

# Jesus Came to Serve and to Save

Pastor Chris Baker //04.16.23 // Centralia FBC

Good morning, church family! Our kindergarten through third grade students are dismissed to go to children's church at this time. While they're heading out, please turn in your Bibles to Mark 10.

I'm excited to launch into something new with you this morning. We'll spend the rest of the spring and most of the summer in Mark's gospel. This is a bit of a soft launch into the series because next week we're excited to have North American Mission Board missionary Phil Dooley with us. Phil is from right here in Mid-Missouri, but he's currently serving as a missionary in Montana.

Phil is going to preach for us next week in addition to sharing some of what God is doing through baptist churches in Montana.

As we consider Mark's gospel we are starting in chapter 10 because it's here we learn Mark's reason for writing. God has preserved four gospels for us in Scripture. Each of those gospels were written by different men for different audiences all inspired by God Himself in such a way that we believe these words to be God's own words.

And they're God's own words that He arranged in a specific way to highlight certain themes about Jesus. Matthew was written by a Jewish man to a largely Jewish audience and he goes to great lengths to highlight Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. There are more references to the Old Testament, the Jewish bible, in Matthew than in the other gospels.

John puts a great deal of focus into the deity of Jesus. If you read John, it's hard not to walk away convinced that Jesus of Nazareth truly is the Son of God. Luke wrote the most scholarly account of Jesus's life and he pays special attention to Jesus as the compassionate Savior. But what about Mark?

We'll see it in the text today, I hope. We're just going to read one verse. We'll look at its context a little bit in a few minutes, but there is one verse that I believe is the key to unlocking what Mark wanted to emphasize about Jesus.

Let's read it, then we'll pray:

*45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

## **Pray**

What do you do when an alarm goes off?

If I asked 'what are you supposed to do' I think we all have the same answer. But what we do in reality depends a little bit on the situation, right?

I'm part of a group of men who have been getting together every so often to play basketball for the past few years. We used to play at the rec center here in town on Wednesday evenings after it was closed. I was usually a little bit late because I'd be finishing up things here at church.

One particular Wednesday, I pulled up and there was a police car parked out front. That was unusual. I wasn't sure what to expect when I went in. Here's what I found. The guys had that look that... well, do you remember in school when your class would have a substitute teacher, and behave horribly, then your normal teacher would come back and they'd spend half the class scolding you for treating the sub like garbage? The guys had that look to them.

Here's what went on before I showed up. Somehow the fire alarm started going off. Now, what are you supposed to do when the fire alarm goes off? What did these guys do? They just kept playing ball. The alarm was tripped accidentally, there was no fire, but when the police officer showed up he, rather pointedly, reminded the group that when an alarm goes off it's a good idea for your safety and the safety of first responders if you exit the building.

The alarm sounded and they didn't respond. Mark is sounding the alarm in his gospel. He has an urgent message and he shares it urgently.

We're going to split our time this morning between talking about the man and his message. The message is more important than the man, so we'll spend more time there. But I think you'll find some encouragement in Mark himself. Let's start there:

## **The Man**

The author isn't named in the book, but very early in the history of the church this book was attributed to a man we meet in Acts 12 named John Mark.

In Acts 13 when the church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas as missionaries that they took young John Mark along as an assistant. There was apparently some conflict because Mark went back to Jerusalem and later, in Acts 15, we see that Paul doesn't want Mark to go along when he went to Syria. Paul and Mark had a falling out. So Barnabas took him and they headed toward Cyprus.

Whatever it was that caused friction between Paul and Mark, they put it behind them. We know this because very late in his life, Paul goes out of his way in 2 Timothy 4 to ask for Mark to join him in Rome.

He also had a close relationship with Peter. In 1 Peter 5, we see this 13 ***She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, as does Mark, my son.***

That relationship is especially important for us to know about because it seems most likely that Mark was first told of the details recorded in his gospel by Peter. Mark wasn't a disciple of Jesus during his earthly ministry, at least not that we know of. He's not among the 12. He's not an eyewitness to these things like Matthew or John were.

But he was extremely close with Peter. So close, in fact, that it's probably safe to say that Mark's written gospel is Peter's spoken gospel. A church leader from the second century wrote this:

**Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, he followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.**

-Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, AD 140:

*(Kirsopp Lake, trans., Eusebius the Ecclesiastical History, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 297 (III, XXXIX 15) sourced in Hughes, R. Kent. Mark (2 volumes in 1 / ESV Edition) (Preaching the Word) (Kindle Locations 7376-7377). Crossway. Kindle Edition.)*

So Mark wrote down Peter's recollection of the gospel. Why didn't Peter do it? I mean, Peter wrote a couple of letters that were preserved in Scripture. We don't know why Peter didn't write it down before Mark, but we've got a pretty good idea why he didn't write it when Mark did. Peter was dead. As best we can tell, Peter was martyred sometime between 60-70 during an intense time of persecution in Rome. So Mark wrote down his gospel as a way to encourage the suffering Christians at Rome and elsewhere.

We know little of Mark's life prior to him meeting Paul and Barnabas. He's not really a main character in any passage of Scripture. The most detailed thing we know about him is that he abandoned his mission trip and went back home.

And yet, God used Him to record His very own words to be preserved for His people for generations. Church, from the little we know about Mark we need to be reminded that God has a purpose for each and every one of His people. He especially has a purpose for those who have struggled. The one thing we know about Mark isn't positive. It's most likely some kind of failure on his part. But God redeemed that and continues to use Mark's ministry in the lives of His people today. He'll keep using Mark's ministry until Jesus comes back and we don't have to read His words anymore—we'll listen to them, amen?

As we start studying the gospel of Mark, be reminded that God does have a purpose for all His people.

That's the man. What about the message?

## **The Message**

### **Mark's Message is Urgent**

I said earlier Mark was sounding the alarm. Kent Hughes calls Mark the 'Go!' gospel because everything is action.

That's clear right from the beginning. Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* That's the first verse. From there, a one-verse quotation from Isaiah and then you're introduced to John the Baptist, a desert-dwelling street preacher who wore a camel-hair garment and ate locusts.

When you meet Jesus in Mark, down in verse 9, He's not a baby. He's an adult starting His public ministry being baptized in the Jordan River.

There's no birth narrative, no genealogy. Everything is action. That's part of why Mark is my favorite gospel to study. It's constantly on the move. Mark is the shortest gospel. It takes most people less than two hours to read. Most audiobook versions are about 75 minutes. Those of you who commute to Columbia could listen to Mark four times in a week just while you're driving.

Mark was sounding the alarm. And he sounded it quickly. He's probably the first one to ever write down the story of Jesus. We think this gospel was written around 30 years after Jesus's death and that Matthew and Luke both used Mark's gospel as source when they were writing theirs. Almost everything in Mark is included either in Matthew, or Luke, or both.

There's some comfort in that for those of us who are more skeptical by nature. Mark wasn't an eyewitness. Yet, his gospel was written first and Matthew, who was writing later and had almost certainly read Mark's gospel, doesn't dispute anything. Instead, he affirms it.

Mark's news is true news. Mark's news is good news. Mark's news is urgent news. That is just as true today as it was when he first wrote this book.

Mark's message has two main points: Jesus came to serve and Jesus came to save. That news is going to require a response from you. Let's unpack those two truths and then we'll talk about how we respond.

First, **Jesus Came to Serve.**

He's speaking to the disciples in Mark 10 when he says:

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve*

Those words were a response to a question from James and John, two-thirds of His inner circle.

Going back to verse 35 *James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him and said, "Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask you."*

*36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked them.*

*37 They answered him, "Allow us to sit at your right and at your left in your glory."*

*38 Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink or to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"*

*39 "We are able," they told him.*

He had just told them He was going to Jerusalem and there He would die. Their first question is, 'Hey Jesus, when we get to heaven can we be in charge, too?'

They completely missed the point.

Though Jesus had been with the disciples for three years as the ideal Servant, though the end was near and he had just given them a detailed forecast of his death, though he had taught them that his way was to be the model for their lives, they now made this request that revealed that their way of thinking was virtually the opposite of Christ the Servant.

Church, the way the Kingdom of God functions is backward compared to the kingdom surrounding us to day. Jesus came to serve people, but our culture—and the culture James and John lived in—tell us we have to use people, to overcome people, if we want to get ahead.

*Forbes* magazine studied people who were regarded as successful a few years ago. The title of the article tells you a whole lot about their findings: *Why Jerks Get Ahead*.

They did two interesting experiments. The researchers had people take a geography quiz –first alone, then in pairs. The task involved placing cities on a map of North America unmarked by state or national borders. The participants rated themselves on their own abilities and rated each other, secretly, on a number of qualities.

As expected, most people rated their own geographic knowledge far higher than actual performance would justify. In the interesting new twist, however, the people most prone to overrate themselves got higher marks from their partners. They appeared confident, so the people they were with had confidence in them.

We'd never say we prefer overconfident friends or coworkers. But we tend to practically give preference to them. It's the same with rudeness, because while most of us deplore it, research suggests that we also see it as a sign of power. Another study indicated that the ruder someone acts, the more convinced observers become that they are powerful.

(<https://www.forbes.com/sites/daviddisalvo/2012/08/18/why-jerks-get-ahead/?sh=75ecda494091>)

In God's economy, things don't work that way. Jesus had the right to all the confidence on the planet. It should be counted as a miracle that He responded calmly to James and John, right? 'Jesus, we know you're about to suffer and die and all that fun stuff. . .but we'd really like a favor. And we came without Peter because that guy really runs his mouth a lot, so wouldn't you rather have us in charge than him?'

The Kingdom of Heaven doesn't value being first, it values seeing yourself as last, as the least.

Jesus knew He deserved to be first. That title 'Son of Man' is loaded with meaning. It shows up over a dozen times in Mark and we'll highlight it as we go. But Jesus deserved it all, yet humbled Himself to death, even death on a cross.

Colossians 1:15-17 tells us this about Jesus:

***He is the image of the invisible God,***

***the firstborn over all creation.***

***For everything was created by him,***

***in heaven and on earth,***

***the visible and the invisible,***

***whether thrones or dominions***

***or rulers or authorities—***

***all things have been created through him and for him.***

***He is before all things,***

***and by him all things hold together.***

Jesus—while holding the universe together—made Himself a servant to the lowest of the low.

And one of the primary points of Jesus' teaching throughout Mark's gospel is that disciples are to be servants. It had to be infinitely frustrating to Jesus at this point in His ministry to have to re-explain this truth—yet He did. Patiently loving His flawed disciples, and aren't you glad for that? Amen?

Taking in this big picture truth from Mark's account of Jesus's life should make us step back and look at our own. Ask yourself this very important question: Do you view yourself as a servant? Not do you serve. Jesus isn't listing examples of His service here. He's identifying as a servant. Those aren't the same thing. We can serve for a million reasons. And 999,999 of them are selfish.

Do you view yourself as a servant? Here's a good diagnostic question for your heart. How does your heart respond when someone treats you like a servant? That's different than thinking about how much you serve and, church, we do have so many people here who serve so well. Some of the most servant-hearted people I have ever met in my life I have met in this church. But the question Jesus forces us to ask ourselves here isn't outward-focused. It cuts to our heart. Do you see yourself as a servant? If you do, and someone treats you like one, you won't be offended.

That's an incredibly difficult place to arrive at. James and John didn't arrive there in three years. But they did eventually. And you can, too. If we're going to follow Jesus, we'll adopt His worldview. And seeing our life through His eyes means that we are here to serve. We view ourselves as servants.

And He gave us the ultimate example of that, didn't He? The end of Mark 10:45,

### **Jesus Came to Save**

*Jesus came to give his life as a ransom for many.*

A ransom is a price paid to grant the release of someone who is held captive.

You've probably heard about the King's Ransom, right? This goes back to King Richard I in the 12th century, the one they called the Lion Heart. Returning from the third crusade, he was captured and held for ransom. It took about a year to gather up the money to pay the ransom and it was paid. 150,000 marks, which may not seem like a lot of money to you until you realize that 150,000 marks was roughly two and a half times the total revenue of all of England at the time. Meaning, adjusting it to today's dollars the ransom paid for the release of King Richard amounts to several billion dollars. That's a huge ransom.

(<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-I-king-of-England/Imprisonment>)

It pales in comparison to the ransom Jesus paid on our behalf. He put His identity as servant into action in the highest way possible when He offered up Himself to ransom His people from sin, death, and hell.

King Richard I was kidnapped. We were not. We chose captivity, do you recognize that? Here's the problem.

God demands holiness. Peter wrote **1:15 But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; 16 for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy.**

God's demand of holiness is a problem. Because we have none. We aren't born with it and we can't achieve it on our own, no matter how hard we try. Romans 3:23 tells us For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Instead of pursuing holiness, everyone one of us has rushed headlong into wickedness.

Sin renders holiness impossible for you and I. And for God to lower the standard to come into His presence would make Him unholy. God's presence can't tolerate sin. If you remember back to our Exodus study that is why the nation was so terrified when God revealed His presence on Mount Sinai.

It's shortly after that revelation of Himself at Sinai that God gave Israel His Law. It's a holiness code. If you want to be holy, live like this. The problem is that the standard—both in the heart and in the actions of the people—was impossible.

The law was perfect, but the people weren't. That's what Paul says in Romans 8. **3 For what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, 4 in order that the law's requirement would be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

We don't come to God on our own merit. We come ransomed. King Richard didn't fight his way back to England. He was ransomed and released.

How did God solve our holiness problem? Our rescue story is a Trinitarian thing of beauty, Church. The Father sent the Son who willingly died and was raised by the Spirit (according to Romans 8:11).

We just celebrated Easter. When Jesus bled on that Good Friday, He was paying the ransom for the sins of all His people.

That's how Peter puts it for us. Remember, it's probably Peter who gave Mark this gospel story to tell. And it's Peter who understood the ransom this way:

1 Peter 1:18 **For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was revealed in these last times for you.**

The root word for redeemed there is the same for ransomed in Mark 10. You were ransomed, you were redeemed. You didn't redeem yourself. You were ransomed by the Father. The Father provided the ransom price.

Church, the cross was the Father's idea. It was the Father's love for you that sent Christ to serve and to save. It was the Father's love for you that sent Jesus to obey and bleed and die. It was the Father who

offered the ransom price. And then, it was the Son who paid the debt. The ransom is the gift of the Father but the burden of the payment fell upon the Son.

Why? 1 Peter 1:20 it was revealed "for you." Why the cross? Why the obedience and blood of the Son Himself? Why? "For you." There is an offer there if you have ears to hear it, made to you this morning by God Himself. There's an offer. Jesus is for you, he's saying. He's for you. He obeyed and bled and died for you; for your sake the ransom was paid.

He is for you if only you will take Him freely by faith you can be set free by the grace of God.

Mark's urgent message is that Jesus Christ came to serve, and the ultimate way the He has served us is to pay our ransom. Jesus came for you. To serve you. To save you. He did those things for His glory and your good.

Mark has urgent news to share. And that urgent news requires that we respond. Technology is a wonderful thing when it is employed correctly.

One Saturday morning in January 2018, television stations, radios, and every smart phone in Hawaii were sent an automatic alert. It came at 8:07am. What were you doing at 8:07am yesterday? Were you drinking coffee? Trying to finish up some yard work before the rain hit? Some of you were here for our Saturday morning men's group.

Think about how you would react if you phone started blaring with this announcement in all capital letters:

**BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.**

I don't know what you have planned for the rest of Saturday, but when that message pops up your plans go out the window. Folks in Hawaii were terrified—and rightfully so. At least one person had a heart attack shortly after receiving the message.

(<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2018/11/28/man-who-had-heart-attack-during-false-missile-scare-files-suit/>)

The next alert came 38-minutes later. 'There is no missile threat or danger to the State of Hawaii. Repeat. False Alarm.' For those 38 minutes, no other news mattered. Everything you did was in response to the news of your impending doom.

Mark's urgent news requires just as drastic a response.

For those within the sound of my voice who belong to Christ: don't forget you're ransomed today. You were hostage to your own sin and unholiness and God rescued you. He rescued you not so we can sit comfortably in pews and live our best life now. He rescued us to be servants. Let's live as Jesus' followers by seeing ourselves through His eyes. Let's serve each other, let's serve the lost around us, and let's let them know that Jesus came to save. There are people in our town whose ransom Jesus paid. You see them every day. The greatest way you can serve them is to point them to the Savior. Ultimately, you have to do that with words. The most loving thing you can do for a lost person is to verbally share the gospel



with them and invite them to respond to it. Sure, there are a thousand other ways you can serve them and you should. But unless you're committed to sharing the gospel, you're not truly committed to serving.

Some of you within the sound of my voice are among those whose ransom Jesus paid. The Father sent the Son to serve *you* by dying in your place. The Bible tells us that if we confess with our mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart God raised Him from the dead we will be saved.

If a missile was incoming, you'd respond. Mark's gospel message is even more urgent than that because if you're don't know Jesus Christ as Savior it's not just your life here that is in danger. Your eternity is in danger. The gospel requires a response today. To the lost, the ransom is paid. Repent and believe. To the saved, you are a servant. Imitate Jesus by identifying as a servant and serving this lost and dying world. Let's pray.