

# (Through the Bible) Mark 1

by Chuck Smith

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*Chuck Smith's sermon on Mark 1 explores the beginnings of Jesus' ministry, emphasizing His servanthood, authority, and the importance of prayer and witnessing.*

**Duration:** 37:25

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1, Matthew 5:21-22, Mark 1:4-24, James 2:19

**Topics:** "Witnessing Christ", "Holy Trinity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the natural inclination to share the work of God in one's life. Witnessing becomes a natural response when God has done a marvelous work in someone's life. The speaker emphasizes that witnessing should not be a programmed or forced activity, but rather a genuine expression of gratitude for what God has done. The sermon also touches on the baptism of Jesus, highlighting the presence of the three persons of the Godhead - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

Let's turn to Mark's gospel. Mark was a young man when Jesus was crucified, perhaps about 12 years old. So the gospel that he writes is considered to be the understanding that he received from listening to Peter relate the stories of Jesus Christ.

Peter does call Mark his son. That would be son in the faith. And Mark was a companion of Peter through much of Peter's ministry and thus heard Peter relate these stories of Jesus Christ.

And so in his gospel you have pretty much Peter's account as written by Mark of Jesus. There is only one part of Mark's gospel that he probably wrote from personal experience. It's a little insertion in the gospel of Mark that you do not find in the other gospels.

And it is concerning the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. And Mark's gospel tells us that there was a young boy there about 12 years old. And one of the soldiers grabbed him, but he wriggled out of his coat and left his coat in the soldier's hand and ran home.

And that is believed to be Mark's personal account of his own experience. And as a little 12-year-old boy happened to be there in the garden with Jesus and his disciples that night that Jesus was betrayed. Mark's mother's name was Mary.

She was a wealthy woman. She lived in Jerusalem and her home was a gathering place for the church. When Peter was imprisoned by Herod, the church had met in her home for that prayer meeting.

And so when Peter was released by the action of the angel and came to the house and knocked on the door and the young maiden came and saw it was Peter and was so excited she didn't even open the door but ran back in and told the people, Peter's here. And they said, oh, you've seen a ghost. That was the home of Mark.

His mother's name was Mary, a wealthy woman who lived in Jerusalem. Her home was the gathering place for the early church. Her brother's name was Barnabas.

And he was the companion of Paul on the first missionary journey. Mark also went with him on that first missionary journey. But Mark left them and we don't know why he left.

There is speculation that Mark was afraid to go on into the more hostile areas of Asia. But that is only speculation. We do not know why Mark left Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey.

But Paul evidently was offended by his leaving. So that when Barnabas and Paul were getting ready to leave on their second missionary journey and Barnabas wanted to take his nephew Mark along, Paul objected strenuously because of the fact that he had left the first time. And from this, the contention between Paul and Barnabas became so great that Barnabas took Mark and went off himself to the island of Cyprus.

And Paul took Silas and headed on out to Asia. However, this breach between Paul and Mark did not last long. For Paul makes mention of Mark being in Rome with him and ministering to his needs.

It was probably while Mark was in Rome with Paul that he wrote this gospel. It is one of the earliest gospels written and thought to be written sometime before the year 63. It is thought to be written by Mark for the Romans as he was there with Paul in Rome, inasmuch as whenever he deals with any of the Jewish customs, he takes the time to explain it, which would not be necessary if he were writing to the Jews.

But it is thought that he wrote this gospel for the Romans. Mark is brief in his style. He doesn't go into a lot of details, but he just briefly relates the stories, and he covers, therefore, a lot of territory.

Later, as Paul was writing, he asked them to send Mark to him with some of his things because he said Mark had been such a comfort and a help to him. So here we have the gospel according to Mark. In the Bible, we have three beginnings.

John's gospel in the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God.

Genesis 1.1, in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. But Mark's gospel is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. So Mark does not tell us about the birth of Jesus.

He leaves that for Matthew and for Luke. But Mark begins his story at the baptism of John. But this is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and so he is not going to tell us anything about the early years of Jesus, about his birth, but he starts right in with the ministry of Jesus Christ, so the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And being with Paul in Rome, probably he was thinking of Paul's declaration to the Romans in his epistle to them prior to his going there, where Paul said, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. We'll find John referring much to the gospel. He is quoting Jesus as making reference to the gospel in many places.

John sets out, I mean, Mark sets out, well, it's John Mark, actually, so he sets out Jesus. Mark was his surname. He sets out Jesus as the servant.

Matthew sets out Jesus as the king, the lion of the tribe of Judah. Mark emphasizes the servanthood of Jesus Christ, and so in Matthew, Jesus is the lion. Mark, he is the servant.

Luke, he is the son of man, and in John, he is the son of God. These are the various aspects and the phases of Jesus' life that we see in the gospels. As it is written in the prophets, and he begins, first of all, with a quotation from Malachi, and then he jumps to Isaiah and quotes from Isaiah.

As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. That's a quotation from Malachi. It is a quotation concerning John, the forerunner of Jesus Christ.

Now, quoting from Isaiah, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight. John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all of the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

And John was clothed with camel's hair and with a girdle of skin about his loins, and he did eat locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

So he briefly tells us of the ministry of John the Baptist, and he quotes the prophecies from the Old Testament that relate to the ministry of John the Baptist. And then he tells us, And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in Jordan. And immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him.

And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Here again, we see the three persons of the Godhead. As Jesus is coming up out of the water, the Spirit of God is descending upon him and the voice of the Father declaring, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And now he takes this from the baptism. Immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness, and he was there in the wilderness for forty days, tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beast and the angels ministered unto him. Now, Mark does not give us any of the details of the temptation of Jesus.

He leaves that for the other gospel writers, Matthew and Luke. Now, after that, John, you see the brevity. He doesn't go into the details where the other gospels give us a little bit more detail about that temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.

Now, after that, John was put in prison. Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Notice the gospel of the kingdom, the good news of God's kingdom.

And he was saying, The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel, believe the good news. Now, as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers.

And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And immediately they forsook their nets and followed him. And when he had gone a little farther from there, he saw James, the son of Zebedee and John, his brother, who also were in the ship, mending their nets.

And immediately he called them and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants and went after him. Now, as we read Mark's gospel, because he doesn't give us any background, it would appear that Jesus just walking along the shore of Galilee suddenly saw Peter and his brother Simon said, Come on and follow me. I'll make your fishers of men.

And they just left their nets and followed him. Well, that is what happened. But this isn't the first time that they had met Jesus.

This is when Jesus called them to discipleship, but they had met Jesus earlier. In fact, in the gospel of John, he tells us of their earlier meeting of Jesus. Andrew had met Jesus and he came to Peter, his brother, and told him, Hey, we have found the Messiah.

And, and he brought his brother Peter to Jesus and they knew Jesus. They had met Jesus. They had observed the miracles that he had done, but now Jesus is calling them to a full commitment of discipleship.

Knowing Jesus, immediately upon his call to them, they left their fishing, their nets to follow Jesus. Notice James and John with their father Zebedee. Jesus later sort of nicknamed them the sons of thunder, but they had hired servants.

They left their father with the hired servants. So they evidently came from a well to do background. And so they came into Capernaum, which of course is where, uh, Peter was living there in Capernaum.

And immediately on the Sabbath day, he entered into the synagogue and talked and they were astonished at his doctrine for he taught them as one that had authority and not as the scribes. Now, when the scribes would teach the people, express an opinion as their own, they would say, now, rabbi Hallel says of this, that it means this or that or the other. And they were always quoting other rabbis.

They would never just say flat out. Now, this is what the Lord is saying to us. They never would speak with authority.

They would always in their teaching, just quote the other ideas, the other thoughts, the other rabbis and what they thought this might have meant. Thus, when Jesus came, he spoke with authority. We remember in the sermon on the Mount, he said, you've heard that it has been said by those of old time, thou shalt not kill.

But I say unto you, and he spoke with authority and they marveled at this kind of teaching. They weren't used to this kind of teaching. They weren't used to someone speaking with authority concerning the word of God.

And so they were astonished at his teaching because it wasn't as they were used to hearing, but he spoke to them and he taught them with real authority. And there was in their synagogue, a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out saying, let us alone.

What have we to do with thee thou Jesus of Nazareth? Are you come to destroy us? I know thee whom thou art the Holy one of God. James in his epistle said, you say you believe in God. So what? That doesn't make you a Christian that doesn't make you saved for the devils believe and they fear and tremble before him.

So just believing in God really doesn't bring you salvation at which many people are mistaken in that they say, well, I'm not an atheist. I believe in God, but that isn't salvation. That's just proving.

You're not a fool for it is the fool that has said in his heart, there is no God. So you say you believe in God, then I believe you're not a fool, but it doesn't mean you're saved. Salvation comes by believing into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ, a life changing relationship with Jesus Christ that whosoever believeth into him, into this vital life changing relationship with him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now this demon crying out said, I know thee whom thou art. You're the Holy one of God. What are you doing? You're coming to destroy us.

He recognized the power of Jesus. He acclaimed Jesus to be the son of God, but he wasn't saved. It is possible for you to recognize the power of Jesus and acclaim that Jesus was the son of God and still not be saved.

Salvation is a life changing experience as you believe into this relationship with Jesus Christ. And when the unclean spirit had torn him and cried with a loud voice, or Jesus rebuked him saying, hold thy peace and come out of him, speaking with authority to the demon. And so when the demon had torn him and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

Mark makes mention of many cases of exorcism by Jesus demonstrating the power that Jesus had over these unclean spirits or demons. We'll talk about that further when we get to the uh, fifth chapter in the man of Gadara. And they were all amazed in so much that they questioned among themselves saying, what thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority, he commands even the unclean spirits and they do obey him.

And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. So suddenly around the area of Galilee, there's a buzz about Jesus of Nazareth, the things that he is doing, the things that he is saying. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

So Simon and Andrew had a home there in Capernaum, but Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. And so they told him about her and he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. And immediately the fever left her.

And she, um, ministered unto them that is she fixed him dinner. And that even when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased and those that were possessed with demons, not devils, plural, because there's only one devil. And that's a, uh, the, the word in Greek is, uh, the word translated demons.

And all of the city was gathered together at the door and he healed many that were sick of different types of diseases. He cast out many demons and he did not allow the demons to speak because they knew him a busy day. The beginning of the ministry of Jesus started out in the morning with this man, with an unclean spirit, as Jesus was teaching in the synagogue.

And this man with an unclean spirit, crying out and being cured all day long, they began to bring people to him to be healed on into the evening hours. How late we don't know all the city was gathered together there at the door of Simon's house. You'd say, Oh man, what a tough day.

We better sleep in tomorrow. You've been spiritually expended. And in the morning rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed.

It's interesting that Jesus' concept of being renewed in strength and refreshed was not sleeping in, but getting out early before anyone else was up and communing with the Father. And he drew his strength from prayer. I do not know of any greater evidence of the necessity of our praying than the fact that Jesus prayed.

Being the son of God, he resorted to prayer for strength, for guidance, for life itself. And if he being the son of God saw the necessity of prayer, how much more do we need prayer? If he saw the need of getting up early to pray, how much more should we realize our need of prayer? How important prayer is to the spiritual life of the believer. And Simon and those that were with him followed after him.

And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men are seeking for you. So later on when they got up, Jesus was gone. But already there was a crowd of people around the door waiting.

And when Simon and the others found him, they said, Hey, everybody's looking for you. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also, for this is why I came. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and he cast out devils or demons.

And again, Mark makes note of the fact that he was casting out demons. Notice this is the fourth time that Mark makes a special emphasis upon this fact. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him and kneeling down to him and saying to him, If you will, you can make me clean.

And Jesus moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him and said unto him, I will, or I am willing, be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed. And he sternly charged him and then sent him away.

And he said unto him, See that you say nothing to any man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them. But he went out and began to publish it much and to blaze abroad the matter insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but had to stay out in the deserted places. And they came to him from every quarter.

Now, Jesus was trying to have perhaps a little more freedom of movement. But when the news was going out, the leper was cleansed and all the healings that were being done, it got so bad that he could not come into the cities anymore because of the throngs. In fact, we find him spending a lot of his time in a little boat offshore so that they couldn't press around him so much.

The crowds so often get unruly, pushing, shoving. And so he would push out a little ways from shore in the boat and there he would speak to them from the boat as they would stand on the shore. And his purpose

in telling this man not to tell anybody is to give him a little more freedom of movement.

But the fellow didn't obey, went everywhere, telling everybody what had happened to him. It's hard to keep a secret when God has worked in your life. Now, it's interesting.

Jesus didn't say, now, look, I want to teach you how to witness, friend. Take this little booklet with four spiritual laws and you go out and you take this religious survey and you ask all these questions, which opens the door. And then you say, well, do you know the four spiritual laws? You see, when God has done a marvelous work in your life, witnessing is the natural thing in the world.

How can you help but just share what God has done in your life? It's just something that becomes so much a part of your life that witnessing is a very natural thing, not a programmed thing, but a very natural thing. You couldn't shut these people up. He didn't have to have a Tuesday night witnessing night where we go out and, you know, canvas the neighborhood.

God was working in the lives of the people. They were being affected and touched by that work of God. And they naturally sought to share what God had done for them.

The interesting thing about this leper is number one, his statement to Jesus, if you are willing, is the Lord willing to heal us? Jesus looked upon him with compassion and said, I'm willing. The second thing is that Jesus touched him. Now it was unlawful to touch a leper.

If you touched a leper, you yourself were considered unclean for a period of time. However, Jesus touched him, but that really wasn't unlawful because the moment he touched him, he was cleansed. So he was no longer a leper.

Immediately he was cleansed. Jesus said, now go and show yourself to the priest and offer those things which the law prescribed. Go through the little ritual.

So it is interesting to me that God in the law made provisions for a man who had an incurable disease, which ostracized him from society. God made provisions for that man with an incurable disease to be returned to society when he was healed of an incurable disease. But how can you be healed of an incurable disease? God made provision for himself to work as he so desired.

So this is the law for the leper in the day of his cleansing. And God, under the law, gave that law for the leper in the day of his cleansing. Come and show himself to the priest.

He examines him and then he puts him in a house apart. And after seven days, he examines him again to see if there'd be any new blotches or spots or whatever. And if he is clean after the seven days, then he is to bring in this dove and they are to kill it.

Two doves actually there to kill the one, put the blood in the basin and all. And they're to take the live dove and dip it in this bloody water and then turn it free and it flies away with the wings flapping with the blood and all of the dove that was killed as a sacrifice for his cleansing. And he was then cleansed and could return to society.

Interesting though to me that God would make provision for him to work. Oh, let's always give allowance for God to work. Let's not try to put God in a box.

So leprosy is incurable. Well, give God the opportunity to work if he so desires. God left himself room to work.

And if God leaves himself room to work, surely we ought to leave room for God to work. This is the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. That to me is just absolutely remarkable.

I love that particular portion of the Levitical law where God made provision for him to do a miracle. If I want to work and heal a leper, all right, this is, you know, this is the law for the leper in the day of his cleansing. It is interesting in that leprosy is always used in the scripture as a type of sin because it was such a horrible, loathsome disease that slowly ate away.

First of all, it actually doesn't eat away except that it destroys the nerve endings. And so people became deformed as the result of the leprosy because they lost feeling. First it began in the extremities of their bodies, usually in their fingers or on their feet.

And the first thing that leprosy does is numb your senses. It kills the nerves so you don't feel anything. And because they can't feel anything, pain or whatever, they've lost their sense of feeling.

The lepers quite often have their feet gnawed away by rats and they don't feel it. While they're sleeping at night, the rats will just eat their feet and they don't feel it because of the leprosy having destroyed the nerves. Or they'll put their hands down on a hot plate or a stove and they'll burn their hands and get the gangrene and all as a result of burns.

They can't feel it. And so the damage is done actually because they don't have feeling. They say, oh, you know, his finger dropped off.

No, a leper's finger doesn't drop off. But because they have lost the feeling in their hands, in their fingers, many times they are burned or destroyed in other ways because of this loss of feeling. Sin has a way of just anesthetizing a person, a loss of feeling, and slowly you're destroyed, incurable, except by a divine work of God.

And so Jesus said, I'm willing, be thou clean, go show yourself to the priest.

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