

Children's Message— Introduction to Mark's Gospel and Mark 1 Summary
David Jahnke, 6/10/18 (Sermon below)

So after Jesus' death and resurrection, the followers of Jesus went around telling stories about Jesus. Around 35 years after Jesus death, a Jewish Christian who knew how to write in Greek decided it was time to turn these stories into a book and so he wrote the gospel of Mark which is the earliest gospel. And it is filled with his healings and other miracles and not so much with Jesus' teaching.

Mark's book starts like this: 1. John the Baptist claiming he is unworthy to be Jesus' slave; 2. the heavens are torn apart at Jesus' baptism; 3. Jesus battles Satan in the desert and he exorcizes a demon-possessed man in the synagogue; 4. Jesus heals a leper, Simon-Peter's mother and many more who then came to him. All this and more in one chapter.

So Mark's gospel is like an action movie and guess who the superhero is? Right! And what do people think of superheroes? So people approached and followed Jesus because he did amazing things that people had not seen others do before. And any who followed him closely and their lives transformed into a great adventure; a huge battle not against other people but against evil powers.

Your school is ending in two weeks. And that means your life can become a huge adventure for almost three months. You have new Bibles and I want you to read them and learn about Jesus' adventure and act out the stories. And who always wins in a good story? How do we know Jesus wins? Never forget that and join the battle against evil not with swords and bombs but with love, peace and truth.

Jesus the Miracle Worker and Family Reconciler in the Gospel of Mark
Based on Mark 3: 20-35

Today I will continue with a reconstruction of early Christian history. As a quick review, it all started with Jesus' resurrection and his appearances to the disciples and to many of his followers. If not for Jesus' resurrection, the disappointed and fearful disciples would have continued to lay low and, if confronted by the authorities, they would have simply told the truth that Jesus was not who they thought he was. They would have accepted a rebuke and a slap on the wrist and returned to a simple, normal life.

Instead of feeling ashamed and disappointed in Jesus, they became more confident than ever that Jesus was indeed the Messiah; instead of laying low, they became more public in their proclamation than ever; instead of avoiding the authorities, they confronted them with Jesus' resurrection which led the authorities to jail, kill and otherwise persecute them which ended up scattering them around Israel and up into Samaria and Syria. Why would they have done this?

The Bible provides the only reasonable answer— Jesus rose and appeared to them. He showed them the gift of eternal life and told them to do what he had been doing— only now it was time to start telling everyone about who Jesus was and what he had been doing. It was time for the Markan secret which is unique to his gospel to be revealed.

Time and again in Mark's gospel, after Jesus does something amazing, he tells the disciples to keep quiet about it. He also tells the demons to keep quiet about who he is. And the probable reason for this is he did not want word to spread too quickly about him so that he would get killed before being able to get to all the villages and towns he needed to go to before Jerusalem. He knew that the trouble he was getting into would be greatly intensified if Word spread about his deeds and people calling him the Messiah.

So after his death, it was time to reveal the truth. The disciples did just that and they indeed started getting into trouble like Jesus and they were scattered as already mentioned. But that was all a part of God's plan as well. Because within just three decades after Jesus' death, Jesus' Way had already spread across Samaria, Syria, modern-day Turkey, Greece and even into Rome. How did this happen?

The apostle Paul was primarily for sewing the seeds for the spread of Christianity in the Gentile world. And he wrote to the Corinthians that Jesus appeared to all of the disciples and even to hundreds of new Christians who, it seems, were gathered for an important meeting at one point. So hundreds of people were incredibly empowered to spread the gospel. But the tens of thousands of new followers of Jesus never saw him. So why did they convert?

Historian N.T. Wright rightly argues that it was having a second and true and wondrously loving family that was responsible for this rapid spread of Jesus' Way. What was incredibly attractive to the Pagans was the disciples' Way of life in which it was understood that everyone who converted became a part of a new family in which the same sort of love, forgiveness, and fidelity that exists along blood lines or at least should; this would become a reality among all peoples because of the blood of Jesus and when they commit to His Way. [The New Testament and the People of God, N.T. Wright]

I want to share a few lines from a song by Mary Gauthier who was adopted. I think it sheds light on the deeper bonds of blood and love.

When I was a child they told me she loved me too much
She didn't keep me 'cause my mother loved me too much
She left without a trail, she left without a trace
Blood is blood and blood don't wash away

I got a heart that's ripped, I got a soul that's torn
I got a hole in me like I was never born
Blood is thicker than water, blood is bound by God
Blood is blood, blood don't wash away

I don't know who I am, I don't know who I'm not
I don't know my name, I can't find my place
Blood is blood, blood don't wash away

So these words are particularly poignant for orphans and also for so many people who have messed up families of origin. But on another level, it applies to all of us. Because no family is perfect or sufficient. We're not sure who we are and who we're not. And we all long for more love and support. We see this even in the life of Jesus. Reading now from the third chapter of the gospel of Mark. Jesus has just returned to his hometown and as soon as he arrived:

3:20 A great crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 3:21 When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons."

Jesus then counters their foolish arguments and his parents finally find him. Reading again now, starting at the 31st verse.

3:31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." 33 And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

So Jesus' family were wanting to stop him from carrying out his mission because they were afraid for him. He was getting into trouble with the authorities who were accusing him of blasphemy and being out of his mind and possessed by the devil. And it seems his family were wondering the same.

This is the reality for far too many people who have heard that they are bad or stupid or "have issues;" people labelled by society in some way or another just as Jesus was; people without enough support from their family. These are the kind of people Jesus went to and hung out with. And what did he have to say about them? "Here are my mother and brother and sisters. You are my family.

We have been so blessed over the last few days to have my niece Daria with us. The dynamic in my immediate family is generally good but you know how things can get within families. We are no different. So it was very interesting to see the dynamic change somewhat with my niece here. And the same kind of goes for when we have church parties or friends over. There is something about knowing there are people in the

world who love and support and affirm and will be there for us beyond our immediate families.

That is what this church thing is all about. It was what was responsible for the spreading of Christianity like wildfire in the first century. The pagans and many Jews saw people living a different Way and as God's Law always intended. They saw people loving and caring for each other like family and the deep longing within them was filled.

A second family is what is cited by our own church members time and again. It is what we extend to our new members; and what we hope will remain important to our nation and world for generations to come. Because there truly is only one human family, all united in the blood of Jesus. And everyone who is committed to doing God's will should be understood literally as our brother and sister, our mother and father, our son and daughter. May our understanding of who is family keep stretching and growing. And may we welcome one another into our homes more and more and meet here at church as regularly as we can. And as we break bread together, may we realize the family bonds of love and peace which are unbreakable in Christ Jesus. To the God of all grace who calls us to eternal union in Christ Jesus be all the power and the glory, now and forever. Amen

Sermon Reflection and Application Questions

1. Do you agree with pastor David that Jesus' resurrection and his miracles come first regarding a proper understanding of Jesus and the church?
2. Why were these events of primary importance in Jesus' revelation and our making him Lord of our lives?
3. a. If the supernatural fades into the distance in favor of an understanding of Jesus as essentially 'teacher' and 'prophet', what is lost? b. What happens to the comfort a miracle-working God wants to bring to us? c. What happens to our sense of feeling compelled to follow his very difficult teachings?
4. One comfort God wants to bring is with regards to our families of origin.
a. What struggles did Jesus experience in this regard? b. What does that mean for people who have struggles with parents and siblings? c. What does Jesus want to bring to those relationships? d. What will you do about if you have struggles with your own family?
5. One of those very difficult teachings is that everyone who is doing the will of God is literally our brother and sister. Do you agree and what does that mean regarding anyone out there pursuing truth, loving others, furthering peace, health and justice (i.e. God's will)?

