

OUR LORD'S MINISTRY BEGINS

Mark 1:9-20

Intro: Last Sunday morning I began *again* the study of the Gospel of Mark. I say “again” because, as most of you know, I had started the study of Mark in our Sunday evening services at the beginning of this year, and continued on through the first five chapters until the first part of May. Then, after Will Custis’ graduation from The Master’s Seminary, and at the invitation of our elders, Will came to join in the ministry of Trinity Bible Church. And so I felt that we needed to give him a regular ministry, and so I discontinued for the time, my study of Mark, and asked Will to take our Sunday evening services. He graciously accepted my invitation, and those of you who have been coming on Sunday nights, know what a blessing his messages on Philippians have been. Tonight he starts chapter two of that delightful epistle. And having recently concluded my Sunday morning study on the life of Moses, I decided to go back to the Gospel of Mark. And so that is what I did last Sunday morning.

However, I felt that we ought to get a fresh start on that Gospel especially because many of you were not in on our study of the first five chapters. And so I began with chapter 1 again, not to bring the same messages, but to do fresh study, and get us all started at the beginning.

We learned last week that the Gospel of Mark was probably the first of the four Gospels to be written. It, along with Matthew, Luke, and John, has to do with the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. We all should know that with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world, a silence of approximately four hundred years was broken since that last revelation from God had been given. They are often called “the silent years” because no fresh revelation from God had come during that time which for us is from the end of the OT to the beginning of the NT. It is no exaggeration to say that the OT anticipated the coming of the Messiah of Israel, and the Gospels tell us about His life on earth. And just as the OT looked forward to His coming, from the book of Acts on through the rest of the NT we learn more about the meaning of His work on earth, what He is doing now, and what we can expect Him to do in the future. The Bible is not only a revelation from God, and infallible revelation, but it is a revelation about God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And it is very, very important for every child of God to be well acquainted with all of the truth of the Bible. The four Gospels focus attention particularly on Christ and His earthly ministry. They are not

four different Gospels, but four records of the same Savior, giving us four different records of Christ and His ministry on earth. In Matthew we see Christ as the King. In Mark, as the Servant of the Lord. In Luke as the Son of man. In John, as the Son of God. In many ways they overlap with each other, but in some matters each one is distinct. The four Gospels are meant to teach us the supreme importance of our Lord Jesus Christ. A few years ago I started reading the NT twice each year, and I do it so that there are just a few days out of the whole year when I am not reading some part of one of the Gospels.

And I hope that all of us will be reading just as much of the Gospel of Mark as we can while we are going through these sixteen chapters. If you can “carve out” two hours every week or so in which to read the whole Gospel, that will be your blessing. That is the average reading time. But I don’t believe that we ought to watch the clock as we read to get through it in a certain time. Read prayerfully. Read thoughtfully. Read slow enough so that you can digest what you read. When we eat our food as fast as we can to eat as much as we can, we usually pay for it, don’t we? Reading the Bible just to cover as much space as we can in a certain period of time, will not be the blessing to us that reading slowly, and thoughtfully, and prayerfully will be.

There are many expositors who believe that Mark basically got most of his information about the Lord from the Apostle Peter, which certainly adds to the authority of this book which he has written. But if we were to combine all four Gospels into one, we still would not have a complete biography of our Lord’s life here on earth. That was not the purpose of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Matthew wrote for the Jews. Mark wrote in particular for the Romans. Luke wrote for the Gentile world. John wrote for the Church. But they all wrote to teach us that there is only one Savior from sin; His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Graham Scroggie, whom I mentioned last week as one who has done extensive work on the Gospels, said that Mark 10:45 gives us Mark’s plan for the Gospel he wrote. The verse says this:

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

And he explained what he meant in this way: that primarily in the first ten chapters of Mark we have the Lord’s ministry on earth; from chapter 11 on the end of chapter 16, we are concerned about the events which led up to His death, and then to His resurrection. I find that division very

helpful. It is very likely that John Mark, the writer, was telling us in that verse that this was his plan in writing.

I want to say an added word which I feel is very important for all of us to understand. When the Apostle Paul wrote to describe for us the nature and importance of the Bible, he said this, writing to his son in the faith, Timothy:

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works .

Most of us don't have any trouble applying these words to the epistles of the NT. We go to the epistles to find out what we should believe as the people of God, what we should be, and how we should live. But I wonder how many of us apply these verses to the Gospels. Actually when Paul wrote those verses, he was speaking primarily about the OT. The NT was then in the process of being written, and now it applies to the NT as well as to the OT. "All Scripture" is made up now of the OT and the NT. It is all inspired by God, God-breathed, the very Word of God. And so we can say about the Gospel of Mark that it was "given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," that you and I, the Lord's people in 2005 might find it, the Gospel of Mark, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The study of any book of the Bible ought to be life-changing for us. The Lord has saved us, not just to take us to heaven, but to make us like the Person that John Mark was writing about in this Gospel according to Mark. So we need to study it, not just to learn the facts that are given to us in the Gospel of Mark, that is very important, but we need always to be looking for ways in which the teaching in every chapter of this book needs to be applied to our lives. It will be tragic if we can spend the next weeks in the study of the Gospel of Mark, and the study of Philippians on Sunday nights, and not complete these studies more like the Lord Jesus Christ than we were when we began. We can't make ourselves like the Lord, but the Holy Spirit can, and He does. And the way He does it is by using the Word of God, every part of it, to teach us, to rebuke us, to correct us, and to lead us along in pursuing a life of righteousness. I am going to be keeping this in mind as we go through the Gospel of Mark

both for myself, and for you. I hope that every Sunday I will have something to give you for your heart which has been a blessing to my heart so that together we may be growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to borrow the words of the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2, verses 2 and 3. Let's be praying that the Lord will move us along as we study His Word, making us more like the Person that John Mark wrote this book to tell us about, our Lord Jesus Christ. And let us pray that that work will take place today.

My text for this morning is verses 9 through 20 in this first chapter of Mark's Gospel. And in it we see how the Lord began His ministry. John Mark does not give us the details like the other Gospel writers, but he quickly and briefly states the basics, evidently hoping the stating it briefly, but powerfully may cause the Spirit to write these truths upon our hearts.

Basically we have four important details given us in our text.

The first is the baptism of our Lord. The second is His temptation. The third is His preaching, just a brief sample of it. The fourth is the calling of four of His disciples who became apostles. Let's look at these in the time that we have.

I. THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD (Mark 1:9-11).

John Mark doesn't tell us how John the Baptist objected when the Lord came to be baptized, saying that he needed the Lord to baptize him. But what we have here is an event in which all three Persons of the Godhead took part. The Lord Jesus was baptized. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. And the Father spoke from heaven saying not *about* the Lord, but *to* the Lord, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But what is out of place here? We read in verse 5 that the people who came to John the Baptist to be baptized, were baptized "confessing their sins." If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, as John Mark said in verse 1, and if the Holy Spirit came upon the Lord anointing Him for His work, and if the Father could say to Him, "Thou art my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, why was our Lord lined up with sinners to be baptized? Was He a sinner Who needed cleansing from His sins, even symbolic cleansing? In answering this question, let me borrow some words from the Gospel of Matthew. I am reading from Matthew 3:13-15:

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him (Matt. 3:13-15).

The Lord was telling John the Baptist that it was necessary for Him to take the sinner's place in order that the sinner might have His place. That's the Gospel, isn't it? What a picture of salvation! Somebody mentioned to me yesterday that he remembered Jerry Bridges saying that if he could only remember one verse of Scripture when it came time for him to die, he wanted it to be 2 Corinthians 5:21. Speaking of God, the Apostle Paul said,

21 For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

As we think of that scene, how can we hold back the tears, that our Lord would identify Himself with us, take our sins, die on the Cross paying our penalty for us, that we might declared righteous before a holy God. Let's remember this picture of our salvation as we come to the Lord's Table today. The Lord was identifying Himself with every sinner who will ever be saved when He lined up with those sinners on that day and was baptized. This is amazing grace, isn't it? And remember you and I were on the Lord's heart, and on the Father's heart, and on the Spirit's heart, as the Lord was baptized that day.

But let's move on to the second point.

II. THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD (Mark 1:12-13).

If you want the details on this, read Matthew 4 and Luke 4. Spirit should be capitalized in our text when it say in verse 12 that "immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness," or desert. The temptation of our Lord is a subject for a message by itself (or messages), but John Mark simply tells us that our Lord was not tempted for a few moments on a certain day, but that our Lord was subjected to Satan's temptations for forty days. Matthew added "forty nights." Think of the seeming endless pressure that Satan put our Lord under to get Him to sin. But the Lord "did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22). Becoming a Man had not altered in any way the great truth that as Man He was still God the Son.

But there is another truth here for our hearts. What the Lord experienced in those terrible days when He was constantly, day and night, under Satan's attacks, gives life to that verse in Hebrews which tells us that our Lord "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). And then the writer of Hebrews went on immediately to say,
16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).

Every week is a "time of need" for us, isn't it? We could even say every day is a "time of need." But has the Father seen us at the throne of grace today, or this past week, or how long has it been? You see, there is a message in the temptation of our Lord that ought to be with us every day that we live. Regardless of the trials we have gone through, He went through greater trials than we will ever experience. "He ever lives to make intercession for us," and that is one major reason that you and I have not lost our salvation. It is good to know why you can't lose your salvation. And this is one of them. We should not be able to read about the temptation of our Lord without being convicted about how little we go to the throne of grace, and spend time there. If you and I are going to grow in the likeness of Christ, we must spend much time at the throne of grace.

But there is a third point in our text with its message for our hearts, and it has to do with:

III. THE PREACHING OF OUR LORD (Mark 1:14-15).

What does it mean that He was "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God"? It means that He was preaching the Gospel. There are the kingdoms of this world, and there is the kingdom of God. And we enter that kingdom and come under the sovereign authority of our great and holy God when we believe the Gospel of the grace of God. But you know, the Lord preached the Gospel, but not everyone who heard it really heard it! We are to preach. That is how the Gospel is to be spread. It doesn't mean that we all stand on a platform behind a pulpit to preach. Spurgeon used to say that the best preaching is done when one Christian is telling one other person about the Lord. We are to preach, but God is the One Who gives people ears to hear. Do you know what that means? Isaac Watts wrote those words:

Why was I made to hear His voice,

And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?

And then he gave the answer.

“Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly drew us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.

Even before creation, God made a choice of those whom He intended to save. He gave them to His Son, and sent His Son to die for their salvation. And He continues to call them to come. You and I were called, or we never would have come. And there are others out in the world today who were chosen like we were. We don't know who they are, or where they are. That is why we preach the Gospel to every creature, urging them to come to Christ. And they will come. They are coming. But we must spread the Gospel. That is our task. The Spirit of God is the One Who gives people ears to hear, and sweetly and safely draws them to Christ.

You and I did not deserve to be among that number, and that is why we had to be saved by the grace of God. As we read about our Lord preaching, how thankful we ought to be every day that He called us and drew us and saved us and He keeps us.

And to emphasize what our ministry is, after John Mark told us about the Lord preaching, we are told that:

IV. THE LORD CALLED FOUR MEN (Mark 1:16-20).

If we were reading this Gospel for the first time, and had not read the other Gospels, these names would mean nothing to us. We would not know that Andrew's brother was Peter. And James and John the sons of Zebedee would have meant nothing to us. The four of them were just insignificant fishermen. But the Lord called them not because of what they were, but because of what He wanted to make them.

The Lord called them to follow Him, with the promise that He would make them what He wanted them to be: “fishers of men.” Do you suppose that when Peter and John Mark were talking about this incident that Peter told John Mark not to mention his name? But what a mighty instrument in the hands of the Lord Peter became. You see, there is no

limit to what the Lord may do in our lives if we really follow Him, doing what He wants us to do, spreading the message that He wants sinners to hear, and seeking in all things to be like our dear Savior – in how we live, the things we say, and the message we have to give.

What the Lord commands us to do, He enables us to do. Without Him we aren't worth anything and we can't do anything that will please Him. But abiding in Him, with Him working in us, we can bear much fruit to His glory.

Concl: So there is a lot for us in these few verses, isn't there? If we could but learn to praise the Lord that He sent His Son to save us from our sins, if we could learn how much we need to come to our great High Priest at the throne of grace, if we could see what a high and holy honor it is to spread the Gospel, and if we could learn that the Lord has saved us not because of what we can do for Him, but because of what He can do for us and through us, how different we would be, and how blessed we might be in spreading the Gospel, knowing that there are people in this wicked world who have been ordained for salvation, and who must come to Christ.

This is how our Lord began His ministry, and on these great truths this is how His ministry continues to this day. If we want to see His blessing, His work must be done in His way.