

**“Prepare the Way” (The Gospel of Mark)
February 16, 2014**

Mark 1:1-12 (NIV)

PROP- The Gospel of Mark is a powerful declaration of an amazing Jesus—who radically transforms the lives of all who give Him total access to their hearts!

BACKGROUND:

- **MARK**
 - 1st mentioned in Acts 12—his mother, Mary’s, home hosted early gatherings of the 1st generation church; exciting days.
 - Inspired by 2 powerful men:
 - Cousin of BARNABAS—one who believed Jesus could transform any life (*1st to stand w/ Saul of Tarsus*)
 - Spiritual “son” of PETER—referred to as “my son” (1 Peter 5:13)
 - Mark’s name means “Hammer”
- **HIS GOSPEL**
 - In Peter’s final letter, he promised to “make every effort that (after my departure) you may be able to recall these things at any time” (2 Peter 1:15)
 - Historian *Irenaeus (A.D. 140-202)*- “After Peter’s death, Mark—the disciple and interpreter of Peter—handed to us in writing the things proclaimed by Peter” (referencing the “Gospel of Mark”); written from Peter’s first-hand encounters with Jesus
 - Ultimately, “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21) in reference to the writing of scripture.
 - 1st Gospel written & released; brief; pointed; urgent (*“immediately”*)

1. He came PURPOSED & PREPARED

- Jesus did not come as an afterthought!
- 400 years of prophetic silence broken by the voice of John, fulfilling Isaiah’s & Malachi’s prophecies (final prophecy of OT)
- JOHN the BAPTIST- radical humility
 - Jesus is “more powerful”!
 - Only the lowliest of slaves loosened sandals (yet, Jesus would one day wash his disciples’ feet)
 - I only baptize w/ water—Jesus will baptize w/ Holy Spirit

2. WE must PREPARE our hearts to receive Him

- **“Calling”**- *“to cry out—with great feeling; an impassioned cry”*
- **“Wilderness”**- clear break from a religious system that had become lifeless & predictable; form w/o power; performance w/o Presence!
- **“Make straight paths”**- Romans knew how to build roads
 - Remove obstacles
 - Smooth, unhindered access
- **“Baptism of repentance”**-
 - Change of direction
 - Change of heart/mindset
 - Turn from TREE of KNOWLEDGE (*“I know better”*)
 - To the TREE OF LIFE (*“I need You!”*)

3. Jesus HELD NOTHING BACK

- He travelled on foot 2 weeks (Nazareth to Jordan River)
- Submitted to “baptism of repentance” (though He had nothing to repent of)
- He identifies with us—stands with us (Hebrews 4:15)

4. Jesus FULLY RECEIVED HIS IDENTITY FROM HIS FATHER

- **“I take delight in You”** (from Isaiah 42:1)
- 1st words of lengthy promise of the “Suffering Servant”—who would pay with His own life **“ONCE for ALL”!!!**
- Launched into His ministry as Father’s “much loved Son”!
- **“Immediately”**- (used 11x in this chapter) H.S. Who **DESCENDED**—now **DRIVES** Him into the wilderness
 - Lit.- “wild and untamed land” filled with “wild animals”
 - He could draw near to and hear His Father in the most abandoned and unlikely places
 - Throughout Mark’s Gospel—“wilderness” was place of solitude and prayer
 - Place to retreat from the “crush of the crowd”
 - Took disciples there to rest & get refreshed
 - Fed 5,000 there...place of total dependence

RESPONSE:

- The Gospel of Mark has been called “The Gospel of Passion”
- Experience the heart of a young man consumed with Jesus
- Encounter Jesus afresh
- Prepare the way for Him to move in and thru your life—give Him the “straight path” of total access to your heart