

Hi everyone,

It was great to meet outside on the lawn this morning. We explored Mark 1:1-13. Before reading it, we talked about how the whole of this Gospel, all 16 chapters together, are the author's answer to two questions:

- Who is Jesus and what is he like?
- What does it mean to follow Jesus and become more like him?

With those questions in mind, here is the passage:

Mark 1:1-13

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”

4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Echoing the first words of the Bible (“In the beginning”), the author opens this Gospel according to Mark in this way (“The beginning of...”) to communicate that Jesus is a new beginning, the starting point of the new creation. The quote from the prophet Isaiah and the part about John the baptizer provides a connection to what has been. The desired effect is to portray Jesus as a way forward from the current and socially/politically troubling situation at the time. Things are not (have not been) the way they are supposed to be and Jesus is a new way forward. What is that new way all about? How can we follow in Jesus' way and become more like him? **We can become more like Jesus as we learn, understand, and claim that we, like Jesus, are the beloved with whom God is well pleased.**

During our time together someone brought up that it is often easier to listen to this other voice, a negative voice that pulls us away from becoming who we are meant to be: the beloved of God with whom God is well pleased. How can you learn and grow to know more deeply that you are beloved? Do you have the ears to hear or eyes to see what God sees when looking at you? You are the beloved with whom God is well pleased!

If you have any thoughts/comments/questions about this passage, please do not hesitate to reach out.

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