

Breaking the Silence

Mark 1:1-8

In the state of Minnesota, there is a room of complete silence...

And before all your moms and grandmas of little children make plans to visit there...

Let me warn you.

No one has been able to sit in the room for more than 45 minutes.

Because complete silence can drive you crazy.

People have had hallucinations after only a brief stay in this room.

And that's because humans need to experience sound.

It actually helps us balance.

And it keeps us mentally stable..

It drives us crazy.

Essentially, we have a need to hear things or it drives us crazy.

If you take your Bible and begin flipping through it, you will see that the Scriptures are the story of God....

Communicating with man.

In the garden, God walked and talked with Adam and Eve...

Then God communicated to the world through Noah's preaching in Genesis.

Then God decided to communicate through the nation Israel.

And even though they were a disobedient people, He raised up prophets to communicate with them.

And even today, HE still communicates with His people through His written word.

Yet, there was unique time in history when God went silent.

For 400 years, he did not communicate with His people.

The fancy name for this time is the intertestamental period.

And that simply means the time between the Old and New testaments.

You see, the events of the OT ended around 400 BC and the events of the NT began in 1 AD.

And in those 400 years, God had nothing to say to His people.

Israel was used to having a prophet come along and call them to repentance every so often.

But in these 400 years, no prophet came.

The Lord was giving them the silent treatment because of their disobedience.

And that was horrible news for Israel.

Had God deserted them?

Was God finished with them?

Were God's promises to them now useless?

For 400 years, there were only questions with no answers.

Look men, we break after 10 minutes of our wives silent treatment..

But Israel experienced it for 400 years.

And it caused things to look really, really bad.

But then we get to our text this morning...

And finally the silence is broken after 400 years of misery.

God does speak to Israel again through His prophet, and he not only breaks the silence....

He shatters it!

Turn in your bibles to Mark 1:1....

For the next few months, years...

We will be looking at the gospel of Mark verse by verse...

We will start in chapter 1 and we will go to chapter 16.

And each week, we will get to spend time with our Lord on the pages of Scriptures.

We will see Jesus' incredible compassion...

We will experience his judgment...

We will learn from his teaching...

We will be amazed by his love...

And my only purpose is to make those in Christ fall more in love with their Savior...

And if you aren't in Christ, I want to introduce you to the most amazing person to ever put his feet on this earth.

Nothing but truth comes out of his mouth...

And no evil ever proceeds from his hands.

He is 100% God and 100% man.

In him, I find my hope.

In him, I find my life.

In him, I find my purpose.

In him, I find my salvation.

He is the way, the truth, and the life.

And there is salvation in no other name.

And the joy for us is that we get to see his glory every week in the book of Mark.

So let's dig in...

Mark 1, verses 1 to 8...

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

*“Behold, I send My messenger ^[a]ahead of You,
Who will prepare Your way;*

*3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
‘Make ready the way of the Lord,
Make His paths straight.’”*

4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness ^[b]preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. 6 John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and ^[c]his diet was locusts and wild honey. 7 And he was ^[d]preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8 I baptized you ^[e]with water; but He will baptize you ^[f]with the Holy Spirit.”

Mark begins his book in an unusual way compared to the other 3 gospel writers.

Matthew begins his gospel with Jesus’ family tree by all the way back to Abraham., the beginning of the Jewish people

John takes Jesus a step further and goes to the beginning of the world...

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

But Mark and Luke begin both their gospels with the story of John the Baptist.

And this makes sense because Mark was writing this gospel to Gentiles.

He didn't need to prove that Jesus was Jewish.

He didn't need to concentrate on how Jesus' birth was the fulfillment of prophecy.

Mark was writing to a Roman audience who would not have had much knowledge of the OT.

So he bypasses all the details and goes straight to John the Baptist...

And I divided these first 8 verses into a simple outline...

First, we will see John's Messiah in verse 1...

Followed by John's mission in verses 2 and 3...

Then John's ministry in verses 4 to 6...

And end with John's meekness in verses 7-8...

So let's begin with John's Messiah in verse 1...

I. John's Messiah

I The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

There's a saying that goes like this...

Keep the main thing the main thing...

Now, yall will quickly learn that I am not very good with tools..

The people who have been helping remodel the parsonage are already aware of this....

So when my dad needed my help...he was very specific.

Take this wrench and tighten that nut.

He didn't talk about how the wrench was invented.

Or what size the wrench was..

He kept the main thing the main thing....

And that is exactly what Mark is doing here.

The book that he is writing has one main subject....

It is the story of Jesus Christ.

Most likely, this was Mark's title of his book.

Mark wanted to be clear.

So he sets the main thing as the main thing with his very first sentence.

Jesus will be the focus from verse 1 to the very end.

And the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ begins with the story of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was the one whom God chose to end his silence toward the nation Israel.

400 years of silence ended when John came on the scene to announce the coming of Jesus.

Also, take notice of the word ‘gospel’ in verse 1..

This is a word that we use often in the church, yet we forget how special the word is.

Gospel just means good news.

And the fact that Jesus was coming was good news to Israel, who had heard nothing from God for 4 centuries.

In fact, it was great news.

Israel was waiting on God’s promise to bring forth a King, who would deliver them.

And now that King was coming.

400 years of bad news was about to be turned into good news.

And let me tell you something, you may be 70 years old in here today..

And your life may have been 70 years of bad news...

But the good news of Jesus is here today.

You may have 30 years of bad news...

Or 16 years...

And when I speak of bad news, let me be clear...

Bad health, bad job, bad relationships, and bad circumstances are all bad news....

I understand that.

But the good news of Jesus Christ is not a promise that those things will go away.

In fact, your health may get worse if you come to Christ.

The circumstances in your family may go downhill even more.

Your job may be harder...

Jesus is not the answer to we often call bad news...

Jesus is the answer to the worst news of all...

And it is this....

You stand before a sinless God as a sinful person.

Your sin is piled a mile high before a holy God.

And the wages for that sin is death.

You are a dead man walking.

And when you finally understand and say yes that is me.....

The good news...

No, the best news is Jesus.

The one who died for sin.

The one who paid the debt that is too great for any man.

That is good news in the best way.

And that is what Mark is trying to say here.

Good news is here.

And this is the beginning of that story of good news, which is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And it begins with the story of John the Baptist, which will look at in verses 2 to 8.

So now, let's look at John's mission in verses 2-3.

II. John's Mission

Verse 2...

² *As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:*
"Behold, I send My messenger ^[a] ahead of You,
Who will prepare Your way;
³ *The voice of one crying in the wilderness,*
'Make ready the way of the Lord,
Make His paths straight.'"

I glad yall are sitting down because I have some bad news for you.

John the Baptist was not the original Baptist.

He did not invent the covered dish fellowship.

He was not the first one to sit on the back row of the church.

He wasn't the first one to preach until 12:05.

In fact, the best translation of his title is John the Batpizer....

Because we will see in a minute that that is what he is known for.

But verses 2 and 3 are simply a description of his mission in life.

And that mission was found in the OT.

Isaiah, Malachi and Moses had all written about a messenger who would come before the Messiah...

To announce His arrival.

And it is important to note here that Mark turns to the OT.

Like I said before, Mark does not concentrate too much on how Jesus fulfills OT prophecy...

Because he is writing to Gentiles with little or no knowledge of the OT.

But he does reference OT prophecy concerning the messenger...

And here's what we need to learn from that...

The NT is simply a continuation of God's plan from the beginning.

People often use phrases like that the God of the OT or this is the God of the NT...

The truth is that God is the same God from eternity past to eternity future.

And his plan from the very beginning was Christ.

Jesus is not plan B.

Christ's life, death and resurrection has always been God's plan.

And God has always planned to send someone ahead of Christ.

And the evidence of that are the prophecies of the OT seen in verse 2.

This messenger, according to verse 2, would prepare the way.

One of the most time honored traditions of American government is the State of the Union address.

Every year, all the branches of government meet at the Capitol and the President delivers a speech.

And regardless of what you think about the politics, it is full of great traditions.

And by far, my favorite part happens at the very beginning.

After all have entered and taken their seats...

The sergeant of arms opens the door and yells,...

Mister speaker, the President of the United States.

It is a grand announcement followed by a grand entrance.

Well, John the Baptist is that sergeant of arms...

But the announcement that he makes is not for a politician...

But for the Prince of Peace.

And because he was given that honor, Jesus said he was greater than all who came before him.

And his message was simple...

Make straight the way of the Lord.

In the 400 years of silence and even before that time, Jews had made a mess of their religious system.

God had called Israel to be a light to the nations by keeping His law.

Yet that original purpose had slowly become a burden of laws placed on the people...

By corrupt religious leaders.

Instead of their obedience being an example to the nations.

It had become a load too heavy to bear.

And the way of salvation.

An in the 400 years of silence, it had grown more and more corrupt.

At this time in their history there was a great need for Israel to turn away from their self-righteousness...

And return to the Lord God.

Therefore, John was calling people back to God.

By preparing their hearts for the promised Messiah.

That was his mission.

And he fulfilled it in a unique way.

Now that we have seen his Messiah and Mission...

Let's look at John's Ministry.

III. John's Ministry

Verses 4 and 5...

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness ^[b]preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.⁵ And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

When John came on the scene after 400 years of silence, he appeared in a very special place...

The wilderness.

Now, this seems to be a strange area to announce the greatest news in the history of the world.

If on Monday, a scientist finds a cure for cancer, I doubt that scientist will run into the woods and...

Announce it to trees.

No, he will be on every TV in the world with such a great discovery.

But John's ministry is in the wilderness.

Specifically, it occurs in the desert region around the Jordan River north of Jerusalem.

It is a barren land full of nothing or nobody.

Yet, John's appearance here is important in two ways.

First, the wilderness was symbolic of getting right with God.

Moses spent time in the wilderness before his ministry.

Elijah was fed by the ravens when God sent him into the wilderness in his ministry.

But more significantly, Israel had spent 40 years in the wilderness in preparation for the Promised Land.

The wilderness symbolized a turning back to the Lord that Israel desperately needed at this time.

But second, the wilderness was far away from the corrupt religious center in Jerusalem.

Though the religious leaders thought themselves right with God, Jesus said their hearts were far from God.

In fact, when Jesus called from his disciples, they all came from Galilee,...

An area of Israel that is located about as far away from Jerusalem as you can get.

The only one from Judea was who?

Judas, who we know betrayed the Lord Jesus.

John the Baptist is in the wilderness and he is preaching, according to the end of v. 4.

And he is preaching repentance, which will be a word found all throughout the rest of the NT.

Repentance is a change of mind...

A change of heart...

And a change of life.

And it is not only the message of John the Baptist, it will be message of all NT preachers.

Peter will preach it in Jerusalem in Acts 2.

Paul will preach it in the letters to the churches.

And every biblical preacher NT preacher until this day will preach it as well.

And why is it biblical? Because it follows the example of Jesus.

Look just a few verses down at Mark 1:14.

¹⁴ Now after John had been ^[h]taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, ^[i]preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God ^[i]is at hand; repent and ^[k]believe in the gospel.”

This should be the message heard throughout churches today...

Because it is the message of our Lord.

And John even preached it before Christ in the wilderness.

And the response to that message was amazing.

Look at the response to John’s message in v.5.

⁵ And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

Now, Mark is using a figure of speech here.

We know not everyone came to repentance in the wilderness.

Because Jesus still has plenty of enemies when he begins his ministry.

But the point is that people were responding to John’s message of repentance.

They repented, were being forgiven and then coming to be baptized.

And that is how John became known as the Baptizer.

Baptism was almost unheard of before John.

The only people being baptized prior to this point in history were Gentiles who desired to become Jews.

In this case, they would undergo a ceremonial cleansing where they would wash their bodies..

But most likely, they weren't immersed or dipped, which is what this word means.

John was dunking them and everyone came to know him as the Baptizer.

And John's ministry was successful, yet you would not know if you talked to him.

Because finally, we need to see John's meekness.

IV. John's Meekness

Verse 6....

⁶ John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and ^[c]his diet was locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he was ^[d]preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. ⁸ I baptized you ^[e]with water; but He will baptize you ^[f]with the Holy Spirit."

When the name John the Baptist is mentioned, most everyone thinks of v. 6.

He was certainly an unusual character, but it was not for show.

The clothing was simply that God identified with many prophets in the OT.

In 1 Kings 1:8, you'll never guess how Elijah was described..

⁸ They ^[d]answered him, "He was a hairy man with a leather girdle ^[e]bound about his loins." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

And the language there does not mean that Elijah was hairy, but most likely that he wore clothes of animal skins.

And you also see the customary belts that prophets wore.

The diet was even more unusual.

The honey sounds good, but locusts??

Well, according to Jewish Law, a person could eat locusts.

Lev. 11, Jews were not allowed to eat any insect except the locust.

And that is exactly what John did.

And I'm sure they are delicious fried with a little salt.

But the unusual clothing and diet suggested a contrast to the well-clothed and fed religious leaders of the day.

John was the greatest of men but it was not apparent from the outside.

But not only was John unusual, He was unworthy

Look at verse 7, John says that he was not even worthy to untie the sandals of the One coming after Him.

To untie a person's sandals in one of the dirtiest regions of the world...

Was the worst job that one could hold.

Yet John says that he is not even worthy of untying Jesus' sandals.

John the Baptist is the one who said that Jesus must increase and he must decrease.

He was the greatest but he saw himself as the lowest.

And let me be clear on this morning of my very first sermon here at Pine Grove.

The pulpit and this ministry that the Lord has given me here is not about me.

When I step up here to preach each time, it never about seeing Bud but about seeing Christ.

If this church is to be known for anything, let it not be known for its loves of man but for its love of God.

I am honored to be here, but I am the least deserving.

God can speak through rocks if necessary.

I truly believe that.

But let this pulpit be a place of exalting Christ.

We live in a day when pastors who stay at places for long times...

Seem to get more and more confident in their ability.

They increase and Jesus decreases.

May you all hold me to the biblical standard..

If the Lord allows many years here, may I get smaller and smaller and may Jesus get bigger and bigger.

John the Baptist knew he was unworthy.

May the same be said for us.

And finally, John was not only unusual and unworthy...

He was also unable.

Verse 8...

⁸ I baptized you ^[e]with water; but He will baptize you ^[f]with the Holy Spirit. ”

A man has to know his limitations, and John the Baptist understood this very well.

Yes, John the Baptist baptized many people, but he knew that what he did...

Was very different than the baptism of Jesus.

John's baptism, like baptisms today, was an external display of the repentance....

That had already occurred in the heart.

There is nothing magical about the waters then or even today.

Baptism does not save anyone...

It is simply an public expression of the salvation that has already occurred in the life of the one being baptized.

John knew this.

He could submerge you.

But only God could save you.

And that is the baptism that Jesus would bring.

The New Covenant in Jesus blood is the promise of a new heart through repentance and faith in Christ.

The baptism of the Spirit is a supernatural act of God where He changes our hearts of stone...

Into hearts of flesh that are made to walk in newness of life and obedience to Christ.

John could raise a person up out of the waters of the Jordan

But only Jesus can raise a person up from the bondage of sin.

And let me say here that every pastor should also know their limitations.

My heart's desire is to see all men come to repentance.

Because that is also the Lord's desire.

And every week, we will study the Scriptures and I will beg you to trust Christ.

I will call you to repentance and faith in Jesus.

But I know my limitations.

Because there is no salvation in Bud Moss.

Is it possible that people were baptized by John but never repented?

I'm sure that happened, and they essentially just got wet in the Jordan.

Is it possible for you to walk an aisle and shake the pastor's hand and never repent?

You bet...and it happens every Sunday in churches all over the world.

Am I available if you have questions about your salvation?

Absolutely...that is what I enjoy more than anything else.

I will stay all afternoon and help you understand the gospel.

But I want to be clear...

Salvation is from faith alone in Christ alone....

And only you can call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

Every week after the sermon, we will sing.

And this is the time to let the truth of God's Word sink deep into your heart.

You don't even have to sing.

But it's not a time to let the distractions of the world creep in.

What are we doing for lunch?

What do I have to do after lunch today?

Where did I put my phone?

And in that time if questions arise about salvation or anything else that was preached.

Use that time for confession or repentance or even to call upon the Lord and be saved.

And always, if I can help you think through these issues, I will be available to talk to right to you right after service.

There is power in God's Word.

It sanctifies us.

It counsels us.

It makes us more like Christ.

And most importantly, it leads us to salvation found in Jesus name.

John the Baptist was limited in what he could do.

He could get you wet, but only Jesus could make you whole.

Conclusion

The 8 verses that begin Mark are so full of truth, but the amazing part...

Is that we haven't even met Jesus yet.

That comes next week, and then we will get to spend time with Him for the rest of the book.

And He will be the most amazing person in the history of the world.

We will see him asleep in the boat because he is 100% human...

But then we will watch him stand up and calm the sea in the next verse because he is 100% God.

We will see him...

Heal the sick.

Raise the dead.

Love the poor.

And proclaim the truth.

The ultimate God-man will be our focus for the remaining chapters in Mark.

And it will be the most awesome display of power and love that the world has ever seen.

Through that awesome display, my prayer is that you grow to love Him more....

Obey Him fully...

And Shout His Name to the world.

Amen.

Let's pray.