

# Mark 1:1-8

## MARK 1:1-8

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, <sup>2</sup> as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way” —

<sup>3</sup> “a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.’”

<sup>4</sup> And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. <sup>6</sup> John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup> I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

I love a classic ‘whodunit?’ murder mystery: watching the movie mystery, walking alongside the detective, meeting the suspects, gathering clues, trying to work out whodunit. But I also love another approach, where the storyteller shows me whodunit from the start: watching from a privileged position, I then follow the characters in the story working out what I already know.

As Mark tells his story of Jesus, he takes the second approach. He tells you in the very opening scene what everyone else is going to spend the whole story trying to figure out. “Jesus,” he tells you in verse 1, is “the Son of God”, but who will be the first to work out what we already know? It’s more of a ‘who-IS-it?’ mystery than a whodunit. Who is Jesus? We’ll watch a diverse cast of characters come on and off the stage, we’ll listen to them all asking the same “who IS this man?” question, and we’ll follow the story until someone hits the right answer.

As Mark tells his ‘who-is-it?’ story, however, there is definitely a ‘whodunit?’ question in the mix. Mark *is* telling a murder story after all. As we watch John the Baptist building the stage for Jesus’ appearance, he drops a couple of big clues about the plot we should listen to. “Forgiveness of sins” (verse 4). Cleansing with the “Holy Spirit” (verse 8). *Who* needs forgiving? *Who* needs the Holy Spirit? *Who* murders Jesus?

If you were to fast forward through Mark’s story to the moment of Jesus’ death, you’d meet the man who just oversaw his murder realising this: “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39). And if we follow the story well, we’ll be standing there with him, blood on our hands, in total awe. Who is Jesus? The Son of God! Who murdered him: I did! Yet in all this, it is really Jesus himself who *lays down* his life. To forgive the murderers. To wash clean the murderers.

*Head: What have you learnt about Jesus from Mark 1:1-8? What have you learnt about yourself?*

*Heart: How does it make you feel that the stage we see built in these verses is being built for a cross?*

*Hands: As you seek to turn from the temptation to sin through the coming day, how might picturing that Centurion and echoing his confession help you?*

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you that Jesus is the Son of God. I join with that Centurion now in confessing that truth. Thank you that I have been forgiven me for my part in his murder, for all my sin that nailed him to that cross. Thank you that Jesus laid down his life to make this possible. Please help today me to make real my confession that Jesus is the Son of God, by turning from sin and living under his rule. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

## Mark 1:9-13

### MARK 1:9-15

<sup>9</sup> At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

<sup>12</sup> At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, <sup>13</sup> and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

One of the longest ever running sit-coms was the American 60s classic 'My Three Sons', chronicling the life of a widower as he raises his three sons. If you listen closely to the verses above, you'll hear echoes of another, even longer running 'My Three Sons' story. This 'My Three Sons' story is told in the Old Testament. It's the backdrop to Mark's story of Jesus.

Mark has already introduced *Jesus* as a son. In Mark 1 verse 1 we met Jesus as the 'Son of God'. But as we now watch Jesus the Son of God baptised and tempted, the echoes of these other sons are loud and clear. When God speaks from heaven to Jesus and says "you are my Son", these are words that were first spoken to King David (see Psalm 2:7). Yet those same Psalms longed for a 'Son of David' who unlike David would live forever. Could Jesus be that Son?

David was a disobedient son. He fell to temptation. So as Jesus gets a forty day dose of temptation in verses 12-13, we watch closely. And we recall not only David's disobedience but the disobedience of

two other sons. As Jesus is pictured among the *animals* we recall Adam, the first 'son' of God in the Bible, made in the very image of God. Yet Adam fell to temptation, just as David later did. As Jesus spends *forty days in the wilderness* we recall that Israel was also called 'my son' by God (see Exodus 4:23), yet also fell to temptation, as David later did. What about Jesus?

Forty days. That's intense. But it's not the *most* intense temptation faced by Jesus. As the cross later draws close, he pleads with his disciples: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Mark 14:38). Yet they all fall. Only Jesus stands. Even in the face of the intensity of the cross. Yes, here is THE pleasing, obedient, wonderful Son of God.

*Head: What have you learnt about Jesus from Mark 1:9-15? What have you learnt about yourself?*

*Heart: How does it make you feel that Jesus came to undo all the sinful history of the world?*

*Hands: Through Jesus' death for our sins we can call God "Father". We have been restored to what Adam lost, as sons and daughters of God (see Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6-7). As you pray now and through today just pause for a while on that word "Father" and rejoice in the privilege that Jesus has won for you: a relationship with a perfect loving Heavenly Father.*

*Prayer: Father... Heavenly Father... my perfect loving Heavenly Father... thank you that through the one obedient Son Jesus, you have brought many disobedient sons and daughters home to call you Father. That I can call you Father. That I am your loved child. That your Spirit lives within me. That through trust in Jesus you are pleased with me. Thank you...Father. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

## Mark 1:14-20

### MARK 1:14-20

<sup>14</sup> After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. <sup>15</sup> "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

<sup>16</sup> As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." <sup>18</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>19</sup> When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. <sup>20</sup> Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

“Repent!” is a scary word isn’t it? It’s not a word we hear much today. And when we do it’s not always *good*. Perhaps it’s the bible-thumping televangelist, calling us to repent, to stop sinning, to stop smiling (and maybe send in a cheque)? Perhaps it’s the placard wielding street preacher screaming “repent!” and reeling off all the things you’d better stop doing if you don’t want to meet a fiery end. Repent... turn from this, turn from that...

Well yes, repenting *does* mean turning. But as you listen to the word “repent” on Jesus lips, it seems that the first thing to get straight is who you’re turning *TO*. Not the ‘*from*’ bit as much as the ‘*to*’ bit. Sure, there’ll be consequences in terms of turning *from* plenty of stuff. But the *first* step, the *biggest* step and the key to *every other* step, is who you’re turning *to*. Who you’re *following*.

Jesus says “Repent!”, and then says to Simon and Andrew, “come, follow me”. What is repenting? It’s following Jesus. It’s turning from whatever you’re doing, however you’re living, and following Jesus. The turning *to* is the first step, the key step, the every step. To repent is to follow Jesus. To be part of God’s kingdom, to return to God’s rightful rule over your whole life, is to follow Jesus. Simon and Andrew turn and follow. Next thing James and John are following Jesus too. Caught up in the excitement of Jesus mission to “catch people”- more people who will repent, who will follow Jesus. Are you one of them?

When Jesus says “repent!” he says it’s *good* news. It’s not the bad news you have to swallow to get to the good news. It’s part of the good news. It’s the good news of God’s Kingdom breaking into your life. It’s the good news of getting caught up in following Jesus. From Jesus’ viewpoint, this ‘repenting’ is good news. It’s good. It’s exciting. It’s something to get caught up in.

*Head: What have you learnt about Jesus from Mark 1:14-20? What have you learnt about yourself?*

*Heart: How does it make you feel that repenting is good news to get caught up in?*

*Hands: How might you be strengthened to turn from sin today if you remember who it is that you’re turning to? How might it help to have that picture of being caught up in something better?*

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus. Help me to repent by turning to him, following him. Help me to see how good it is to be following Jesus. Help me to see how exciting it is to be caught up in his rule over this world and his mission in this world. Help me this day to walk every step in Jesus’ steps. And please use me to invite others to get caught up in the good news of the Kingdom of God.*