

JESUS

WATCH

LISTEN

FOLLOW

JESUS. WATCH. LISTEN. FOLLOW

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SAMPLE

JESUS.

WATCH.

LISTEN.

FOLLOW.

Watch Jesus. Listen to Jesus. Follow Jesus. This is the invitation offered across the book of Mark: To watch, listen to, and follow Jesus.

Watching is crucial to Mark's story of Jesus. You are invited to watch Jesus in action. As Jesus opens the eyes of the blind, you are asked to open your eyes to him. You are invited to open your mind to who he really is. You are invited to awake from spiritual slumber and be watchful.

Listening is crucial to Mark's story of Jesus. You are invited to listen to Jesus. As Jesus opens the ears of the deaf, you are asked to open your ears to him. You are invited to open your heart to him. You are invited to be the good soil that truly hears Jesus and is fruitful.

Following is crucial to Mark's story of Jesus. You are invited to follow Jesus. You are invited to follow Mark's story of the arrival of God's Kingdom. You are invited to follow Mark's story of the arrival of God's King. As you watch and listen to others responding to King Jesus, you too are invited to follow Jesus as your King.

Steve Cree
Senior Pastor

INTRODUCTION TO MARK

MARK THE GOSPEL

Mark is probably the earliest of the four gospels. It is also the shortest. Mark has written for us a fast moving action story of Jesus. One of his favourite words is “immediately”, appearing twelve times as he guides us through a quick journey of Jesus’ life and ministry. And what a journey it is: Mark’s gospel has often been called “a passion narrative with an introduction”. We have barely started reading and we’re already following Jesus on the way to Jerusalem, knowing that a cross awaits him there. As we watch, we see a cross looming. As we listen, we hear Jesus speaking about this cross and all it means. As we follow, we are invited to take up our own cross and follow Jesus:

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”. - Mark 8:34

Mark’s story of Jesus is all about the cross. It is all about how a crucified man called Jesus is in fact the Messiah, the King, the Son of God. This is a fact that will take others in his story some time to discover. But it is a fact Mark tells us, his readers, in his opening words:

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. - Mark 1:1

We then watch and listen and follow the story and the many people who come

across Jesus’ path. And it is only as Jesus is being crucified that we finally hear a voice which echoes what Mark told us 15 chapters earlier:

And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”. - Mark 15:39

Mark’s story of Jesus is also all about the resurrection. Again in his opening chapter, Mark raises the expectation of the coming Kingdom:

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”. - Mark 1:15.

After telling his disciples of his coming death and resurrection, Jesus then tells them this:

And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.” - Mark 9:1

As we watch, listen, and follow the story of Jesus we are watching for the arrival of God’s Kingdom in power. While we might speak of Jesus being crowned as King upon the cross, it is in his resurrection that the kingdom of God arrives with power. The risen, ascended Jesus now rules the world, just as he announced to the high priest immediately before his death:

Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the

Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” – Mark 14:61-62

MARK THE MAN

This gospel does not provide its author's name. However, very early Christian tradition identifies the author as John Mark. Verses such as 13:14 suggest that Mark had a relationship with his readers, which would explain why he didn't feel it necessary to identify himself. It is also likely that the strange episode of a young man fleeing naked upon Jesus' arrest (14:51-52) was a story known by his readers to be about Mark himself. So he did leave them with a signature of sorts that they could enjoy.

We learn from the book of Acts that John Mark was from a large house in Jerusalem. It is the house where the believers gathered to pray for the release of Peter (Acts 12:12). The presence of servants implies some wealth. The twin names John (Hebrew) and Mark (Greek) imply a good education, evident in the skill of his writing.

It is Mark's relationship to some of the apostles and other early Christian leaders that is most interesting for our purposes. Mark was cousin to Barnabas. He was also involved in missionary journeys with Paul. Barnabas and Paul had a dispute over Mark in Acts 15:37-41, however it is clear from later writings of Paul (Philemon 24, 2 Timothy 4:11) that reconciliation had occurred. Mark's most significant relationship was with Peter, who refers to him as "my son" (1 Peter 5:13).

MARK AND PETER

Documents from the 2nd century tell us two more significant facts about Mark's relationship with Peter. Firstly, Mark was Peter's interpreter. Secondly, this gospel represents Mark's attempt to pass on Peter's preaching. As we watch and listen and follow Jesus in Mark's gospel, we are doing so very much through the eyes, voice, and discipleship of Peter. This would explain why Mark's gospel has no birth narrative of Jesus but features Peter's calling early on. Mark's story of Jesus is Peter's story of Jesus.

Luke uses a significant word in describing Mark when he refers to him in Acts 13:5 as a 'helper'. A more literal translation would be 'catechist', or we might say 'apprentice'. In context, Luke is describing Mark as being a ministry apprentice alongside Paul and Barnabas. When Luke wrote his own gospel, he refers in his introduction both to "eyewitnesses" and "servants of the Word" (Luke 1:2) as key sources for his gospel. The word translated there as "servants" is the plural of the same word Luke used to describe Mark as a "helper" in 13:5. This use of "servants" in Luke is an indication that Luke has drawn upon Mark's text to write his own account of Jesus' life.

MARK AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Mark's world was the world of the Roman Empire. As a boy he would have experienced the rule of the mighty emperor Augustus, described by the poet Virgil as the first of a "new breed of men come down from heaven". Augustus was revered as the man who had brought peace to the Roman world, with all other powers at his feet. Augustus and his successors had enormous power and were revered. Statues and public buildings were constructed to honour them. Inscriptions announced their achievements. Coins were issued that called them 'son of God'.

It is against this backdrop that Mark tells his story of the true Son of God. He chooses to highlight a Roman centurion, of all people, as the first to acknowledge Jesus as the true Son of God, with his confession given at the foot of a Roman cross. Watch, listen, and follow Jesus the true Son of God! Here is the real man from heaven. Here is the one who doesn't need to print his image on a coin for he is the living, breathing image of God. Here is the one who truly brings peace through his death on the cross. Here is the one who is truly powerful, ushering in the Kingdom of God through his resurrection from the dead. Here is King Jesus.

MARK AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

While the Roman Empire provides some backdrop for Mark's writing, there is greater, more dominate platform on which Mark's story takes place - the Old Testament. This story is built firmly upon Old Testament expectations of a Messiah,

a promised King. Jesus this promised Messiah and King. Who fulfilled all of God's great Old Testament promises perfectly.

Mark contains 69 explicit Old Testament quotations and many more allusions. Interestingly, these quotes and allusions become more frequent as Jesus draws closer to Jerusalem. Over half of the quotations are from the prophets, with Isaiah and Daniel very prominent. There are twelve references to the Psalms with all but one having connections to King David.

Jesus is the fulfilment of God's great plan of salvation. He is the all-conquering king of the Psalms. And the afflicted king of the Psalms. He is the long-awaited son of David. He is Isaiah's Suffering Servant. Jesus is Daniel's Son of Man, coming through the clouds in power to be seated at the right hand of God. Jesus is Zechariah's Messiah, riding a donkey into Jerusalem, cleansing the land of its idolatry, and bringing forgiveness of sins.

Mark's story of Jesus is a fulfilment story. As we watch, listen, and follow Mark's story of Jesus, we are watching, listening and following the fulfilment of God's great plan of salvation:

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" – Mark 1:15.

MARK AND YOU

As you work through these "Jesus: Watch. Listen. Follow." studies, you're going to witness a lot of encounters. People meeting Jesus. People being met by

Jesus. Lots of different faces coming on and off stage in the drama of Mark's gospel. An array of characters.

As the drama unfolds, it's surprising who really watches Jesus, who really listens to Jesus, and who really follows Jesus. It's a Roman Centurion who confesses that a Jewish man called Jesus is the true son of God (15:39). It's a blind man called Bartimaeus who sees that Jesus is the long-promised son of David (10:48). The challenge for you will be to consider your own encounter with Jesus:

Will you *watch* Jesus in Mark's gospel?
Really see who he is?

Will you *listen* to Jesus in Mark's gospel?
Really take his words to heart?

Will you *follow* Jesus in Mark's gospel?
And then really follow him in your life?

Each of these studies will encourage us to dip into Mark's gospel and experience these encounters. Application questions at the end of each study will invite you to watch Jesus, to listen to Jesus and to follow Jesus – to follow the one gave his life for you:

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." – Mark 10:45

01 THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

God has been preparing for Jesus to come to earth and bring about his Kingdom since before the creation of the world. To come, and fix a broken world.

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” – Mark 1:15

1. What impacted you from Sunday? What did you find encouraging or challenging?
2. Read Mark 1:1-15. How does Mark begin telling us about Jesus (v.1)? What’s the first thing he wants us to know about Jesus? Why does he begin this way? How does this first verse influence the way we read the rest of Mark’s gospel?
3. How do verses 4-8 relate to verses 2-3? How does Malachi 3:1-5 and Isaiah 40:1-11 deepen our understanding of verses 2-3? What does it say about the person of John? The coming of God? What we might expect to happen next?
4. How does John the Baptist himself understand his own role? What does John tell us about Jesus?
5. What does the voice of God at the baptism of Jesus tell us about Jesus? This picture of God’s son, sent as his servant is a development from the picture of the ‘servant’ in Isaiah. Complete the table on the next page, considering how the role and description of the servant influences your understanding of the person and ministry of Jesus. (Perhaps divide the passages amongst your group and have them report back)

PASSAGE	ROLE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVANT	IMPLICATIONS FOR JESUS' LIFE & MINISTRY
Isaiah 42:1-4		
Isaiah 49:1-7		
Isaiah 50:4-11		
Isaiah 52:13-53:12		

6. What is the significance of verses 12-13? What does this passage lose if these verses were left out? What do we learn about Jesus in these verses?
7. What message does Jesus preach? What do you think this means? How has the kingdom of God come near in a literal sense?

WATCH. LISTEN. FOLLOW.

8. What are some different perceptions of who Jesus is? How would you respond if someone asked you, "Who is Jesus?" How does this passage influence your understanding of Jesus?
9. Discuss what it means to repent, believe the good news, and be part of the kingdom of God. How would you understand and explain repentance? What difference is seen in a life that is lived in light of the kingdom of God?
10. What does Jesus call you to do in this passage? What does it look like to obey what Jesus says in verse 15?

PRAYER

Praise God for sending Jesus, just as he promised, to fix the whole world and to offer us repentance and forgiveness. Praise God that his kingdom has arrived in Christ.

Confess that we have made a mess by building our own kingdoms, rather than God's.

Give thanks for the hope we have as citizens of God's kingdom all because of what Jesus has done for us.

Ask that God would give you a passion to proclaim his kingdom and to see others repent and believe.

Pray for friends who don't yet know Jesus. Pray that God would give them eyes to see who Jesus really is and what he came to do.

Pray for your cross-cultural connect worker. Pray that God would use them to build his kingdom in a messy world through the message of Jesus. May they see many repent and believe the good news!

Grace Alone - Called into a kingdom that cannot be shaken



JOHN THE BAPTIST @adesertprophet

HOMETOWN

The hills of southern Judea, near Qumran. My childhood home was at Ain Karim

I baptised Jesus in the River Jordan and God made it clear Jesus was the Messiah I had been prophesying about

FAMILY

Son of Zacharias and Elizabeth. Cousin of Jesus. I was born 6 months before Jesus

DID YOU KNOW?

I remind people of Elijah because we both lived in the desert, wearing desert clothes and eating desert food - locusts and honey generally.

OCCUPATION

Prophet of God. My job is to prepare the way for the arrival of the Messiah. I preach for people to repent and be baptised. I baptise them in the River Jordan.

WHERE AND WHEN I MET JESUS

We are cousins. Our mothers Mary and Elizabeth are kinswomen and were pregnant with us at the same time.

watch



listen



follow



watchlistenfollow.org

FAMILY GROWTH

01 THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

God has been preparing for Jesus to come to earth and bring about his Kingdom since before the creation of the world. To come, and fix a broken world.

BIBLE READING

Mark 1: 9-15 (for younger listeners v.14-15)

PRE-PRIMARY & PRIMARY

Let's play a game! Spend a few minutes playing 'Follow the leader'. Everyone has to follow where the leader goes and what they are doing. One family member sits out and when they call out "Repent" everyone has to turn around and the person at the back becomes the leader.

Do you know what it means to repent? 'Repent' means "stop going the way you are going and turn around". It means stop ignoring God. God wants us to change the way we live and follow Jesus as our King. The sad thing is we like to be king of our own lives. When you are having fun playing and you are asked to tidy up your room, what do you say? You might say: "NO, I want to do what I want to do! I want to be boss of myself and I don't want anyone to tell me what to do." It's God's desire that we join his kingdom and follow Jesus as king.

HIGH SCHOOL

Talk about the meaning of the word 'repent'. (Repent means to recognize you're moving in the wrong direction, turn around in the opposite direction, and move in the right direction following Jesus as king).

Search on YouTube for 'Marisa - I Have Decided To Follow Jesus' and listen to the song.

Does that song reflect your attitude to following Jesus?

Discuss the things that distract you from following Jesus. What would it mean to turn around from these things and have Jesus as your king?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, please help me turn around from going the wrong way in life. Help me be a true part of your kingdom and follow Jesus as my king.



ISRAEL
IN
THE
TIME
OF
JESUS



NOTES

SAMPLE

At Creek Road we love Jesus. We want to reach the city and reach the world with the good news about who Jesus is. We'd love to help you meet Jesus as we explore the Bible together at our Sunday Services.

We want every person to have a chance to connect with Jesus, to grow to be more like Jesus and to serve Jesus. So we try to make everything we do clear and easy to understand.

If you've got any questions, we'd love to answer them.
If there is anything you need, we'd love to help.

You don't need to be good, religious, or have it all together to join us on a Sunday. Jesus is for everyone - people of all stages, ages, and places. So is our church.

Everyone is welcome. Seriously.



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