

Mark 1.1-13

'You are my Son'

Christ Church Selly Park

Sunday 14 April 2024

Mark: Who is Jesus? [1] + APCM

Who is Jesus?

Before a baptism, the minister approached the candidate and said solemnly, 'Baptism is a serious step. Are you sure you're prepared for it?'

'I think so,' he replied. 'We have a caterer coming to provide plenty of cookies and cakes for our guests.'

'I don't mean that,' the minister frowned. 'I mean, are you prepared *spiritually*?'

'Oh sure,' came the reply. 'I've got a keg of beer and a case of whisky for later.'

Today we begin a new series in Mark's gospel. Mark is the gospel for people who don't have much time to spare – he doesn't waste any words, and things happen breathlessly, they come tumbling one after another.

Mark begins like this:

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

Mark 1.1 (NIV)

And he then spends the next 16 chapters exploring an important question – in fact the most important question all must answer: **‘who is Jesus?’**

People heard Jesus’ teaching and wondered who he was to teach with such authority (1.27). They heard Jesus forgive sins and thought to themselves, who does this guy think he is (2.7)? He healed the sick on the Sabbath and they decided to kill him (3.6). Jesus calmed a storm and they asked one another, ‘Who is this?’ (4.41). When Jesus went home people refused to believe because they knew his parents, his brothers – he must be a fraud (6.2-3). Jesus walked on water and they thought he was a ghost (6.48).

Although the demons know full well who Jesus is, it isn’t until a Roman soldier sees him die that someone finally realises: **‘Surely this man was the Son of God!’** (15.40).

Mark gives us the answer in chapter 1 verse 1 – but it is only when Jesus dies that we understand what that means, and what it cost.

One of us

A few years ago there was a TV programme called *The Secret Millionaire*. In each episode, a millionaire leaves his or her luxuries behind, and lives undercover in a much poorer area. They are given a limited budget to live off, and over a week to ten days they have to build relationships the hard way.

Over that time they identify people or organisations they think deserve a break – and then at the end they reveal their identity and surprise people with gifts and donations.

Jesus is like those secret millionaires – only he isn't *pretending* to be one of us: he *really is* one of us.

Jesus did not need to be baptised. John's baptism was to mark **repentance** and **forgiveness of sins** (4); the outer washing with water was a sign of inner cleansing. For those who came to John it marked a fresh start, a new commitment to live God's way.

Jesus didn't need any of that. His heart wasn't deceitful like ours. He hadn't done anything wrong. He didn't need a fresh start. But he was still **baptised by John** (9) – why? To identify with us who *do* need forgiveness and a fresh start. To join us in the pit. To identify with us, to show us he really is one of us.

True of us

At Easter I showed a video telling a story of a champion football player joining a failing team, scoring goal after goal, leading them to Wembley, winning the cup final. The fans go mad. He runs over and taps the badge on his shirt. He's one of them – what's true of him is true of them, though they haven't expended a calorie of effort. He wins, they celebrate.

That's what's happening here. Jesus was **baptised by John** (9) to show he really is one of us – which means what's true of him can be true of us.

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

Mark 1.10-11 (NIV)

Don't you long for someone to say those words to you? How amazing would it be for *God himself* to say those words to you? **'You are my child, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'**

Jesus is one of us, so what's true of him is true of us: those words God spoke to Jesus that day he speaks to you, too, if you want in.

Come and see



You might have no idea who Jesus is, not really. You might think you know him well. This series is an opportunity for all to come and see. Come and see the good news. Come and see who Jesus really is – and if you find him, you will find yourself.

You see, we don't find who we are by looking within, by searching our hearts, by following our desires. Who we are – who we *truly* are – is found only in Jesus. When we are one with Jesus, what's true of him is true of us. When we are one with Jesus God says to us as he said to Jesus: **'You are my child, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'**


So come and see. Come and see **Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God**. You might be surprised, but you won't be disappointed.




The Good Shepherd (APCM)

This year I had no idea what to say at the APCM today. To be honest I'd decided to say nothing. Then a friend gave me a prophetic word: 'The Lord is my Shepherd.'

What he didn't know is I've been thinking a lot recently about a church Jess and I visited in New Zealand. Here it is:  the Church of the Good Shepherd, on the shore of Lake Tekapo on the South Island. It's tiny and beautiful, and its main window isn't stained glass,  it simply shows the lake and the distant mountains.

Sitting there, looking out at the beauty of God's creation, had a profound impact on me. There are many beautiful churches and many stunning views, but this one has stuck in my heart.

As I go on Sabbatical – which comes from the word 'Sabbath' or 'rest' – those five words are going to go with me : 'The Lord is my Shepherd.' I pray those five words go with you, too. There are many shepherds, but I pray *he* will be *our* Shepherd.

David's prayer carries on, talking about God's  provision – **I lack nothing** – his  protection – we are safe to rest **in green pastures** – and his  promise – **he refreshes my soul**. Friends if you pray, let us pray this for one another over the next weeks and months.