emphasizing is that the true Gospel isn’t just glorious words; it’s also life-changing power. The Gospel doesn’t just go forth in what we *say*; but it goes forth in what we do. It’s one thing to *preach* the truth of the Gospel; it’s another thing to live out what we preach.

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<sup>2</sup> “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, **preaching** the gospel of the kingdom of God, and **saying**, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel!’” (*Mark 1:14–15*). “Then they went into Capernaum, [Jesus is on the move!] and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and **taught**. And they were astonished at His **teaching**, for He **taught** them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (*Mark 1:21–22*).

<sup>3</sup> See also **Mark 6:2**

<sup>4</sup> See also **Mark 6:12–13; 16:20**

This is what the Apostle Paul is getting at in his letter to the church in Thessalonica...

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

~ *1 Thessalonians 1:5*

Mark is saying...

- Not only did Jesus *preach* in power, but He *moved* in power.
- Not only did Jesus *preach* about sacrifice, but He *lived* it.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,  
And to give His life a ransom for many.

~ *Mark 10:45*

- Not only did Jesus *preach* compassion, but He *showed* compassion.

There is a scene in **Mark 6** where Jesus and His disciples were exhausted from ministry, and so they had planned to get away “to a deserted place and rest a while” (**6:31**). So got into a boat, and “departed to a deserted place...by themselves” (**6:32**). But word got out, and by the time Jesus and the disciples arrived to where they were going, a massive crowd was already there waiting for them (**6:33**). 😊

And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude  
And was moved with compassion for them,  
Because they were like sheep not having a shepherd.  
So He began to teach them many things.

~ *Mark 6:34*

And then when He finishes feeding their hearts with the glorious truths of the Gospel, He ministers to their physical needs by feeding their stomachs (**6:35–42**).

This might be **one of the biggest disconnects in the American church today**: *connecting Gospel Words with Gospel Action*.

- On the one hand, there are many who get involved in Gospel Action (like maybe advocating for social justice issues, giving food to the homeless guy on street corner, or fighting for the lives of the unborn children who are being murdered through abortion) – but then these same people might never speak the truth of the Gospel over their actions.
- On the other hand, there are many who speak words that are in harmony with the Gospel, but who never actually do anything about the words that they speak.<sup>5</sup>

### EXAMPLES:

- I don't know how many times I've heard Christians talk about feeling compassion for the orphans, but who never open up their homes to care for the orphans.
  - Think about this for a second: there are over **1,000 kids in foster care in Minnesota** (*who don't have a family*), and according to the most recent statistics that I could find, there are over **3,000 Christian churches** just in Minneapolis. This means that if one family (out of every 3 churches) would give their home and their hearts to adopting a child, there would be no orphans in our state.

<sup>55</sup> This is what James talks about...

## EXAMPLE:

My wife Elizabeth has challenged me in this area maybe more than anybody I know personally:

- She felt **compassion** for orphans – and so she has sacrificed her adult life to care for orphans...
- She felt **compassion** for the women in Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge who were here on Palm Sunday – and so she filled out all the paperwork, attended the class, got her fingerprints taken so that she could become a mentor for some of these women.
- She feels **compassion** for the homeless individuals that we pass on the road every day, and so (not only has she put together paper bags of necessities for them) but she has also invited them into our home for meals and fellowship.

I mean, I think I always felt bad for the orphans across the world, but (*shrug shoulders*) ...

I felt bad for those who were trapped in an addiction to drugs & alcohol, but...

I felt bad for the homeless, but...

For the past 16 years, Liz has shown me the heart of Jesus...

My point is that many of us are really good at “feeling gospel feelings” (*compassion, empathy, justice, mercy*) ... but then how often are those feelings disconnected from any Gospel Action?

Because Jesus didn't just **preach Gospel Truth** and **feel Gospel Feelings**, but He always connected His Word and His feelings with Gospel Actions.

**APPLICATION:** So maybe you and I can ask ourselves this question: what has God given us a compassion for in our hearts...and then how can we put these **Gospel Feelings into motion** with **Gospel Words** and **Gospel Actions**?

That brings me my third and final reason for titling the message, “The Gospel in Action”.

### 3. The Gospel Demands a Response.

Earlier this morning, we heard the story in **Mark 5** where Jesus rescued a man who was possessed with a legion of demons (**5:8–9**).

What do we know about this man?

- He was possessed by a legion of demons (**5:7–9**)
- He lived in the tombs on the mountainside (**5:2–3, 5**)
- He was crying out night and day (**5:5**)
- He was constantly cutting himself with stones (**5:5**)
- Nobody could help him...or even control him (**5:3–4**)

And then Jesus came... And then Jesus came!

And Jesus spoke (**5:8**), and His words came with power.

The legion of demons left the man and entered into a herd of pigs...and the pigs instantly lost their minds and Mark says that “the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea and drowned in the sea” (**5:13**). **Q.** Why would Jesus do this? **A.** Because He cares more about people than He does about pigs.

Now, pay attention to how the different people in this story respond to Jesus.

1. The people who were taking care of the pigs **fled** into the nearby city (5:14).
2. The people from the city came to see it for themselves, and they were **afraid** (5:15).
3. The people from the city wanted Jesus to be **gone** (5:17).
4. The man who had been set free just wanted to be **with** Jesus (5:18).

One of the things that Mark emphasizes in his Gospel is all the different ways people **reacted** and **responded** to Jesus.

- People were astonished,<sup>6</sup> amazed,<sup>7</sup> afraid,<sup>8</sup> alarmed...<sup>9</sup>
- Some people followed Him;<sup>10</sup> others rejected Him.<sup>11</sup>
- Some people wanted to be with Him;<sup>12</sup> others wanted Him gone.<sup>13</sup>
- Some people believed in Him;<sup>14</sup> others ridiculed Him.<sup>15</sup>
- Some people marveled at Him;<sup>16</sup> others were offended by Him.<sup>17</sup>
- Some people said He did all things well;<sup>18</sup> others thought He was possessed by demons.<sup>19</sup>
- Some people thought He was a prophet;<sup>20</sup> others thought He was the Messiah.<sup>21</sup>
- Some people were filled with great joy;<sup>22</sup> others were filled with great sadness.<sup>23</sup>
- Some people served Him;<sup>24</sup> some people crucified Him.<sup>25</sup>

One of the things you notice as Mark tells the story of Jesus is that everybody responded to Jesus, and nobody's response was neutral.<sup>26</sup>

Here in **Mark 5**, the entire city **responded** to Jesus by pleading with Him to leave. They wanted Him gone. But one man, the one who had experienced the life-changing Gospel of Jesus (the one who had been set free) **responded** to Jesus by begging to be with Jesus.

Here's how this scene ends:

### READ **Mark 5:18–20**

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<sup>6</sup> **Astonished** | 1:22; 6:2; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18

<sup>7</sup> **Amazed** | 1:27; 5:42; 6:51; 9:15; 10:32; 16:8

<sup>8</sup> **Afraid** | 4:41; 10:32; 11:18; 16:8

<sup>9</sup> **Alarmed** | 16:5

<sup>10</sup> **Followed** | 1:18–20; 2:14–15

<sup>11</sup> **Rejected** | 3:5

<sup>12</sup> **Desired** | 5:18

<sup>13</sup> **Wanted Gone** | 5:17; 11:18; 14:1; 15:12–15

<sup>14</sup> **Believed** | 9:24; 15:39; 16:20

<sup>15</sup> **Ridiculed** | 5:40; 15:31

<sup>16</sup> **Marveled** | 5:20; 6:51; 12:17; 15:5, 44

<sup>17</sup> **Offended** | 6:3

<sup>18</sup> **Praise** | 7:37

<sup>19</sup> **Accused** | 3:22, 30

<sup>20</sup> **Prophet** | 8:27–28

<sup>21</sup> **Messiah** | 8:29

<sup>22</sup> **Joy** | 10:52; 12:37

<sup>23</sup> **Sadness** | 10:22; 14:72

<sup>24</sup> **Served** | 1:31

<sup>25</sup> **Crucified** | 15:12–15, 24, 37

<sup>26</sup> This is similar to what Jesus says in **Mark 9:38–41**.

Nobody can encounter Jesus Christ, God the Son, the Messiah...and remain neutral.  
Nobody can hear His Gospel and experience His power...and remain neutral.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS DEMANDS A RESPONSE.

In his book, **Mere Christianity**, C.S. Lewis says,

“You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God,  
or else a madman or something worse.  
You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon  
or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God,  
but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher.  
He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”  
~ *C.S. Lewis*

So, the question Mark leaves us with is “*How are you going to respond to Jesus?*”

As you read through his gospel, you see that Jesus’ disciples experienced pretty much every emotion and reaction toward Jesus, but (after the resurrection & ascension of Jesus) the story ends with the disciples going into all the world, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere.

The disciples made their choice. And Mark says, “*Now you make yours.*”