

Sermon Transcript from February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016  
Act 4: Jesus Is Everything  
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I want to show you Jesus and how Jesus is the fulfillment and the climax of the story of God. But, I want to do this narratively through Mark's book about the life of Jesus. Let me read.

"In the beginning of [the Gospel] the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

"I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way' – 'a voice calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'

"And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the river Jordan. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locust and wild honey. And this was John the Baptist's message: 'After me there comes one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

"At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended to him.

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the [Gospel] good news!'

"As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him.

"When Jesus had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Jesus.

"They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!'

"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

"The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.' News about Jesus spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

"As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and immediately they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

"That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were ill and demon possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was."

This is God's Word, so let's pray.

Lord, I thank You for today and I ask that You would teach us. We want to sit under the power and the authority of the Holy Spirit today. So, would You collectively teach us, God? All of us. Give us ears to hear and hearts to receive Your words today and would you show us Jesus? I present all of my capacities to You and I ask for help. I ask for help today. I'm so very humbled by the Scriptures and by who You are, Jesus, and I pray that You would reveal Yourself to us in Christ's name. Amen.

I love love love Mark's Gospel. It's my favorite Gospel because it reads like an action movie written by someone with ADHD. Mark loves the words "immediately" – I don't know. I kind of read it with some umph. But, if you read Mark's book, he doesn't mess around with genealogy, he doesn't mess around with Jesus' birth. It's like, "This is the Gospel and Jesus is casting out demons."

Like, the very first page of this thing. That's why I love it. He loves words like "immediately" and "at once" and "as soon as." Like, things are happening really really fast and Mark doesn't waste time. He gets straight to the point. His opening sentence that he uses in his book is supposed to hang over the book like a virtual title. It says this. This is how his book opens:

**"The beginning of the good news..."** – or "This is the Gospel." Some of your translations say "the Gospel."

**"The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God."**

He just puts it all out there. This is who Jesus is and this is what this book is about. And I love the way that Mark uses the words "in the beginning" or "the beginning." It's supposed to awaken echoes of the first phrase in Genesis. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." And Mark uses the same kind of language to awake your mind to this is a new beginning. A new beginning is happening here in Jesus and not just a new beginning to Israel's story. That is true. Jesus is a new beginning to Israel's story. But, it's actually a new beginning to the whole world, the story of the whole world. Jesus is rebooting the story. Jesus is redeeming humanity's story. In Jesus, the story of humanity is being restored. And, just as in Genesis God initiated creation by speaking, here at this time God is initiating salvation.

God is starting His salvation project in Christ, and that's why Mark calls this story "The Gospel." That's why Mark calls this story "The Good News." Mark doesn't mean this is a genre, though it is a genre. He's not saying, "Hey, this is the kind of writing I'm writing. It's called a Gospel." That would be developed a lot later on. Mark is saying that this is Gospel, this is the good news. He's saying this. He's saying the Gospel is the story of salvation in Jesus. The Gospel is the story of salvation in Jesus. The Gospel is God taking decisive action to save the world.

So, when Mark opens up his book he's like, "God is taking decisive action in Christ to redeem and to save the world."

And this is why the opening of the book of Mark drips with the salvation stories of Israel. And the reason why I said, when I opened up, that I would really like it if you went back and listened to the other teachings, this teaching kind of might not make sense unless you've been with us so far. Because Jesus doesn't just come in in the middle of history just like this random person that just comes and says, "Hey, you guys are all in sin and I've come to personally save you."

That's not what Jesus does. Jesus actually enters into Israel's story and He is the culmination and the climax and the fulfillment of Israel's story and, just like God told Abraham that through you and your seed I'm going to bless the world, Jesus comes to fulfill that. So, unless you understand the story of Israel up to this point, you can kind of get Jesus – well, you can get Jesus, but you don't fully get Him. And that's kind of the way that Mark tells his story. The very opening, just what we just read, drips with Israel's history. It drips with the stories of Israel.

First of all, Mark, at the very beginning of his Gospel, quotes the Old Testament. There's a quotation. There's indentation, if you notice in your Bibles. It's a quotation from Isaiah. He goes, **"As it is written in Isaiah the prophet."**

He is awakening the hopes of the people of God, the people of Israel. And we get this quote from Isaiah that says:

**"I will send a messenger ahead of you,"**

There is this Old Testament prediction that, before the Messiah came, before the savior of the world came, before the in-breaking Kingdom of God was established on earth, before God would redemptively act on behalf of humanity. Before all of that, there would come someone that would go before the Messiah to prepare the way for getting people ready, their hearts ready, to receive the Messiah, to receive this king. And this person would come like a herald.

And then we meet this guy named John the Baptist, and John the Baptist is this really strange character. He has really weird fashion. He wears camel hair and eats locusts and wears a leather belt around his waist and he's in the wilderness. He's in the wilderness. You guys just finished the book of Numbers. Where is Israel wandering? In the wilderness. This is where our Israel meets God in the Exodus is in the wilderness. This is their place. This is Israel's place of new beginnings. They get out of bondage, out from under Pharaoh. God destroyed Pharaoh and his army and they cross over and they're into the wilderness and this is where they meet God. This is where they're saved out of slavery. This is where God decisively acts and breaking the power of Pharaoh and saving people from bondage.

So, when you're reading in Mark you're like, "Oh, he's in the wilderness. They're just stating a location."

They are stating a location, but what Mark is also doing is you're supposed to go, "Oh, they're in the wilderness like they were in the Exodus."

And this is like all of a sudden this thing is starting all over again. Israel's story is starting all over again. John is baptizing in a river and the river is called the Jordan river and he's preaching of repentance and forgiveness. And the Jordan river is where, 1,000 years earlier, Israel cross over to get into the promised land and to become God's light to the nations. John's return to this very place, the Jordan River, signals a new beginning for Israel; a new summons from God to carry out their task. "You are Israel. Come and repent of your sins and get back on task."

Baptism was this vivid symbol of this new beginning and the people of God are symbolically crossing the Jordan once again. People in droves are coming out and John the Baptist is preaching a message of repentance and Israel is being baptized in the Jordan River, crossing it symbolically once again to take up their mantle as Israel, as a light to the nations. And then Jesus shows up.

So, before Jesus even shows up, Mark is like, "Okay."

Do you guys remember last year when the Star Wars trailer came out? Of course you do. Of course you do. It was like Thanksgiving morning, right? And you were in your bed and you got an alert on your phone and all your friends text you like, "Oh my gosh. The new trailer came out."

And you watched it and then it was like the story's being rebooted by all these old characters and Chewbacca shows up and you're like, "Ah!"

You're freaking out and watching it. It's like the story's being rebooted and retold and all these things are awakening again for you. The soundtrack, the characters. Everything is awakening. If you watched the Jurassic World this summer, same sort of thing happened. Right? It was like a reboot of this story. And you have this kid who loves dinosaurs in the very first one. You have this kid who loves dinosaurs and you have this really crazy philanthropist in a helicopter. In the second one, in this new one, same sort of thing. It's rebooting the story. It's getting you excited to go, "Oh, this is the story again."

This is exactly what Mark is doing. This is what's happening in Jesus. The story of God is being rebooted. It's being retold. They're in the wilderness, they're in the Jordan, they're crossing over. This is what they're looking for. And then Jesus shows up, but Jesus shows up and it's almost anticlimactic. It opens with Isaiah's prophecy and Malachi's prophecy that there would be one who comes to prepare the way for the Lord and then John is baptizing and all these people are showing up and then, all of a sudden, the audience waits. Who is this one who's going to show up that John is saying He's coming and He's going to baptize you with the Spirit of God and I'm not even worthy to stoop down and untie His sandals?

And then – I love this. The way that Mark says it. He says, "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth."

Now, this is just so nonchalant. Jesus was a very common name and Nazareth was a weird town. So it's like, "And then Bob from Livermore..."

It's just really weird. It's super strange. So, when you're reading this it builds up really really really big. It's like, "Jesus from Nazareth."

You're like, "What is happening? Who? Jesus? Why this guy? Are you kidding me?"

And then Jesus goes right up to John and asks to be baptized. Now, Mark doesn't point this out, but Matthew does. Matthew says they get into a little argument. I don't know about argument.

Jesus is like, "Baptize me."

John's like, "Well, I don't know if I should baptize you."

Jesus is like, "We should do this."

So, John's like, "Alright."

But, Mark doesn't mention any of that. He just goes in and He gets baptized. Now, why is this important? Why is Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River important? Jesus doesn't need to be baptized. He has no sin. What Jesus does is identifies Himself with the nation of Israel. Jesus' life means something. His ministry means something. It means that Jesus is taking on, Himself, their mission. Jesus is taking on, Himself, their mission to become a channel of God's salvation to the nations. This was God's purpose and program the whole time.

When God chose Abraham – if you're reading through the Bible with us and especially today as you get to Jesus, the questions that might come up for you are why did God wait so long to send Jesus? Why didn't Jesus show up in Genesis 4 or Genesis 12 right after the Tower of Babel? Why Abraham and not Jesus? Why didn't Jesus show up after David died? Why did the kingdom have to go crazy with Solomon? Why didn't Jesus show up in all these different places in time? Why did God wait so long and have so much patience with Israel? Why did He do that?

With God, Israel was always the plan. God saving the world through Israel was always the hope. And it seems like a long route, and it was. But, if God was going to save the world, and He has, however God was going to save the world, it would be through humans.

I need you to hear this. I think what we do is we're like, "God does everything; we do nothing."

That will preach, by the way. That will preach here, right? Like, "Jesus does everything, you do nothing, guys. Just receive. All your guilt's washed away. You don't have to do anything. God fulfills His covenant. You don't do anything."

That is actually, if you read the Bible, not what God has in mind. What God has in mind is that humanity would partner with Him in the renewal of the world. When God calls Abraham, He's like, "Abraham, I need you to believe me. You are going to have a son."

And Abraham goes, "I believe You."

And it says, "And God accredited to his account righteousness."

He believed and it was accounted as righteousness. He was right before God because he believed in God and God's like, "This is what I'm looking for. I'm looking for a partnership with humanity. It didn't go good with Adam and Eve. It didn't go good with Lot. It didn't go good with the rest of humanity. I'm going to choose Abraham and, through him, I'm going to bless the world.

"So, Abraham, be my representative. Show the world what I'm like. And you and I, together, will bring about the redemption of the world."

God always wants to use humanity as part of His project. That's why Jesus is a human. Salvation doesn't just drop from the sky. God wants to partner with humanity and, when

you and I hear these things, we're like, "Yeah, but doesn't God do it all and we just sit back?"

No. That has never been it at all. God has always wanted to partner with humanity. He will not bypass humans being responsible. If you think Christianity is about you not being responsible, this is the wrong faith for you. If you think you have no choice in the matter and your character doesn't matter, that's not true. God chooses a family. He wants to be in relational covenant with a family and He wants His blessing to spread through that family out and out and out. But, they don't do it.

When they cross over – and you guys are there right now – the promised land in the land of Canaan, God's like, "Don't become like Canaan. Don't kill your children and eat them. Don't worship idols."

And, when you're going to get to Judges you're going to realize that Israel turns into Canaan. They turn into Canaanites. They're doing all these wicked things just like the Canaanites have done. Under Solomon's rule, they turn into Egypt all over again. Over and over again, God is telling this people, "I want to show the world what I'm like and a people under my rule and under my kingdom. I want to show that."

And over and over and over again they don't do it. And this is why Jesus was human. This is why Jesus is standing in the Jordan River identifying not just with Israel, but with the whole world. He's stepping into Israel's vocation and saying, "I now will fulfill this."

N.T. Wright, New Testament scholar, says it like this:

"Jesus believed that the creator God had purpose from the beginning to address and deal with the problems within His creation through Israel. Israel was not to be an 'example' of a nation under God. Israel was to be the means through which the world would be saved and that this would be accomplished through Israel's history, reaching a great moment of climax in which Israel herself would be saved from her enemies and through which the creator God, the covenant God, would at last bring His love and justice and His mercy and truth to bear upon the whole world bringing renewal and healing to all creation."

This is what God always wanted to do. And Israel knew this and their prophets knew this. That one day God would set this world right through us. Now we have to step into our vocation. We have to step into our calling and this is what the prophets kept saying over and over again to Israel. "Come back to your calling. Come back to your vocation. Repent. Turn. Start living into the salvation of God."

This healing of all creation is what Jesus was doing. This is what Jesus was doing when He stepped into the Jordan River. This is what He was starting.

So, it says in Mark 1:10, **"Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open..."** – I love this phrase.

So, Jesus steps into the waters of baptism, identifying with Israel – not just identifying with Israel, but I'd say identifying with the whole world and all of humanity up to that point. And, when He comes up out of the water, heaven is torn open. So, whenever the Old Testament uses this sort of language, it's saying that God is about to speak or act, and that someone will get a glimpse into the purposes of God.

This happened in Ezekiel 1:1 when the heavens were opened and Ezekiel saw a vision. However, this isn't heaven opening, this is heaving being torn open. Like, Isaiah actually prayed this. Isaiah 64 says, **"Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down."**

That you would tear open heaven and come down. And the prophet Isaiah prays that the barrier between heaven and earth would be torn open and God would be among His people. Mark is saying that this is happening in Jesus. In Jesus, the fabric of heaven is torn open and God is among His people. God is among us and this irreversible cosmic change has taken place. And what has been opened cannot be closed, what is torn is never the same again because Jesus is on the scene. It says, "If heaven breaks loose on earth," – and that's exactly what is happening.

So, right after this, heaven's torn open, Jesus is anointed, He is the anointed one. That's what the word "messiah" means or "Christ." The anointed one. He's anointed with the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God comes upon him and He's led into the wilderness to be tempted. When do you remember someone being tempted by the evil one? This episode reads like another temptation story in Genesis 3. But, this is the anti-Garden of Eden. Everything

the Garden of Eden was, the wilderness is not.

The Garden of Eden is where there's fellowship and food and peaceful animals. Jesus in the wilderness, alone, without any food and wild animals everywhere. This is the anti-Garden of Eden. It's as if in order to start to reverse what Adam had done in The Fall, Jesus needed to enter into the world not as Adam found it, but as Adam left it. So, Jesus enters into the world that Adam left behind. He enters into a barren world of loneliness and wild animals and hunger. And Jesus enters into that world.

So, when Jesus is tempted, He was not tempted in a garden like Adam, He was not surrounded by peaceful animals over which He exercised dominion, He was in the desert and He was surrounded by wild beasts. It was a fallen and broken and sinful and disintegrated world that Jesus faced temptation in the power of darkness. And then Jesus emerges and we're told this explicitly in Matthew, but Mark has a different way of saying it. Mark doesn't say, "And then Jesus said this and Satan said that."

Matthew does that. Mark just says this: "He went in and He was tempted."

You're like, "Well, what happened?"

In the very next sentence, Jesus pops out proclaiming the good news of God. Who wins? Jesus won. He pops out saying, "Jesus went to Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God."

He's like, **"The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the Gospel!"**

He faces temptation, He comes out saying the kingdom of God is here. This is the good news. This is the Gospel. In Greek, the word is "euaggelion." This is the euaggelion. This is the Gospel. Originally, this word "gospel," in the ancient Roman world, meant the announcement of victory in the battlefield. So, when a great king would win, they would go around and they would announce that a king has won. This king has won.

This word turned into meaning an epic announcement of good news. But the Jewish context derives all its meaning from Isaiah in chapter 52. In Isaiah 52, the prophet Isaiah is writing almost 600 years before the time of Jesus. And he's writing to a people who have been stuck in exile, held captive by Babylon, oppressed and crushed and destroyed by Babylon. And he describes a day coming soon when Israel will be free from her oppressors and God will usher in the great day of victory and a great day of peace.

And they are waiting for this day and Isaiah writes that there are watchmen on the city's wall and the tower and they're waiting for this good news to come and they are looking for a messenger who runs with the good news that God rules again, that God is king once more. And the people see the messenger approaching the city, and this is what they say in Isaiah 52: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news."

That's that word. "Gospel."

"How beautiful are the feet."

He's running toward the city to proclaim God is king, God reigns, God rules. And they look at his feet and they're like, "Those are beautiful feet because they're running with good news."

**"Who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"**

So, what Jesus is saying here – Mark takes both of these things and he blends them together. Jesus is saying, "Here's an announcement of a king who now rules," and He's pulling from Isaiah saying, "When Jesus is preaching the Gospel, He is saying to Israel and to the whole world, 'God reigns and God rules. This is good news.'"

So, Jesus comes out of the Jordan River, comes out of wilderness temptation into Galilee and says, "Your God reigns, Israel."

The Gospel means the inbreaking of God's final act of salvation. When peace and good news and release from oppression will be showered on all of God's people. And this is what Jesus was announcing. Jesus says, "The time has come and the reign and the rule

of God is here."

Now, when I say "Kingdom of God," I know that that kind of doesn't resonate because we don't live in London or whatever. We don't have a queen or a king or a prince or whatever. We have a Prince, but it's a different prince. But, we don't have royalty like that. Don't even try.

So, the Kingdom of God doesn't really resonate with us. What Jesus is saying in a clearer way that you and I would understand is that the rule of God is here. The rule of God is here. This is what Jesus is saying. That in Him the rule of God is here.

Now, how do we know that God rules? How do we know that God reigns? What does it look like when God brings salvation? Everyone think of what you just finished reading in the Exodus. What does God have to do in order to deliver His people from bondage? He has to crush the oppressor. The first mention of the word "salvation" is after the crossing of the Red Sea in the Bible's very first worship song. And it's found in Exodus 15.

This is what they sing. This is the first worship song, it's the first mention of salvation:

**"Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:**

**"I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea."**

Who's the horse and the driver? Pharaoh and his army. He hurled them into the sea. He crushed them.

**"The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."**

How did God save His people? By crushing the enemy. This is how the song ends:

**"The Lord [rules] reigns for ever and ever."**

Listen, you can't start to really understand Jesus until you understand the Old Testament. When Jesus is saying, "The Kingdom of God is here," He is pointing to this. He is saying that when the Kingdom of God shows up, the rule of God shows up, the reign of God shows up, the crushing of the enemy starts to happen. And what does it look like for God to rule and for God to save? It means that God crushes the oppressors and frees the captives. And what does Jesus do? At the very beginning, Jesus is preaching and then someone starts manifesting a demon in church. And what does Jesus do? He crushes it.

This is how Mark's telling his story. Here's the Messiah. God is becoming king of the world. He's freeing people. He's calling people. That's the whole story where He was like, "Hey, drop your nets and follow me."

He's calling a people now and there's 12 of them. The 12 tribes of Israel, calling 12 disciples. He's doing all this and He's also saving them from their enemy, but who is their enemy? Their enemy is not necessarily Rome. Their enemy is not necessarily prostitutes and sinners or the Pharisees, the enemy is Satan. That's ultimately the enemy. That's ultimately how this whole story fell off track at the very beginning. And Jesus goes to confront the enemy.

I love this. In Mark, when Jesus stands up and He's preaching and a demon manifests, this is what the demon says: "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?"

What's the answer?

"Yep."

That's the answer. "What do you want, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?"

And the answer – I mean Mark, again, he tells it narratively.

He casts the demon out and crushes him, but the answer is: "Yes. I've come to destroy you. That's why I'm here."

1 John 3:8, **"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."**

Colossians 1:13, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Jesus came to destroy the works of Satan and deliver people from His rule and every other claim to early powers. See, in Mark's Gospel, demons, they overrule and they dominate people and illnesses make people less than whole people and nature is always threatening to destroy with storms and all this stuff and humans oppress other humans. And what Jesus does in bringing the Kingdom of God or the rule of God in the world is to challenge every other claim to power. Everything that comes against the loving rule of God, everything that keeps people in bondage, everything that keeps people from created order. The inbreaking Kingdom of God brings freedom. The rule of God brings freedom.

Jesus rules. Like, Adam and Eve are supposed to rule, remember? Remember from a few weeks ago? God created them, placed them in the Garden and He goes, "Now, rule. Rule over the fish and the birds and that creepy serpent. Rule over it all."

And they don't. Jesus comes in and He does. Jesus comes in and He rules rightly over created order and He starts to undo it all. This is how a missiologist, Lesslie Newbigin, puts it:

"Jesus was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, not to submit to them. His whole ministry is portrayed in the Gospels as a mighty onslaught on the works of the devil. Whether these took the form of sickness and demon possession among the people or of hypocrisy, cruelty and hardness among the rulers. And His whole ministry is interpreted as the breaking in of the reign of God in the life of the world to release those whom Satan has bound."

The inbreaking Kingdom of God brings the rule and the reign of God in the life of the world and releases those who have been held captive in bondage. The whole interpretive way you're supposed to interpret the Gospels is like a new exodus story. Jesus comes in and crushes the Pharaoh. Jesus comes in and crushes the true Pharaoh. The one that has oppressed all of humanity and who – later on in Revelation it says about Satan – leads the whole world astray.

This is what Jesus has come to do. When Jesus heals the blind, the lame, the mute, the deaf and the leper, people see God's healing and renewing power flowing into human history to end the reign of sickness and pain. That's exactly what happened when He entered into Simon Peter's home. Simon's mother-in-law was sick and Jesus heals her and then everyone starts bringing their sick and Jesus heals them. When Jesus calms the sea or feeds the hungry, He demonstrates the power of God to renew and restore a cursed creation. When Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and the widow's son and Jairus' daughter, people see the power of God conquering even death.

It's like the works that Jesus does are windows through which we catch glimpses of a renewed cosmos from which Satan and his demons have been cast out. Jesus cast out evil, He casts out Satan, He casts out brokenness. And what does it look like? It looks like whole bodies, people raising from the dead, people being generous, people forging, people loving, everything being restored. This is what Jesus has come to do and Jesus is a fulfillment of the story of Israel.

Now, remember Mark's opening line? Mark's opening line is this:

**"The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God."**

This is how Mark starts his whole book. This is the narrative genius of Mark's writing. He lets us, the reader, know who Jesus is and what the Gospel is right away. Like, from the very opening line, you're reading this book– if it's the first time you're reading the Bible, read the book of Mark. In the very beginning, you know who He is.

"Oh, this is a book about Jesus and Jesus is the Messiah and He's the Son of God and He's bringing the Gospel."

And you get all of that from the opening line. But, here's the thing. Here's the genius of Mark's writing: no one else knows. Only you know. The audience knows, the readers know, but the people around Jesus don't. Actually, only the demons know. But, they're told to be quiet over and over again.

"I know who you are."

And Jesus is like, "Be quiet."

Over and over again demons are told to be quiet because they know who He is and then everyone else is trying to figure it out. That brings this dramatic irony in the whole book. You and I, as readers, know the identity of Jesus from the very first line, but none of the characters in the story know it. So, the suspense arises from the tension between the reader's knowledge and the ignorance of the actors. Like, reading them you're like, "Aw, if they just knew who He was."

We know from the beginning that the real Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Gospel concerns Him. But, ironically, no one else really knows that. So, there's this context of unbelief and this climate of unawareness. People kind of knowing who He is, but kind of not knowing who He is. And Mark will present who Jesus really is which is brilliant because some of you – maybe some of you in here, I would imagine, or maybe some people that you work with or live with – may not really believe in the Biblical Jesus or the Jesus that Christians believe in and follow.

Jesus, to you, might just be a good teacher. He might just be a teacher. Or Jesus, as you read the Gospels, is like a really good life coach or a model example of a human who's full of compassion and He has all these other admirable attributes. Now, to believe that about Jesus, like, "Jesus is a just a really really good, great teacher." That's flattering. That's good. Thank you for saying that. But, these can also function as ways to contain Jesus, to manage Jesus.

See, when you want a Jesus who is simply a good teacher or an ethical figure, then He's not the one who announced the Kingdom of God, who insisted that all God intended from the creation of the world was coming true in Him, who demanded people to repent and follow Him. You can keep Jesus at a distance if you just believe, "Oh, He's just kind of like a guru life coach/teacher/peasant poor guy who went around doing good things."

You can keep Jesus at a distance, but that's not what Jesus claimed He was. He was like, "The story of God in humanity reaches its fulfillment in me and I'm the one bringing about the renewal of the whole world. So, repent from the way you think you're bringing about the renewal of the whole world and follow me."

So, in the middle of Mark, there's this turning point. Jesus asks His followers in Mark 8, "Who do people say that I am?"

And they say, "Oh, they say you're all kinds of things. That you're the Prophet reborn, you're Elijah. All these things."

And then Jesus asks them really clearly, "But who do you say that I am?"

Now remember: the audience knows who Jesus is. We know, from the opening line, who Christ is. He is the Christ, the Son of God, and we might even believe at this point, by looking at what Jesus has done, who Jesus is. That He's like really this purveyor of really strong power. And Peter speaks up and Peter says, "You're the Christ."

And it was true. Jesus is the Christ. But notice, Peter's designation of Jesus as the Messiah carries with it these connotations of being nationalistic, oriented towards an exercise of power. We know this because Jesus said this very thing next, which is really strange. It's almost like Jesus treats Peter like a demon.

Peter says, "You're the Christ."

And Jesus says, "Okay, don't tell anyone."

You're like, "Wait, I thought we were supposed to tell everyone. I thought that if You're truly the Messiah, we're supposed to tell everyone. Why am I not allowed to tell anyone?"

Commentators call this this Messianic Secret motif. This means that the reason why Jesus was not allowing everyone to tell about who He was – He does that through all the Gospel of Mark – is because they don't really have who He is figured out yet. They think

they do, but they don't. Let me show you why. The very next thing it says in Mark 8 is this. It's on the screen.

Mark 8:31: "Jesus then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

"But Jesus turned and looked at his disciples and rebuked Peter. 'Get behind me, Satan!' – That's not good. – "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Okay so, let's back up. Jesus is like, "Who do people say that I am? Who do you say that I am?"

"You're the Christ."

"Ah, very well. Don't tell anyone. Anyway, so, I'm going to go to Jerusalem, I'm going to suffer, I'm going to die and I'm going to raise in three days."

And Peter's like, "No you're not. You can't do that. You are the Messiah."

Which means he doesn't have an accurate view of what the Messiah is."

So Jesus says, "Don't tell anyone because you don't know who I am yet. You don't fully get it yet."

We can be guilty of making up our own versions of Jesus. Even His closest followers initially guilty of that. We make up and follow a Jesus that we're comfortable with, that will fight for all of our causes and all of our agendas whether it would be world peace or self-righteousness, religion or spirituality, we fashion our Jesus and what we think He is like and then we follow that.

The reason why Jesus tells almost everyone who thinks they know who He is not to tell a soul is because they don't have a whole picture yet. Those who have recognized Jesus as the Messiah have much to learn about what that means. Because right after Mark 8, all of Jesus' miracles almost stop. We only have three more for the rest of the book. And the controlling symbol of the real Jesus becomes the cross. And Jesus says over and over and over again, "I'm going to the cross. I'm going to the cross. And if anyone wants to follow me, they have to go to their cross to do so."

Jesus could only be rightly understood and rightly followed as the Son of Man who will surrender power in order to suffer and die. That's the only way you could know Jesus. And this is what brings the dramatic tension in Mark's book, because no one sees Jesus for truly who He is, and everyone who thinks they do, He tells to be quiet. No one really sees Jesus until the cross, because who Jesus is is wrapped up in what He came to do. And a huge part of what Christ has come to do is to give His life as a ransom for many. Out of His own mouth He said that.

And Jesus would go to His death, He would hang on a cross praying for forgiveness of His torturers, innocent and finally breathing His last. And then there was Roman centurion, this secular Roman centurion, standing at the foot of the cross. And when Jesus breathed His last breath, he says this:

**"Truly, this man was the Son of God."**

And no one tells him to be quiet. Because what Mark is saying is that he opens this book by saying, "This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," and you and I are going, "How is He the Son of God?" And at the very end of his book, you see Him on the cross and the centurion says, "This is the Son of God," and Mark goes, "Bravo. That is the Son of God."

He's not rebuked. The centurion is not told to keep quiet because this Roman guard sees Jesus for who He is and Mark leaves it there open for the world to know. This is the Son of God. Tell the world. So, we don't get a full picture of Jesus until the cross. If you only know Jesus the teacher or the spiritualist or the humble peasant Jesus, you don't have the whole picture.

In Jesus, God was offering Himself as the one who takes the consequence of our sin and evil on the cross, Jesus offers Himself to the consequences of the world's evil. In the resurrection, He defeats it. He absorbs it and He takes it and then, in the resurrection, He defeats it, He conquers it, He truly crushes His enemies, our enemies, the thing that

has plagued us, the fear of death, the guilt of sin, but also the sin of not attaining to and living into our vocation as humans.

Jesus comes to abolish that and then bring us in again. See, Jesus isn't simply a moral teacher or a social worker or a purveyor of power, He is the suffering Son of God whose rejection and suffering and death revealed the triumph of God over sin and death and the devil. Jesus died so the Kingdom might be truly established in the lives of men and women. And what do you do with this? The news when Jesus says, "The time has come and the Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news." This is a news like if I said, "The building is on fire."

That's news. That's not good news, but it's news. If I said that, you would have to do something with that news. You don't go, "Oh, thanks," you do something. You either stay and die or get out and be saved. That's it. This news is that sort of news. That's what this word means. It's a sort of news that requires a response. This is good news. What do you do? Repent and believe. Repent and believe.

Repentance. Gosh, this word sometimes gets a bad rap. Jesus was summoning His hearers to give up their whole way of life, – that's what repentance means – their national and social agendas and to trust Him for a different agenda, a different set of goals. This, of course, included a change of heart, but it went far beyond that. This was a change of life. This was, "I'm dying to myself and I'm following Jesus."

And "repentance" is the most beautiful word in the Bible because it means on the other side of repentance is God, is the good news, is God receiving us, God coming near to us, drawing near to us, and not just drawing near to us collectively, but also bringing us into what He's doing in the world. These two things – guys, I don't want you to miss these two things. There is salvation and vocation that are tied up in what Jesus has come to do.

There is a salvation that is offered to you right now of freedom from sin and brokenness and, for some of you in here I think this is relevant, the power of Satan in your lives. There's freedom from that. I pray there's freedom even this morning from sickness. I know some of you guys need healing, a physical healing, that the rule of God would speak over your body and say, "Get back in order," and that would happen today. That Jesus would say it and it would be. All of that is true, I believe that can happen. But also, get back to what I've called you to do. Get back to your vocation as an image-bearer of God. Get back to your vocation and making your life about following and proclaiming Jesus everywhere you go and in everything you do.

The time has come, the Kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe this good news. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, I want to pray today that what would happen in this room would be a slice, a bit, of what we see here in Mark 1, Jesus. That there would be freedom here, God. True, real, lasting freedom. I want to pray that if there's anyone here that needs to repent and turn to Christ today, Lord, that they would do so. That You would call them and that You would bring them into this family of God. And I pray against Satan and his power, forces, minions, demons. In Jesus' name I ask that You would dispel the darkness from this room and the city in Christ's name and that You would rule over this church today.

And as You would rule over this church that You would set right the things that are not right, that You would bring relational wholeness, that You would bring physical wholeness, that You would bring economic wholeness, God, that You would bring social wholeness, spiritual wholeness. God, that You would restore us back to You, our relationship with You. That You would tear heaven open again and be among us today. We need You, Lord Jesus. Take Your rightful place as the king, enthroned.

I want to pray, Lord, for people in here who might sense they need prayer and someone to lay their hands on them and pray for them. I pray that You would call them forward today and they might be this very mixed bag of doubt and fear but also hope that You would be who You said You would be and heal or set right or answer. And I pray that, God, You would just give us enough faith to trust You.

I pray for anyone in here who just really feels like they have a gift of healing today, that they would go around this room and pray for people. I pray that whatever would happen, even in this time of response, would be like the Kingdom of God unleashed, the rule of God broken out into the life of this church and then, through us, the life of this city. You are real, Jesus. We don't come here just to clap our hands, sing songs and eat crackers dipped in a cup. You are real, Christ. And we ask that You would, in a real way, move. Set us free. Crush the things that are crushing us. In Jesus' name, amen.