

# Jesus, the Radical Servant-Savior

Pastor Chris Baker //04.30.23 // Centralia FBC

Good morning, church! We'll be reading Mark 1:12-45 this morning. It's on page \_\_\_\_\_ in the black bibles in the pew rack in front of you.

While you're turning there, I want to let you know why we're approaching Mark the way we are. We're covering the 16 chapter of Mark's gospel in about 17 weeks. If you've been at FBC very long, you'll recognize that is moving pretty quick for us. We spent 24 weeks in 1 Peter, 46 weeks in Ephesians over the course of two different years, and by the time we finish the Exodus study we do in the winter we'll be well over 80 sermons. We normally move a bit more slowly. But that isn't the only way to study, nor is it the only way to preach.

Generally, when breaking down a book of the Bible we will study paragraph-by-paragraph because there is usually plenty of truth in a paragraph-sized chunk of Scripture for us to camp on for 40 minutes or so. And wading into the water of God's Word that way enables us to see some things that we just can't see if we move so quickly.

But with Mark we're moving pretty quickly. If we broke Mark down the way I'd normally break down a book of the Bible, today's text would be about four sermons—and I promise I won't keep you here for four sermons-worth of time this morning. We're moving quickly with Mark in part because Mark moves quickly. We've said it before, but it bears saying again. This is an urgent gospel. Mark is all action, and so moving quickly lets us feel that in a way we wouldn't if we were in this book constantly for a year.

The second reason is because I hope studying this way helps you in your own personal study. We're aiming for chunks of Scripture here that would be about what you read in your devotional time. Roughly a chapter. This seems to be the length of a passage you might sit down at your kitchen table or in your recliner and read on your own.

When you do that, what are you looking for? How does Mark point us to the meaning of the cross? Are you seeing things that cause you to love God more? Are you being challenged to love people around you? We'll look for all those things and more as we study, so my hope is that as we go through Mark this summer your own personal study time will grow right along side our time together in this room.

Mark 1:12-45.

## **Read**

## **Pray**

Do you love life? Do you love life? That's a question Benjamin Franklin asked in his autobiography.

Franklin was a prolific inventor, writer, and statesman. He had an intense work ethic, which led him to answer his own question.

***“Dost thou love life?” he asked. “Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.”***

*(From "Father Abraham's Speech," forming the preface to Poor Richard's Almanac for 1758 sourced at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/20203/20203-h/20203-h.htm>)*

Legend has it that during his time as a diplomat in France, Franklin was known for his incredibly busy schedule. One day, he was asked by a friend how he managed to accomplish so much each day. Franklin reportedly responded by pulling out a piece of paper and a pen, and drawing a grid with seven columns and 24 rows.

He then filled in each cell of the grid with a specific activity or task, such as “writing,” “reading,” or “meeting with diplomats.” His autobiography contains a version of that same schedule. He was a man constantly on the move.

While they would have had some serious theological differences, Ben Franklin and the Jesus of Nazareth we meet in Mark’s gospel would have admired one another’s penchant for activity.

Jesus is constantly on the move in Mark. The word ‘immediately’ is in our English translation four times in the text we read today.

This is how Mark introduces us to Jesus. The main character of the first 11 verses is John. That shifts in verse 12 where Jesus takes center stage. To understand Jesus, we had to meet John. But now that we’ve met Jesus we’re not camping in the wilderness near the Jordan River anymore.

We’re moving. And we’re moving fast. Our passage contained seven scenes, and each one reveals something to us about the Man and His message.

Jesus came to serve and to save. That’s what Mark’s gospel is all about and we get to see that immediately here in chapter 1. It’s in the text twice. Once it’s implied, the second time it’s just boldly stated.

After John is arrested, Jesus springs into action. And what’s his message? Verse 15 “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” It’s time for the serving Savior to begin His work. He has come to preach the good news, that’s what He said in verse 38. *And he said to them, “Let’s go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come.”*

The way Mark introduces us to Jesus makes it very clear that everything is changing. This is a radical moment in the history of God and His people. Radical means extreme change.

*(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/radical>)*

Mark lays out for us a radical Jesus in this first chapter. Everything about this man, who is much more than a man, is different. Each of these seven scenes show us that Jesus is not one to squander time. From the very beginning of Mark’s gospel, Jesus is the radical Servant-Savior who is hyper-focused on His mission. We see it in his radical preparation. Look at verse 12:

### **Radical Preparation (v.12-13)**

*12 Immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness. 13 He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels were serving him.*

Here's Mark's sudden style again. Immediately, Jesus is driven into the wilderness. Right after His baptism, right after the *You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased*, Jesus is driven into the wilderness.

Salvation begins in the wilderness. Salvation begins in the darkest place. Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden into the wilderness. Israel was finally saved from Egypt once-and-for all not in the cities where they built temples, but in the wilderness near the Red Sea.

Salvation is won in the wilderness. And, since we are here, don't be shocked when you take a step in your faith—whether it's to start attending church more regularly, or study your Bible more, or grow in prayer, or get baptized, whatever your next step is—don't be surprised if when you take that step that your life immediately gets harder.

Jesus's baptism is followed by His temptation. But notice in the text that it is God who drives Jesus into the wilderness, not Satan. Jesus said over in Matthew that the gates of Hell will not prevail against God's work. Gates are not offensive weapons, church. They're defensive weapons. God didn't drive Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted so that Jesus would go on defense. No, the is Jesus showing Satan right from the very beginning who is in charge.

Jesus took the fight right to Satan. The other gospels spell out what happened there. Mark just tells us He was tempted and He overcame. And, church, it's crucial that we understand this. Every temptation to sin you experience—Jesus has been there and He overcame.

We learned last week that Jesus was baptized to identify with His people, not because He needed forgiveness. That's the same reason He subjected Himself to temptation. The author of Hebrews makes it clear for us: (Hebrews 4)

***14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens—Jesus the Son of God—let us hold fast to our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.***

Jesus is our high priest and whatever it is that is tempting you to sin, He has been tempted in every way as we are, yet He didn't sin. So we know He can empower us to overcome.

This was radical preparation. No one had ever overcome Satan's temptation before. Everyone else who ever lived would have failed. Jesus overcame. This changes everything.

Jesus, the radical Servant-Savior underwent radical preparation for His public ministry. And when that ministry began, He preached a radical message. Look at verse 14:

**Radical Message (v.14-15)**

*14 After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God: 15 "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

I've said Mark's gospel is sudden. Here's a great example. The space between the end of verse 13 and the beginning of verse 14 is probably a year. Based on the other gospel accounts it was about a year from Jesus's baptism and temptation to John's arrest.

This isn't the main point of the text, but we're a hurried culture, so this year that Mark kind of glosses over here might be a good reminder for some of us. God isn't in a hurry. There's no drive-thru lane when it comes to God's providence. If we were setting out to rescue God's people, every one of us would have done it differently. God unfolds His plan exactly how He wants to, and exactly how it will be best for all His people.

He gets right to the point he's trying to make. Jesus is the Servant-Savior and here he starts the public work of ministry and preaching. It's the serving that leads to the saving.

The time has come, Jesus said! That's the radical message. And it requires radical obedience. Look at verse 17:

### **Radical Obedience (v.16-20)**

*17 "Follow me," Jesus told them, "and I will make you fish for people." 18 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*

This is perhaps the most radically obedient response in human history. I say human history because you realize that everything else in creation is always 100% obedient to God, don't you? In just a few chapters, we'll see Jesus in the midst of a massive storm out on the water. And He looks to the sky and says, 'knock it off' and the storm stops. He spoke the world into existence. All creation is obedient—except humanity and the angels who have fallen from heaven.

This is perhaps the most radically obedient response in human history. It's a response to a now-and-future call. Jesus says follow me (now) and I will make you fishers of men (future).

To follow Jesus is to know Jesus. These followers grew to know His habits, His opinions, they knew the way He treated others. They sat at His feet, and they listened. They asked questions and thought about His answers. They loved Him and they were prepared to go wherever He led them.

They became His disciples. That word in the New Testament simply means 'learner.' They were going to become Jesus-learners. They had 3 years of personal instruction. We don't get that—and you might not believe this—but we actually get something better. We get the entirety of God's written word PLUS the indwelt Holy Spirit of God working in and through us to help us learn Jesus.

And as we learn Jesus, He makes us fishers of men. How did He do it with the disciples? He showed them what it looked like. They watched Him talk to a rich, young ruler and watched that rich, young ruler go away because he loved his riches more than he loved Jesus, and they learned something about evangelism.

They watched Jesus talk to a woman at the well, expose her sinfulness and her need and draw her to Himself. And they learned.

They watched and listened as Jesus spoke to Nicodemus. Jesus spoke to him and said to him, "You must be born again." They watched and they listened. They watched Him as He spoke to 5,000 and more all at once on the side of a hill, and they learned how to become fishers of men. They learned from His example.

One of the great calls of Mark's gospel is that obedience to Jesus Christ requires that you become a fisher of men. Be one who shares the gospel.

(GOD MAN CHRIST RESPONSE)

That's the gospel. And speaking its truth and asking for a response is how we take the first step in carrying out the Great Commission. Jesus said in Matthew 28 that we are to go make disciples of all nations. We can't make disciples without the work of evangelism. Jesus is still making fishers of men today. And He's the only one who has the authority to make that work fruitful. We learn in the text that He displays radical authority. Verse 27:

### **Radical Authority (v.21-28)**

*27 They were all amazed, and so they began to ask each other, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."*

This scene begins back up in verse 21 where Jesus goes to Capernaum, teaches in the synagogue there, and the people immediately realized His authority. Then a demon realized His authority.

Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He has come into this world to reverse the effects of sin and only He has the authority to do so.

Jesus begins His earthly ministry by declaring His authority over false religion—the scribes weren't teaching people to worship God, they were teaching people to follow rules. He declares His authority over false religion and over the power of evil.

We see that authority on display through the radical restoration of the next section. Look at verse 30:

### **Radical Restoration (v.29-34)**

*30 Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31 So he went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she began to serve them.*

As soon as they left the synagogue, they head over to Simon Peter's house. There, his mother-in-law was sick so Jesus showed His authority over the effects of sin (sickness) and healed her. Church, aren't you glad you serve a God who, with a word, can declare sickness, pain, death, and suffering to be over! Oh, how we long for that day.

We see a glimpse of that here. As Jesus declared His authority and brings about restoration, He is rolling back the fallenness of the world just a little bit. He's giving us a glimpse of heaven, church!

Salvation puts everything back the way it was—or would have been—if sin had not entered into the world. That’s what happens when Jesus saves sinners. And Mark portrays Jesus as the servant-savior radically devoted to His mission. Verse 38:

### **Radical Devotion (v.35-38)**

*38 And he said to them, “Let’s go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come.”*

Verse 35 tells us Jesus got up early in the morning to pray. That’s a fantastic habit if you can establish it. Jesus seemed to be doing it because that was the only time He could find peace. They found Him anyway and when they did, He immediately got back to work. Jesus came to preach. He came to serve, and we’ve seen that His service reveals a glimpse of eternity for us. And He came to save. For salvation to happen, the word of God needs to go forward and that’s exactly what Jesus was doing.

Romans 10

***13 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 14 How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.***

There’s a backward progression to those verses that I love. The good news is carried by those beautiful-footed evangelists, they preach, the lost hear, they believe, they call on Him, and they are saved.

Jesus was going so that people everywhere could hear and Mark makes clear that this radical gospel has a radical reach. Verse 41:

### **Radical Reach (v.39-45)**

*41 Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. “I am willing,” he told him. “Be made clean.” 42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.*

Jesus went into all the villages of Galilee to preach. During his travel, he encountered a leper. There isn’t a much worse diagnosis someone in the first century could have than that. It amounted to a physical and social death sentence.

Leprosy was a catch-all term for all kinds of diseases. Their clothes were considered to be contagious, according to Leviticus. Walls of the houses they lived in would’ve been considered contagious. And the easiest thing to do, of course, was to require some sort of strict quarantine procedure; so lepers were put in colonies, usually outside of the town somewhere a few miles away, where they could be kept, where they could be secluded, so that they wouldn’t come into contact with any others.

In its worst stage, family members would go and leave food at a certain location, and they would come and collect the food. If they made their way into the town, people would shout, “Unclean! Unclean!” They would move out of their way. They would do anything not to come into contact, because coming into contact with a leper or with something that a leper had touched rendered you unclean, and you’d have to go through all kinds of ceremonial ritual to cleanse yourself again. There was nothing a leper could do,

nothing. The rabbis said it was easier to raise the dead than to heal a leper. It looked terrible; it smelled worse. They became eventually increasingly immobile. They lost the extremities of their limbs. They'd be reduced to begging. They had no hope. No sacrifice could cure them. It was a long and painful, lingering death.

This leper, he comes to Jesus and says "If you are willing, you can make me clean." What does Jesus do? The one thing that you cannot do when dealing with a leper.

He touched him. He didn't have to touch him. Jesus healed often with just a word, but this time He touched him. And do you understand what happens when He touches him? He becomes himself now subject to all of the ceremonial regulations that Leviticus 13 had inflicted upon the people of God. He identifies with this man's condition.

That's the kind of Savior you have, church. That's the kind of Savior you can have if you're lost. He reached out and touched this leper.

There was instant healing. One second this man was full of leprosy, sores all over his body, perhaps even bits of his body, of his fingers had broken off, just stubs left, sores and rashes, and perhaps just a hole where his nose had been. A horrid, horrid spectacle, and the next...he's restored. He's restored. What an incredible thing. And Mark says he was healed immediately.

He is made whole just like that. It's a demonstration of the power, the sheer power of Jesus. It's a demonstration of Jesus' compassion and willingness and power.

Jesus's radical reach extends to even you. There was a time for all of us, and this time is now for some of you, that you have a much worse diagnosis than the leper. Sure, he was dying—but he wasn't dead. Ephesians 2, Paul tells us we were dead, spiritually-speaking. If you're here without a saving relationship with Jesus you are now dead, spiritually. Jesus cleansed the living in Mark 1, you need Him to raise the dead.

But praise God, that's exactly the business He's at work doing in dead hearts even today. Paul wrote it this way: (Eph. 2:1, 5)

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, 5 made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!*

The touch of Jesus repairs the curse of sin. And that restoration comes with responsibility. Jesus never heals someone or saves someone in Scripture, looks at them, and says 'good luck to you.' He tells the leper to tell no one. The leper doesn't obey. He'll heal someone in the next chapter, and He gives Him instructions.

For anyone here who trusts Christ as your Savior for the first time today, your responsibility is to tell someone. The Christian life is not a solo journey. You're saved from the solitary confinement of your sin into gospel community with other Christians. You need to pursue baptism. You need to thrive as a member of a church. That journey starts by telling someone.

For those of you who are saved, telling someone remains part of your journey. Jesus is the radical Servant-Savior and the salvation He won for you requires radical change in your life. As you look at these seven scenes, recognize that Jesus didn't waste time.

I want to change Ben Franklin's question just a little bit. Do you love God? Then don't waste the time you should be using to grow in Him. Do you love the Christians in your life? Then don't waste time you could be serving them and helping them to grow. Do you love the lost? Then don't waste time you could be using to point them to Jesus.

When do we do it? The refrain of this passage is immediately. Mark's gospel is urgent. It changes your actions and your attitudes every single day. How does it need to change you right now? Let's pray.