

From the Water to the Wilderness

Mark 1:9-13

(Preached Pine Grove BC 7/27/14 AM Service)

Introduction

While I was in seminary, our apartment was located only 5 miles or so from Six Flags Magic Mountain.

Fortunately, I was able to take our girls on two different occasions.

The first visit was enjoyable because our girls were not able to ride all the rides.

Unfortunately, the Lord gave our girls a great growth spurt the next year...

And both of them were now tall enough to ride most of the taller roller coasters.

Well, one the fastest coasters is called Goliath, and Ally talked me into jumping on with her.

This roller coaster is tall.

After we climbed the first hill which seemed like it took an hour, we flew down to the bottom.

Only to fly up another hill and then fall to the bottom.

And for the first time in my life, I actually felt like I was 40.

When I was a teenager, no hill was too high.

Now, it seemed like every hill was too high.

And the thrill of a roller coaster is taking you from the top of the hill to the bottom in only a few seconds.

For a 40 year old, the best part of the ride is the slow and level track that leads to the finish.

However, the Christian life seems like nothing but a series of hills and valleys.

It has often been said that you are either in a trial, coming out of a trial or preparing to enter a new trial.

And I think most Christians would agree with that at times in their lives.

Mountaintop happiness is often followed by valley sadness.

Great moments of triumph in our lives are often followed by great moments of testing.

And this morning we will see this truth even in the life of Jesus.

He will rise from the waters of baptism and then walk into the wilderness of temptation.

In one verse, Jesus hears the voice of His Father, and in the next verse he hears the voice of Satan.

In one verse, he gets the highest approval, in the next, he gets a horrible attack.

Yet, both the baptism and the temptation are such great examples for us today.

We are going to see the importance of being obedience and the importance of overcoming temptation.

And we are going to see that times of great obedience often lead to times of great trials.

Now, if you remember from last week, we will spend the next few months in the gospel of Mark.

Getting a front row seat in the life of Christ.

And last week, we failed to even meet him.

Because Mark uses the first 8 verses of his gospel to talk about John the Baptist.

And we saw that John was the messenger ahead of Christ...

Who announced his arrival and was baptizing people in the wilderness...

People who recognized their need of repentance since the Messiah was coming.

And we saw that John's strange way of life and the place that he lived....

Was just his way of saying that the Jewish religion was corrupt.

And that he was not associating with the religious leaders of his day or the religious center in Jerusalem.

John dressed like a prophet of old and he called people of out their religion into repentance.

And though Mark wrote in v. 1 that this was the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ...

We had to wait 8 verses before we finally get to see him..

But today, Jesus comes on the scene and He will be with us until chapter 16...

So, now that we have seen the messenger, let's meet the Messiah.

Mark 1, beginning in verse 9...

⁹ *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.* ¹⁰ *Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens ^[9]opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;* ¹¹ *and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."*

¹² *Immediately the Spirit *impelled Him to go out into the wilderness.* ¹³ *And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.*

This morning we are going to examine two very important events in the life of Jesus..

His baptism and his temptation.

And we are going to see the perfection of our Savior in both events.

He went from the triumph in the waters to the temptation in the wilderness..

And he did both to secure our salvation.

Yet we can learn a lot from these verses.

First, I want us to see his humility in obedience,...

Followed by his ability to overcome.

So let's look at these 5 verses by first noticing that....

I. Jesus Obeyed the Father

Verse 9....

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Being from a small town, I can identify with Jesus in some ways.

Usually when I say I'm from Whitmire, I get a blank stare from most people.

And there is actually a verse in the Bible that is quite funny for those of us from small towns.

Flip with me to John 1:43.

*⁴³ The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He *found Philip. And Jesus *said to him, "Follow Me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip *found Nathanael and *said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip *said to him, "Come and see."*

I love that.

Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

The old joke is that the best thing that comes out of Whitmire is a Greyhound bus.

However, what most people don't know is that Whitmire was the hometown of Donnie Shell.

Now, only you hardcore football fans will know that name, but he won 4 Super Bowls with the Pittsburgh Steelers in the 1970s.

There is only a handful of players who have won that many Super Bowls, and the fact is...

That one of them is from Whitmire.

So when Mark writes that Jesus came from Nazareth, it is a reminder that Jesus came from humble origins.

Though he was the King of the Jews, he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth.

He did grow up in the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus was from Nazareth, which was so obscure that it was never even mentioned in the OT.

For 30 years, Jesus had lived in perfect obedience to God's Law in a small town in Israel.

And now he leaves that small town and comes to an even more remote location in the wilderness.

If you remember, John was baptizing in the Jordan river in the middle of nowhere.

And before you think that this was some beautiful setting with crystal clear water...

Which is what some paintings of this event look like.

Think again.

The Jordan River runs between the sea of Galilee in the north and the Dead Sea in the South.

It is never more than 10 feet deep and 100 yards wide, unless it floods...

And you can walk across it in many places without getting more than your feet wet.

Today, the Jordan is so polluted that baptisms are not allowed in certain sections of the river.

Yet, that is where Jesus was baptized.

And it was another reminder of his incredible humility.

He could have been crowned king in the biggest castle, yet he chose the dirtiest creek.

Now the obvious question is why was Jesus baptized?

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, yet Jesus had no need of repentance.

He had no sin in his life, so why was there a need to be baptized?

Here's the short answer to a complicated question.

First, Jesus was baptized to endorse John's ministry.

Paul Harvey was a well known radio host.

And advertisers stood in line for him to promote their products.

Because Harvey always said that he wouldn't endorse a product that he didn't personally use.

People trusted Harvey and they trusted his judgment, so they would buy products that he used.

It is one thing to say that Coke is the best soft drink, but if I come to your house and find Pepsi in your fridge...

I probably won't trust you when you say that I should buy Coke.

John the Baptist had been sent to call people to repentance ahead of the Messiah.

when Jesus went to him, it was real proof that John had been sent by God.

Second, Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness.

Though Mark doesn't mention it, Matthew says that Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness.

His baptism was another way that Jesus is our perfect substitute.

You need a perfect birth.

Yet the truth is that you are born in sin because you inherited that from Adam.

You need a perfect life.

Yet the truth is that you break God's Law constantly.

You need a perfect death.

Yet the truth is that even your death does not satisfy God's penalty for sin.

Only the death of a spotless Lamb satisfies the penalty for sin.

And we are not spotless Lambs.

It can also be said that you even need a perfect baptism.

Even our baptisms are imperfect because even after baptism, we still need to repent.

But the truth of the gospel...

The good news of salvation is that you can trade your imperfect birth, life, death and even baptism for....

The perfect birth, life, death and baptism of Jesus.

Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:21,

²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

That is the great exchange.

You can exchange your sin-filled birth, life, death and even baptism for....

The sinless birth, life, death and baptism of Jesus.

Do you need to make that exchange today?

Why hold on the filth of your sin when you can have the cleanness of Christ?

Jesus was baptized perfectly because his life was perfect in every way.

And we need that sinless perfection before a holy God.

Finally, Jesus was baptized to identify with sinners.

When I was in elementary school, we always had parents day.

It was a time for your parents to come and spend a day in school with their kids.

Well, in 2nd grade, my dad took a day off from work and went to school with me.

It was so much fun.

To have you dad sitting on those small seats in the classroom and going to lunch...

Made such an impression that I remember it to this day.

For one day, he experienced what I experienced.

And that is certainly a purpose in Jesus' baptism.

He wanted to stand with sinners.

He died on cross though He had no sins to die for.

And he went into the Jordan though he needed no repentance.

Look, my dad didn't need to go to 2nd grade, he was way smarter than that.

He did it to say, "I want you to know that I care about you enough to experience the same things that you experience."

It is humbling to do things that aren't required of us, but that is the nature of Christ.

Nazareth was the place of humble beginnings.

And this baptism was the beginning of a humble ministry..

That would end with a humble death by crucifixion.

Yet this humility demonstrated in his baptism was pleasing to God.

Look at verses 10 and 11...

¹⁰ Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens ^[g]opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; ¹¹ and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

What is the promise to those who humble themselves?

They will be exalted.

And Mark says that immediately after Jesus act of humble obedience came a heavenly ovation.

Notice a couple of things here.

First, see that the heavens were literally "ripped" open.

They only other time that Mark uses this word is when Jesus died on the cross...

And Mark said that the curtain in the temple was ripped in two pieces.

If you remember that God had been silent for 400 years before sending John the Baptist to break the silence.

But now, God Himself speaks from heaven when the heavens are ripped apart.

At the end of Jesus ministry, the curtain will rip supernaturally, but....

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry the heavens are also ripped open by God.

Jesus is then approved for ministry by both the Spirit and the Father.

The Spirit descends and the Father speaks as the Son comes up out of the water.

Now, I don't know about down here, but I am always about asleep when that knock of the door occurs.

I wake up to find two Jehovah Witnesses or two Mormons standing at my door.

Now, most Christians say, "Oh, I don't open the door. They know more about the Bible than me."

What a shame on the name of Christ.

That a false prophet of Mormonism or the Kingdom Hall would know more than you.

Now, we can talk more about the beliefs of these two false religions at another time.

But here's really all you need to know to carry on a conversation with these people.

Always tell them that Jesus is God.

Because Christianity is the only one that says Jesus is God.

Jehovah's Witnesses deny that. They say Jesus is a god.

Mormons deny that too. They say that Jesus is a created being.

Then tell them that you believe in the trinity - one God in three persons.

And they will say that the word "trinity" is not in the Bible.

And then you will turn to this passage and say,

Here's the Son being baptized.

Here's the Spirit descending.

Here's the Father speaking.

And then take them to Matthew 28:19, where Jesus commands believers to make disciples and baptize...

Them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The word trinity may not be in the Scriptures, but the picture of the Trinity certainly is.

And verses 10 and 11 are a great picture of the three persons of the Godhead as Jesus begins ministry.

So with the highest compliment ringing in his ears, the biggest enemy comes knocking at his door.

Jesus obeyed his Father, but now Jesus must overcome his foe.

II. Jesus Overcame the Foe

Verses 12 & 13...

*¹² Immediately the Spirit *impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. ¹³ And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.*

Jesus is ready for ministry but he first faces a big hurdle.

And this is the roller coaster ride that we are all on as believers.

It's Friday and you just finished a whole week of getting up in the morning and spending time reading the Bible and praying...

You jump in the car...

Good worship song playing on the radio...

You are worshipping and singing...

And someone pulls out in front of you.

Or you just had a great Sunday at church.

Good fellowship and teaching and on Monday the doctor calls with bad news.

Or you had a great day at work.

You were able to share the gospel with that co-worker who actually listened this time.

Then you walk in the house and your spouse does something to test your patience.

Off the mountain into the valley.

We have a Savior who understands.

He was there.

Probably still wet from the waters of the Jordan, he heads into temptation.

Mark doesn't tell us much about the temptation.

Matthew and Luke go into more detail.

From them, we learn that Satan gave him three tests.

And we also learn from them that Jesus fought not with earthly weapons but with the....

Sword of the spirit, which the Bible calls the word of God.

But Mark makes no mention of this.

However, I think we can learn some valuable lessons even from this brief mention in Mark

First, notice where it happens.

In the wilderness.

Now, we learned last week that the wilderness is a place to go and get right with God.

Moses spent time in the wilderness before his ministry...

And the nation Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years preparing to enter the Promised Land.

But even the wilderness, there is temptation.

I know you have noticed in your own life when you have repented of sin, that temptation seems to be around every corner.

Temptation is inescapable.

You know we battle this in our own life with children.

What do we let into our home and what do we keep out?

It is a delicate balance, but the truth is that while I can try to protect my children from evil..

I can't protect them from their own flesh.

Even on a deserted island, sin abounds because we can't escape our fallen nature.

And even in the wilderness, temptation is there.

But also notice the length of the temptation.

The temptations kept coming at Jesus.

And they will keep coming at us.

We are most vulnerable after we have resisted the first temptation.

But last notice that that Jesus was not alone in his temptation.

There is power to overcome, but listen to me, it does not come in your own strength.

The Lord sent his own angels to minister to Jesus.

And though you may not get angels, know that the Lord is with you.

I've heard people say, "Just imagine that Jesus is standing beside you when you are tempted to sin."

Guess what? You don't have to imagine...

HE IS Standing beside you at all times.

And the weapon he used was not his imagination but it was the word of God.

When facing temptation, it's not about closing our eyes, its about filling our heart with Scripture.

Though Mark did not mention it for whatever reason, we know that Jesus used Scripture to battle temptation.

Psalm 119:11...“I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”

There's no magic formula or special trick to overcoming temptation, simply memorize some Scripture...

Or keep a Bible handy that is well marked with verses for your particular temptation.

Jesus overcame temptation because he fought with the right weapon.

We would be wise to do the same.

However, the great truth of Jesus' temptation is that he succeeded where Adam fell.

Adam enjoyed the apple, but Jesus endured the attack.

So what do we learn from these two events?

Conclusion

1. Jesus is perfectly righteous and man is perfectly unrighteous.

Jesus obeyed perfectly.

He did the things that he should do,
like being baptized.

Jesus overcame perfectly.

He didn't do the things he shouldn't.

We obey imperfectly.

We overcome imperfectly.

Unfortunately, the Lord requires perfection.

So, we need Christ's perfection in every area
of life.

2. We would do good to imitate the humility of Our Savior.

- Came from an obscure town.
 - o Never had a place to lay his head.
 - o Never sought his own pleasure.

*Maybe you need the humility that comes from
acknowledging your sin.*

- Maybe you need the humility that admits that you aren't good enough to please God on your own.
- Maybe you need the humility that leads to repentance.
- Maybe you need the humility to beg for mercy.

Or, maybe you need the humility that comes from being baptized.

- You may go down with a hairdo, but you won't come up with one.
- Baptism is, or should be, a humbling display.
- There is much to say about the act of baptism....
- But one thing I need to mention here is that baptism is public identification with Jesus Christ.
- You are announcing to the world that you are a believer.
- But you are also saying that the church around you.

- And giving them permission to say to you, if necessary..
- Hey, that's not how a believer acts.
- Because when you make a public display, you are saying that the Lord has given me a new heart with new desires.
- And a new life.
- Now, obviously that new life has come before the waters of baptism..
- But now, you are "putting on the Christian jersey," so to speak..
- Look, if I was at Wal-Mart and saw Randy in a Clemson shirt...
- I'd say, "What in the world is wrong with you Randy? I thought you were a Carolina fan."
- In the same way, for those who have publicly identified themselves with the church in baptism...
- You have told other believers to hold your life to the standard of Scripture...

- You said you were on the team...So follow the playbook.

Maybe you need the humility that should mark the life of those who call themselves Christians.

- So many times I have seen the Christians Bill of Rights.
- I have the right to be treated fairly.
- I have the right to be heard.
- I have a right to be right.
- But guess what church?
- A believer should not only give up his rights if he is saved, he is called to give up his life.
- Luke 9:24, Jesus said, "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."
- Church, the Christian life should not be a race to pride and selfishness,...
- But a race to humility.
- Jesus had every right to refuse to be baptized...
- He had no need to repent of any sin.

- But he humbled himself to be our example in the waters of baptism...
- As well as our walk in the world.
- Be Humble because Our Lord and Savior was humble
- In his birth
- In his baptism
- And in his death.
- There is no place for pride in the life of a believer.

3. Lastly, fight temptation like Jesus.

Maybe you need to start memorizing Scripture as you battle temptation.

If you struggle with worry and anxiety, memorize Phil 4:6-7.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”

If you struggle with sexual temptation, write out 1 Corinthians 6:18 and keep it in your pocket...

¹⁸ Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

If you struggle with pursuing the things of the world, write down Matthew 16:26 and tape it to your mirror or refrigerator door..

⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

And there's a lot of other verses that may apply to a particular temptation in your life.

But you need to not trust yourself in the midst of temptation but to trust in the truth of the Bible.

The wonder and beauty of studying Jesus life in the gospels is that we see his example.

Why be baptized?

Your Lord was.

How do you overcome temptation?

Resist the devil with Scripture.

How often do we complicate both of these issues when the answer is simply...

Be obedient because Jesus was obedient.

That is our challenge today.

May the Lord give us much grace to accomplish these tasks.

Let us pray.