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“GOOD NEWS!”

Mark 1:1-8

Raise your hand if you would like to receive some good news today.

That’s 100% of us! If someone hadn’t raised theirs, I would have told them: either you are not all that self-aware, or you are putting up a front, or you are weird.

? Who has heard too much good news lately? Who would not benefit from some more?

Please turn with me to Mark 1:1-8.

■ Mark 1:1: **“The beginning of the good news”** the εὐαγγέλιον [euangelion], the Gospel **“about Jesus the Messiah...”**

“Good news” refers not so much to this book Mark has written as to its subject. It is the message of the life and ministry of Jesus.

{Is 55:11} And what a message! This is not mainly a recounting of historical facts or doctrinal statement or evangelistic tool – it is a catalyst for light and life, for

**it will not return to [the LORD] empty,
but will accomplish what [God desires]
and achieve the purpose for which [he]
sent it.**

But what exactly is **“the good news”**? What is the specific content of the message?

📖 Many U.S. Christians, especially Evangelicals, say the Good News it is that Jesus died on the cross so we can get our sins forgiven and go to heaven.

Well, yes. That is true, *insofar as it goes*. Still, it hardly does the message justice!

📖 {II Co 5:29} The Gospel is the Good News that **“in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself ... not counting people’s sins against them.”**

📖 {Lk 7:22} It is the Good News that in Christ **“the blind [see], the lame walk, [the lepers] are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the [εὐαγγέλιον] is preached to the poor.”**

📖 {Rev 5:9-10} It is the Good News that Christ **“was slain, and with [his] blood [he] purchased ... [some from] every tribe ... language ... people and nation ... to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.”**

📖 {Eph 4:22-24} It is the Good News that **“in Christ”** we are empowered to **“put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”**

📖 {Mt 22:37; Mic 6:8} It is the Good News that in Christ we are equipped to **“love the Lord [our] God with all”** our being and **“our neighbor as”** ourselves, as we **“act justly ... love mercy, and ... walk humbly with [our] God.”**

📖 {Ro 6:5} It is the Good News that Christ died and rose again and **“if we have been united with him in a death like his”** – if we really are *in Jesus* – then **“we will ... also be united with him in a resurrection like his.”**

📖 {Rev 21:4} It is the Good News that when Christ returns **“The old order of things [will pass] away”** and **“There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain”** for those who found to be in him.

📖 {Rev 11:15} The Gospel is the Good News that **“The Kingdom of the world [is becoming] the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever.”**

Alleluia! The Gospel so much richer, more beautiful, and more powerful than we imagine it to be.

☆ And **“the good news”** is **“good,”** not only in that it is morally excellent and brings joy to many people, but also because it is effective. It **“will accomplish what [God desires] and achieve the purpose for which [he] sent it.”**

{II Tim 3:15-16; Heb 4:12; I Co 18} To put it another way, the message of Jesus has the capacity not just to inform us but to *transform* us. It is **“alive and active,”** well **“able to make [us] wise for salvation.”** Indeed, **“to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”** It is the *great* **“good news,”** the *best* **“good news,”** the *superlative* **“good news,”** next to which every other piece of **“good news”** pales in comparison.

■ Back to verse 1: **“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah...”**

“The beginning.” Of course, the first verse of the first chapter is literally **“the beginning of”** this narrative.

However, **“the beginning”** also has a deeper meaning. What Mark has written is not an exhaustive record.

The Gospel is grounded in and defined by the Son of God’s incarnation and ministry 2,000 years ago. Yet it is not an inert historical artifact.

The Gospel is powered by Christ’s historical death, resurrection, and ascension. Nevertheless, it is not confined to the past.

The Gospel is centered in Messiah’s teachings and actions recorded and interpreted in the New Testament. Even so, it is not a closed book.

The message continually grows as the Word is planted, takes root, and bears fruit in human beings.

The εὐαγγέλιον continually expands as Christ Followers manifest their faith in word and deed.

New chapters are continually added to the narrative of Jesus as we love him by obeying his teachings.

{Jn 1:14} The Gospel is all **“about ... the Messiah.”** It is focused, first and last, on the unique, **“one and only Son”** who **“became flesh and made his dwelling among us”** as Jesus of Nazareth.

Yet it is also **“about Jesus the Messiah”** as he *indwells and works through human beings*. For **“the Spirit of Christ lives in”** all **“who belong to Christ”** (Romans 8:9-11), and **“it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”**

✈ The Triune God does not just use us to verbally communicate **“the good news”**; we are his agents through whom he makes the message *substantial* in time and space. The Gospel is eternally true and intrinsically real, but since the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven it is manifested in the flesh among Christ Followers.

Hence, Mark's book (and likewise Matthew's, Luke's, and John's) is "**the beginning,**" not the entirety "**of the good news.**" The εὐαγγέλιον has continued, grown, and expanded in every generation of the Church.

- That brings us to the ministry of John. Verses 2-4:

² **as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:**

**"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare the way" –**

³ **"a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"**

⁴ **And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**

{I P 1:20} The phrases "**as it is written**" in verse 2 and "**And so**" in verse 4 confirm the necessity of human agency. For though "**the good news**" is "**about Jesus the Messiah,**" and though God planned the gospel from "**before the creation of the world,**" it is initiated on earth by a man. A great man, to be sure! But a mortal man, a sinner like the rest of us.

- Verses 5-6: ⁵ **"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. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey."**

{I K 1:8} Mark exalts John by likening him to Elijah, whom Israel reveres as the greatest OT prophet. Elijah was a man of the wilderness who wore "**a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist.**"

At the same time, Mark emphasizes John's lowliness. His clothes are rough-and-tumble. Every now and then he has to pick a grasshopper leg out of his teeth.

- Finally, verses 7-8: ⁷ **"And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."**

✎ John's great "**good news**" was that YHWH's Anointed One was coming. Not only would Christ be with his people, he was going to send the Holy Spirit upon them. He would immerse them in God's presence!

This is our εὐαγγέλιον as well, only we have the advantage of entering the story some chapters later.

{Jn 1:14} Messiah came in the past. "**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**"

{Rev 3:20} Messiah keeps coming in the present through Scripture, his people, and the H.S. He is saying, "**Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will**

come in and” have intimate fellowship with them, **“and they with me.”**

{1 Th 4:16-17} Messiah will come again in the future.

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God And ... we will be with the Lord forever.”

{Lk 7:28} John was one-of-a-kind. Our ministry cannot equal his; for the Savior said, **“among [mortals] there is no one greater than John.”** But it does not need to, for Jesus goes on to say, **“yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”**

God chose John to be his messenger in his own time and place. He has chosen us as his messengers in our particular times and places.

This Gospel is *manifested* in all God’s people, including us. It is *made substantial* in our character. It *expands* in our speech, conduct, and relationships. It is even possible that you or I are **“The beginning of the good news”** for someone who does not know Jesus!

Look at the people in this sanctuary. If we are Christ Followers, then his Spirit dwells inside them, and indeed all of us.

We – even we – are messengers of **“the εὐαγγέλιον about Jesus.”** Not only so, we are a tangible expression of the Gospel, we embody it to the world in deed as well as in word.

Mark 1:1-8 is the word of the Lord.