

## [ RSVP ]

## :: mark 1 ::

We're starting a new series of studies this morning. I'm calling it *Hitting The Mark*. And what we're going to do is take the Gospel of Mark one chapter at a time, read it, then draw out a devotional theme or two as we see what God has revealed to us about Himself, what Jesus did and what He said, and then see how we are to respond to that revelation.

We've got a lot of ground to cover, so let's take a look at our text.

**Mark 1.1-45 - The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**

**As it is written in the Prophets:**

**"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,  
Who will prepare Your way before You."**

**"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:**

**'Prepare the way of the Lord;  
Make His paths straight.' "**

**John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.**

**Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."**

**It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**

**Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.**

**Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."**

**And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.**

Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."

And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

As is always pointed out, Mark's Gospel moves at an incredibly fast pace. He packs 3 and a half years of teaching and ministry into just a few pages. It's only fitting, then, that we're going to try to survey each chapter in just 15 or 20 minutes.

What we see in these 45 verses is twofold. First, we see God's activity. We see the effort of heaven as this book opens and we read about the Lord doing a lot of things. Teaching and traveling and being tempted. He's healing and praying and calling people and casting out demons. There's a ton of heavenly activity. God speaking down from above, Jesus speaking

out to crowds and to individuals. And right from the get-go we learn that God had this long held intention to do all of these things. The text points out that, 'hey, remember the messages you were given in the Prophets?' and then John is described as this forerunner who was going to help prepare people for the coming of the Messiah. Then Jesus says to His guys a few verses later, 'Come on, lets get over to Galilee and tell people that the Kingdom of God is at hand and that it's time to reconcile man and move forward with the plan of redemption.' It was all unfolding according to the Lord's will. But man was asked to play a part. Man is called to *repent* and *believe* and *follow* Jesus Christ.

Then, on top of that, there are all these acts and miracles. So, in just a few verses we see an incredible fervor of activity when it comes to what God was doing. And it wasn't just this sort of present, in the moment stuff. Jesus also went around and pulled some guys aside and said, 'I have a future for you. Here's what I want to do with your life.' And He purposed to go and teach people how they were to respond to all that God was doing in all their synagogues and as they went on the road.

And the second thing you pull out of this chapter has to do with those people Jesus interacted with. Their responses. There are a bunch of responses detailed for us in this text. Some good, some not so good. Too many for us to look at in detail, but each one is a good measuring rod by which we should line up our own hearts and our own thoughts toward God.

Like He did in this text, God has called all of us to repentance and belief in Him. Now, while being born again is a one-time transaction, belief and repentance are things that are ongoing in our lives. We'll see that unfold in the lives of the disciples for sure during these studies. But each of us are called upon in a variety of ways. First, from our text, we are all called upon to prepare the way of the Lord in our lives. Meaning centering our lives not on self but on Christ. Changing the pursuit of life to *be* the presence of God. Saying that, 'Yes, I am going to order and structure and modify my temporal life so that Christ can come in and do what it is that He wants to do.' Things like teach me and correct me and rebuke me if necessary. So that He can then call me specifically to a ministry where I can serve.

You see this in Simon and Andrew and James and John. Men who were willing to prepare their physical lives and their physical schedules to be used by God to do an eternal work. We love to see their response when Jesus walks up to them and says 'follow Me.' But we need to also understand that the same way that Christ called *them*, He has called *us*. And we must **respond** to Him.

But let's take a look at another response or two.

This demon-possessed guy at around verse 23 really sticks out. It's interesting to me that a demon would want to attend church. Of course we understand that the Devil desires to bring strife and division in the Church and it makes a little more sense. But it's a strange situation.

But then I started thinking about this devotionally. And, while it is clear that a believer, a Christian, cannot be possessed by a demon, it's interesting to think about how we get comfortable with sin in our own lives and how we carry it around with us. I can think "how could this guy bring a demon into the synagogue?" But then I look within and have to be realistic and think, 'Yeah. Sometimes I'm bringing uncleanness into God's house. Some bitterness. Some resentment. Some jealousy. Some self-seeking.' Now, again, I'm not saying a

Christian can be demon possessed, but when we carry sin in our lives and the Lord comes to us and calls us to repentance or when He rebukes us, what is our response? I realized yesterday, just something I hadn't really thought about before, that if I can't remember the last time I repented of something before God, there's probably something wrong. I'm probably not listening for the loving correction that God brings to His people. I'm probably not responding to the Spirit. I'm probably just carrying sin around, when Jesus wants to free me from it so that I can glorify Him.

But let's look at the other end of the spectrum now. Let's look at the response to healing and blessing in our lives. Because we all want blessing. We pray for it. We're quite blessed here in this time and place. God loves to bless. But are we still responding when we're blessed by the Lord, or has it become commonplace? There toward the end of the chapter, in verse 37 these brand new disciples come and find Jesus where He was praying and they say, 'Where have You been? Everyone's been looking for you!' And I want to cut these guys a lot of slack, because I wouldn't have done any better than they did, but you get the feeling or just a little vibe from the text that the people were a little upset that the Lord wasn't there to give them what they wanted when they wanted it.

'You're praying?!? Why aren't You down here fixing my leg or healing my blindness or making me a millionaire?' You see the multitudes here coming to Jesus, not to worship Him, but to *get* something from Him. And Jesus was healing. He was blessing. It's not that those things were wrong. But our response to God's blessing needs to be less like that and more like what we see in Peter's mother in law. She was sick with a fever, Jesus came in, healed and restored her, and the text says her response was that she got up and served the Lord and the people there in the house. It wasn't, 'Oh Lord, thank you for taking away my fever, now can you get to my lower back?' It was a response of service and humility.

Or look at the leper in verse 40. He receives a life-changing, life-saving blessing from Christ. Jesus asked him to go and be a testimony to the priests and the Levites in the Temple. Now, beyond that, this man was so overwhelmed that he couldn't help but share with everyone what God had done for him. That's a different study.

Here's the point: Heaven is working overtime. God has gone to great lengths to bring revelation and interaction to our lives. After all, He's made us His heirs and friends. He doesn't want to hide away Himself or His plan from us. Instead He calls us, heart to heart, to repent, believe and follow Him.

So how do we respond to that?

Are we men who have readied our lives for the specific call of Christ to go and make disciples or are we holding something back from God?

Are we men who are listening for Christ's teachings and corrections, or have we become comfortable with certain sins that don't seem to bother anyone?

Are we men who understand what incredible blessings we enjoy and respond with thankfulness and service, using them as a testimony that we share with the people around us, or are we always moving on to the next spiritual or physical desire that we'd like God to fill like a heavenly vending machine?

Are we responding to what God is saying and doing in our lives, or have we become callused against Him? Are there areas of our lives where we're more like the other guys in the synagogue who were, in a sense, trying to confine God and what He was doing to a simple doctrine that fits nicely in our intellectual thought? There in verse 27, you see the men of the synagogue there almost missing the entire point of what Jesus was doing in their midst!

God is calling us. He's given us messages and forerunners and plain teaching and the Holy Spirit so that we might understand what it means to repent, believe and then follow Him with abandon so that He can do what He's long wanted to do in us. Our job is to respond with thankfulness, humbleness and willingness to see God glorified and magnified through our lives.

Let's pursue Jesus for the sake of worship. Let's see what He's done and respond accordingly.