

### It's About Jesus Christ, the Son of God

<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup> It is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" – <sup>3</sup> "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" <sup>4</sup> And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and 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 will come one more powerful than I, the thongs 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."

**"Jesus is the reason for the season."** Have you heard that yet this year? I would be surprised if you haven't. I will confess to you that whenever I hear that phrase, I don't always know what to think. There's nothing wrong with it whatsoever. But I just wonder if it's overused, and as a result, it gets tuned out the more it's used. That's why in the past I have refrained from using that phrase. But not today! And here's why. Look again at Mark 1:1: **"The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."** You will not find a more pointed, succinct introduction to a book of the Bible than that. Mark at the outset is as blunt as he possibly can be: **"This gospel is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God (period!)."** In other words, let there be no doubt or mistaking what follows Mark 1:1. It's all about the One who saves, the Promised Messiah, the Holy One of God, the second person of the Trinity, the only begotten Son of God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. As one theologian put it, "Mark 1:1 is the chief artery of the Gospel." The same then could be said of Advent and Christmas: Mark 1:1 is the chief artery of those seasons. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is what it's all about.

It's so important to God that you see this, he purposely sent John the Baptist to prep you for Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Look at verses 2-4 again: **"It is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way' – 'a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."**

This prepping of John the Baptist came first with a strong message of the Law, where he pointed out in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3, how the people in his day had become as evil as snakes, as fruitless as dead trees, and as worthless as chaff. Some of those people, who had come out to John in the desert, were Pharisees who stood proudly and self-righteously on the obedient life they had led. Others were Sadducees who led a very superficial life and could care less about anything spiritual. And the third group were the Jews themselves who had become so callous and indifferent toward their faith and religion. None of these groups were prepared for Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Their sin and self-righteousness stood in the way. So out of love and mercy, John preached a strong message of the Law to show the people the seriousness of their sin and their

need for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who purposely came to save them from their sin and reconcile their relationship with God.

In comparison to the Pharisees or Sadducees or Jews, where is your life these days and how prepared are you for Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Does the sin you harbor in your heart or live out in your life describe you as evil as snakes? Or does the self-centered, self-righteous attitude you have toward others describe you as fruitless as dead trees? Or does your indifference to growing in the faith and worshipping your God and Lord describe you as worthless as chaff? Is there a straight path in your life to receive the Lord? Or are there a bunch a sinful hurdles and barriers that stand in the way? The only reason for asking these questions is to show you, out of love and mercy, the seriousness of your sin and your need for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who purposely came to save you from your sin and reconcile your relationship with God.

Don't these questions I've asked cry for someone greater in your life than yourself? Then listen to what John the Baptist said: **"After me will come One more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie."** You already know who the Mightier One than John is. Remember Mark 1:1? But read the rest of the Gospel, and you will see how mighty he really is.

- He is the One who in Mark 1 said to the evil spirit of a demon-possessed man, "Be quiet! Come out of him," and the evil spirit came out of the man with a shriek.
- He is the One who in Mark 2 forgave then sins of a paralytic, then told him to get up and walk, and the man got up and walked.
- He is the One who in Mark 4 told the winds and the waves to be quiet and be still, and immediately the wind died down and it was completely calm.
- He is the One who in Mark 5 told Jairus' dead daughter to get up and she did.
- He is the One who in Mark 6 fed 5,000 men plus women and children with a few loaves of bread and a couple fish and did a similar thing with 4,000 men in Mark 8.
- He is the One who in Mark 7 healed the Canaanite woman's demon-possessed daughter.
- He is the One who in Mark 9 healed another boy of an evil spirit.
- He is the One who in Mark 10 healed a blind man named Bartimaeus.

But mightier than all those miracles...

- He is the One who in Mark 15 wore a robe stained with blood so that you could wear a robe of righteousness.
- He is the One who in Mark 15 wore a crown of thorns so that you could wear a crown of glory.
- He is the One who in Mark 15 was nailed to a cross so that you could be forgiven of sin.
- He is the One who in Mark 15 received a heap of insults so that you could receive God's blessing.
- He is the One who in Mark 15 cried the cry of the damned so that you could sing the joy of salvation.
- And He is the One of whom we read in Mark 15:39: "When the centurion heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!'"

Could there be any greater exclamation point on Mark 1:1: **“The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God”**? Oh there could, and there is, the angel said to the women at Jesus’ tomb in Mark 16:6: **“You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.”** What is mightier than being able to proclaim: **“Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!”**?

When you see what the Gospel is all about – Jesus Christ, the Son of God – how can you not repent, confess your sins, and receive the grace of God in Word and Sacraments? Yes, don’t forget the grace that John shared with the people along the banks of the Jordan River. The baptism John shared then is ultimately no different than your baptism today. Just to cling to those five precious words that are connected to baptism – for the forgiveness of sins – that’s what the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God is all about. That’s what this season is all about. Amen.