

Jesus on the Move

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[0 : 0 0] So, we're returning to Mark, our study in this great gospel. And it's like all the gospels are different, and this is a great gospel that we look through together.

It's shorter than the other gospels. There's a real sense of immediacy about what Mark is writing. He is keen to write it down, and he's keen to move on from one story to another.

The word immediately is used twelve times in the gospel, so he moves on and immediately something and then immediately something else happened. It's as if he's the short condensed summary of the lives of Jesus, the life of Jesus, is his focus, particularly as we saw last week, his public ministry.

There's nothing about his birth and his upbringing, straight into his public ministry. And it's like the words are running towards the cross, because he wants to get to that place of ultimate significance, where the events in the life of Jesus have their greatest fulfillment.

And it's written for the early church, and mainly it would have been written for Gentile believers, so there's not the same focus on looking back into the Old Testament Scriptures, for example, that the Jewish believers would have been more acquainted with.

[1 : 2 6] But it's really good for us today to read and to acknowledge and to think about, because it was written for Christians to have a greater understanding of their salvation and who Jesus was.

And Peter was probably the one who gave Mark most of his firsthand witness information, and we see that in different ways through the book, through the gospel of Mark.

So what I want to say to our own people today by way of introduction is that it's a great gospel and it's a great theme to invite people to church too, who are not Christians.

So obviously every service is a guest service, and that's a good thing. But there will be maybe certain sections that we look at that are extremely relevant, maybe more so to someone who is maybe a really good introduction for someone who isn't a Christian and who maybe is thinking about coming to church.

So we will highlight every so often a focus where we can invite people into a guest service in church. Not to say that you don't invite people every Sunday, it's great you can invite people every Sunday to this series and indeed any time that we come together for church.

[2 : 5 0] But we do feel that sometimes it's helpful to have a specific focus where you can be guaranteed that the message will be especially relevant, not just to Christians, but also to those who are maybe searching or who are interested or who might consider coming to hear about Jesus Christ.

Come and hear the message of the one who's transformed my life and who is my Lord and Savior. So today Mark's theme focuses, touches on two really great challenges for us that are not just for us, but indeed for all humanity and in some ways and in an existential way and in some ways for our own hearts and for our own understanding.

And the first is who is Jesus? So right through Mark you'll find that Mark is explaining who Jesus is and that is a very important question always to bear in mind when we're looking at this gospel.

Who is Jesus and the uniqueness of Jesus? And the second thing he focuses a lot on in this gospel is what does it mean to be a disciple? What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus?

And we'll come back again and again to that because he's speaking about that right through the gospel. He keeps going back to think, this is what it means to be a Christian. This is what it looks like. This is the application of what we understand about Jesus for your life as a Christian.

[4 : 10] And of course that remains essential and important for us still today. It runs through the series. So the first, and we're going to look at these two themes today from this passage.

First, who is Jesus and then what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? Because it is... There's at least some indication here and it's followed on right throughout the book.

So Jesus, in this passage, Jesus sets out, last week we saw his baptism and the significance of his baptism and why that was important. And the Spirit comes into him and upon him at his baptism in that amazing Trinitarian moment that was highlighted to us last week.

And the first thing we see here that is immediately after this public declaration of the Messiah and of his work and of his anointing, he is sent out into the wilderness.

The Spirit, having descended on him like a dove, immediately drove him into the wilderness. Spirit of God drove him into the wilderness.

[5 : 20] Now that was a real historic event for Jesus, but there's a symbolism in what he was doing and it teaches us spiritual truths as well as being a practical reality.

He was sent, we're told, he was driven into the wilderness. He was sent into the wilderness. He went, but he also went willingly into the wilderness as he was following the command of his Father through the Spirit because it was purposed.

It was an important reality for Jesus to do this as we will see. And just as an aside, in a sense as an application maybe for us, when we become Christians and the Spirit of God comes into our lives, we might not feel any different.

It might not seem like we're zapped by some spiritual power. But when the Spirit, we believe by faith, comes into our lives and we have spiritual life through salvation and coming to Jesus, we are often very, very soon brought into the conflict.

And that's a paradoxical reality for us, isn't it? We become Christians and we think that everything will go great because we're right with God through Jesus and what He's done for us and we've accepted His salvation.

[6 : 47] And what often happens is that there'll be this warfare instigated in our lives and in our hearts.

The peace of God is not the peace of a graveyard. And so what we find is there's an immediate tension within our lives because we have the Spirit of God warring against our sinful desires and temptations and difficulties that we have and this battle begins.

So becoming a... We need to be realistic when we invite people to Jesus Christ. We're not naive and we're not stupid. We realize that there's an unseen spiritual battle that begins in our lives that is evidenced in what Jesus does here.

And it's indicative of two worlds, isn't it, this passage and what Jesus does here. There's much talk today about multiverses. I don't know anything about that.

But there are clearly two worlds. This in other words is not all that there is, what we can see, the seats that you're sitting on, the people that you can see beside.

[7 : 59] There is a spiritual dimension to the world in which we live. It underpins everything about this world. And even in this passage, we see that as He's thrown out into the wilderness, there are angelic beings looking after Him and He is taken into the presence of Satan and Satan is spoken of here.

And it's just a very clear, summary picture of the reality of the world in which we live. That there is both the physical world and there is also an unseen spiritual world that by faith we've come to believe in.

And in Satan's rebellion, because that unseen world has been there from before the creation of our world. But when Satan, in his relationship with God as part of the angelic host, rebelled against God and was thrown out of the presence of God, he then took humanity down with Him in the first temptation, didn't he?

He knew exactly, because he knew exactly what had happened to him. He knew exactly what would press the buttons of humanity against God.

You don't need God, he said in his greatest temptation. You will not die, God is a liar. And all of these things have been powerfully repeated and thrown deceptively into our minds and hearts ever since.

[9 : 37] And the irony of that and the paradox of that is the mystery that we need to wrestle with, in the mystery of a humanity and even an angelic beings, or angelic beings that had everything, except being their own masters.

And the desire to be their own masters in doing so, they lost everything except becoming slaves to sin and death.

So the reality is there for us all to see that there is great mystery. You know, I said, why, well, how is humanity tempted? They had everything, didn't they? They had everything in the beginning, but except being their own masters.

And they listened and they fell to the temptation of Satan, who knew that that was the greatest temptation for them. And that becomes the root explanation for us of the evil in our world and in our hearts.

So it's indicative of these two worlds, and then we recognize that the symbolic nature, the reality of what he did, but the symbolic nature also of what he was doing, he resists Satan's temptation in our place.

[10 : 54] When he goes out into the wilderness, we don't have a long account here of what happened in the wilderness. You need to go to Matthew or Luke to get the details of the temptations that he faced.

I'm not going to go through them today. But this becomes one of the last attacks that Satan makes throughout the Old Testament into the New Testament to destroy the seed of the woman.

We see it in many different places, and here again we find him seeking to destroy the Messiah of God, the reference to the wild animals, the prophetic wild animals of the Old Testament being the enemies that Jesus faced.

And what we have here in the wilderness is really, the wilderness is just the entrance hall of Golgotha. It's the entrance hall of the cross. And we find here that he has to walk through this in order to go to the cross because he has to do what humanity failed to do, which was to resist the temptation of Satan.

And he does that. He does that, and we read in the other accounts, and it's assumed in the account here. He's revisiting, in a sense he's revisiting the garden in the beginning, or he's at least revisiting the failure of humanity in the garden.

[12 : 12] And he's there for 40 days, which is a powerful symbolic number from the Old Testament that's used in different ways. Usually to do with testing, Moses was 40 years in Egypt, and he was 40 years in the desert before he was sent to be the one who would redeem the people out of Egypt.

The wilderness travels were for 40 years for the Old Testament people, and then they had 40 days to repent of their sins before God would come in judgment, and so on.

So we have this symbolic and the reality of what he's going through in the wilderness, and it's hugely understated here, just in a couple of verses, isn't it? He was there with wild animals, and the angels were administering to him.

But the declaration of this which Mark wants us to recognize is that he is here, and Jesus came to defeat what we cannot defeat, and give back to us what we have lost forever with our backs turned on the living God.

What we can never find for ourselves in our own strength and in our own wisdom, true identity, eternal love, genuine belonging, lasting hope, and the lasting hope of a glorious future, body and soul, not just body and soul.

[13 : 36] And that's what is being declared in this passage as he comes out of the wilderness temptation and succeeds in defeating Satan's temptations as a human and as God, where we failed.

And coming out of that, he then goes on to declare in verses 14 and 15 the good news. Now after John was read, Jesus came and gathered proclaiming the gospel, or the good news of God saying, the time is fulfilled, kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel.

So he, it's the first declaration of his message, very similar to John's message also that we heard about last week. And timing is everything, isn't it?

God's timing is everything. You know, the time, when the time was fulfilled in the right time, Jesus came at exactly the right time.

And everything he has done, everything he has planned is in the right time. And you know that if you plan things, don't you, if you're a planner, you know, you have timings for things, and it's important that if the plan works out, the timings also work out.

[14 : 43] Some of us are not good at timing, I know. But that's usually a case, isn't it? If things are to work out, they're step by step things to work out, the timing needs to be planned and prepared and considered.

And we may feel that there's great mystery in God's plan. We might ask Him questions, why? Why is this happening? Why isn't that happening? What is going on, God?

It doesn't seem like there's any plan. But we, as believers, we come in faith and trust in His timing.

And He came at the right time to establish His kingdom, proclaiming that the kingdom of God is at hand. His eternal, His society.

He came. We maybe don't use kingdom quite so much. Kingdom is quite an old fashioned word, although we do talk about the United Kingdom. But society is maybe a word we use more often.

[15 : 43] And He did come. He came to establish His society. And ever since He came, His society is being established in a kingdom of darkness, as it were, in this two-world reality.

And He's establishing His kingdom in the hearts of believers initially. And He will then return to usher in His everlasting kingdom.

But initially it is a kingdom where His lordship and what our submission is personal. His rule and government in our lives and hearts, He is Lord.

He's powerful. He's the author and source of life, to whom every living being, including everyone here, is accountable.

And in establishing His kingdom, He's opening the way back to Himself. And that kingdom embraces body and soul, unlike any earthly kingdom.

[16 : 40] So it's huge. It's big. It's very significant that we consider and wrestle with, as believers as well, and not just fiddle about in the corner with a little Jesus that's insignificant, but see a big, big work and an enormous declaration that speaks of His power and His glory and His love.

He's the King of kings. And as believers we are called to grasp both the personal and the eternal consequences of accepting and following or rejecting Jesus in our lives.

He came to establish His society and He says it's good news. He says that is very good news. He comes with the gospel, that just meaning the good news.

Why is it good news? Precisely because He walked out of the wilderness. That's why it's good news, because He came out victorious from that confrontation with Satan, which points forward to a greater confrontation that He had with Satan and death on the cross.

All the actions of, all the actions that are recorded by Mark in His gospel that are Jesus actions are moving towards, rapidly moving towards the cross.

[18 : 14] So we're reminded that the King Jesus on the cross will wear a crown of thorns. It will be a crown of thorns He will wear because He has representively taken the thorns and the thistles and the wilderness of our spiritual experience on the cross and our guilt.

Mark is saying that I'm taking you towards the cross because you'll see on the cross that Jesus there errs your forgiveness and mine. It's big when we're coming to wrestle with the gospel.

It's not insignificant. It's not small stuff when we deal with the gospel. It's cosmic because Jesus is spanning two worlds.

He's spanning both worlds, the spiritual and the material. And He's the Son of God who the Father loves and the Father sends.

And He's the Son of God who comes because He loves you and He loves me and He wants to put right and has for us as Christians put right what is wrong.

[19 : 21] It's His gift today. It's His gift. It's His gift of love. It's a gift. We don't earn it. We can't work towards it. It's His gift.

He has done it because He loves us. And it's the answer to you and my broken hearts, bruised and guilty and guilt ridden hearts.

That is what we have in Christ. And it's the answer to the torn and broken society in which we live. And it reminds us of the pointlessness of existing without the purpose of being loved and having identity and having meaning, ultimate meaning beyond just a flesh and blood existence that comes and goes and that gets buried in the ground six feet under.

It's so significant in a society which is disintegrating in many ways despite all its claims of progress.

So He declares that He is the good news. And then briefly, what does it mean to be a Christian? We'll see that throughout the series. But here, and throughout the book, He's talking about authentic discipleship.

[20 : 35] He returns to it again and again. And I mentioned that Peter was probably the source of the original material that he writes here.

So we find quite often in the gospel that the failings of Peter are highlighted and the character and the good things about Peter maybe or the important things are underplayed.

It's like Peter says, don't say that about me. Just point to Jesus. And that in a sense is why this account here of the calling of the disciples is very sparse.

And it's a bit weird for us, isn't it? It's as if these guys are fishing and Jesus walks along and says, hey, come and follow me and they immediately throw it, they're not saying follow Him. They say, well, that seems a bit weird. That doesn't seem very normal.

And of course, you need to go to the other gospels to find out that there's more to it than that. But it's as if Peter's saying to Mark, just tell them the immediacy, the important things.

[21 : 40] Just that it's important to follow Jesus. Don't go into all the back story because we learn in the other gospels that they called and master that they were clearly had been listening to Him before.

They knew about Him. They'd been fishing all night. I'll see a little bit more than that just before we close. So we have this account here of discipleship of following Jesus.

And Luke gives, sorry, Mark here gives three very important things, repentance, faith and following.

And that's true discipleship. Just repentance, that means that just that, you know this, we've often said it from the pulpit here, that complete turnaround. It's moving, it's turning our heads, turning our whole bodies from facing away from God in our lives to facing towards Him.

It's a change of allegiance in our lives. Luke chapter 4, verse 8, if I've got the reference right, is important because Jesus says in the temptation that He's facing in the wilderness from Satan, Jesus answers Satan by saying, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and you shall serve Him only.

[22 : 57] And that's part of what He's encouraging in repentance and in this command to follow Him. It's a complete change of allegiance and it's an act of faith and trust in the Jesus, the historical Jesus who died and who rose again and ascended.

And it involves confession saying, I've got my life thus far wrong. And as Christians, it's a continual saying, what, I've got that wrong today.

Lord deal with the idols in my heart. Deal with the things that separate me from you. Confession, recognizing we get things wrong and we come to Him and He willingly, lovingly forgives us because He's paid the price already Himself and He doesn't punish sins twice.

He's the only answer. But to turn our backs, and we do this as Christians as well, don't we, to turn our backs is to be in the wilderness again.

That's what it means. It means you're in the wilderness. It's a genuinely bad place to be in life. Obviously more so in death, to say, I know better than the living God.

[24 : 06] I know better than the Jesus who loves me more than anyone in this universe loves me. It's turning towards Christ to see Him for who He is and the ugliness of our selfish, sinful hearts.

He says, please don't think it's ever moralism. It's never moralistic. It's never just trying to transform and adapt our lives to make them more acceptable to God.

It's about His presence. It's seeing Him for His beauty and recognizing we can never make ourselves right, but He gifts us salvation.

It's not that woe is me kind of repentance, which Mark Twain and his story of Huckleberry Finn speaks about Huckleberry Finn's alcoholic papa.

The old drunk cried and cried when Judge Thatcher talked to him about temperance and such things. He said he'd been a fool and it was a going to turn over a new leaf. Everyone hugged him and cried and said it was the holiest time on record.

[25 : 14] That night he got drunker than he'd ever been before. That's not really repentance. It's just trying to turn over a new leaf and we fail miserably.

It's about seeing the beauty of Jesus and be motivated by the beauty of Jesus to follow Him. And that's the challenge we have in our lives, is to repent that way. But also to have faith, he says, repent and believe in the gospel.

And faith is allowing God to persuade you. Being open to God's persuasion, to open your heart to Him, to ask Him for the gift of faith, more faith as Christians, deeper faith as believers and take it as a gift and recognize that.

Take these facts and allow them to turn your life upside down by God's grace and in His power. And it also means following. So there's this, you know, a great, rather dramatic visual of the disciples just leaving their nets and following Him.

It's the outworking of repentance and faith is that we follow Jesus. And what does that mean? It means relationship primarily. It means a meaningful love relationship with your Creator through Jesus Christ as Lord.

[26 : 38] It's to be with Christ. You see when in Mark chapter 3, I'm moving ahead and taking someone else's theme here, which probably we'll look at again.

Mark chapter 3 at verse 14, when the disciples, all the disciples are being named, he says, He appointed twelve, whom He also named apostle, so that they might be with Him.

So they might be with Him. It's about relationship. He needed and wanted relationship. And He calls us to be in relationship with Him. Unequivocal is that He calls us to see His beauty and to follow Him.

And that is what we're called to do. And His believers, He's... And if you're not a believer, He's either right or He is rotten. Now grasp that.

Jesus is either right or He's rotten. And if He's rotten, none of us should follow Him. But if He is right, then it's hugely significant the choices that we make in lives and the way we follow Him, in other words.

[27 : 40] He's unashamedly saying He is God, and He's saying that we are made to know Him and to love Him. And He calls us to be part of this community of believers. He says, follow Me, they follow Him individually, but He builds a team.

And then He builds a church. Then He builds a family. Then He builds a community. Because we're called together to help, support, and live out the society of following Jesus with Him as our King.

We are a people with a society that are to love each other the way He loves and has loved us. So it involves relationship, it involves therefore following Him.

That is Lordship, isn't it? That's leaving behind as we've seen our own ideas and the whole way of life. And so there's great... I think there's a great symbolism in the picture of the disciples leaving everything behind.

It's really a symbolic of them leaving their old way of life behind, that old way of life where they weren't following God. And they're saying, I'm not going to live the way I want anymore, I'm not going to be a fisherman anymore, I'm going to follow Jesus.

[28 : 43] Now it's really interesting as well, isn't it? They were fishermen and it's important to recognize that He was calling them away from that to something completely different.

And that's sometimes what it feels like to us if we're to follow Jesus. He's taking us out of our comfort zone, out of the things we know about and it seems counterintuitive to follow Jesus and to surrender to His will.

What are they thinking of? That's all they've ever been trained to do and He's asking them to leave that. And there's a symbolism there about following Jesus in our own lives that we are to surrender to what He knows best for us and to obey Him.

See, there's nothing more miserable than facing both ways than just following ourselves and kind of half following Jesus. The leading of the Spirit will immediately bring us into conflict as we saw at the beginning with our disordered lives, appetites, desires and perspectives.

But He is worth it and I'm saying, stake your life in Him. He is worth it. And it's a massive change. Only for us as believers to recognize that it's, I'm not going to trust in myself.

[30 : 02] I don't even know what color of socks to put on in the morning. And I'm not, I can't even make that decision.

And yet I seem to trust, it's easy to trust myself about the big eternal matters and issues. And He says, don't do that. He's worth it. Stake your life in Him.

He will never let us down. Filling in ourselves for the meaning of life is a far too great a weight to bear. We can't bear it. And it always takes us six feet under and dead.

We can't do it. So follow Him and follow His Lordship and learn to resist temptation. You know that James 4 verse 7 says, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

And that's got to be taken from what Jesus did in the garden. So we have that important focus in our lives to resist temptation because we are empowered to do so through Jesus' strength in us.

[31 : 02] Not because of we just kind of rally away and say we can do it. But because Jesus did it in our place, He resisted temptation and won the battle for us.

Relationship, Lordship and then calling. And with that I'm finished. I've gone on longer than I meant to. He calls them to be fishers of men. And that's really simply a picture of spiritual fruitfulness because Jesus knows better and Jesus knows what's more important.

And He helps them to understand that by telling them to put out, they've been fishing all night. We're not told it here but in the other accounts we're told they were fishing all night. They didn't catch anything. And then He said, put your nets over just now.

Okay, just because you said so Jesus. They put their nets over and the nets are bulging with fish. And He says, right now, leave all of that. I've shown you who I am.

Leave it all. And I'll make you fishers of men. I'll give you fruitfulness in a way you can't understand or believe. And that's our calling. Our calling is to be fruitful and to be involved in this kingdom work of bringing others into the kingdom so that we hope that if we invite people to hear the gospel and our lives are reflecting the loveliness of Jesus, these pews and seats will not be enough.

[32 : 17] Even if we only took one person, each of us took one person all year to hear the gospel and as we pray for them, they come to faith in Jesus. We'll need to plan another church again.

I'll take all the new ones down to Leith. And then we'll start a new church there. But isn't that good? One person each a year. Two people each a year. What a difference that would make if we see God working in that powerful way because we're all Fisher.

We're all to bear fruit. We're all to have that work of the kingdom. We are to partner with Him in bringing in the lost and we are to live and share His good news.

Father God, help us to live and share your good news. So much in this passage that we could talk about it forever. But help us to know and understand it better.

And as we go through Mark, help us to see through your spirit in our hearts the beauty of Jesus, the power and the glory of Jesus and also the call to authentic discipleship and what it looks like in our lives.

[33 : 21] We ask it in His name. Amen.