

**SERIES: GETTING TO KNOW JESUS**

**SUBJECT: THE REST OF THE GOOD NEWS**

**SCRIPTURE: MARK 1:9-15**

**SERMON NO. 3**

In the mid 1800s, Charles Berry, a pastor in England wrote in his diary, of how he became a Christian, after he was already a pastor. He said that at that time he preached a "very thin gospel" really no gospel at all. He viewed Jesus as merely a good teacher not the divine redeemer.

Late one night during his first pastorate, he was sitting in his cozy study, and there came a knock. He opened the door and found a young girl with a shawl over her head and clogs on her feet. "Are you a minister?" she asked. When he said, "Yes", she went on breathlessly. "You must come with me quickly. I want you to get my mother in."

Thinking the mother was a drunk who needed to get out of the cold, Berry said, "You must go and get a policeman." "No," said the girl, "My mother is dying, and you must come and get her into heaven." So, Berry got dressed and followed her for a mile and a half through a maze of unlit streets. He went into an old apartment and knelt at the woman's side. He began telling her how good and kind Jesus was and how He'd come to show us how to live.

Then the desperate woman cut him off. "Mister," she cried, "that's no use for the likes of me. I'm a sinner. I've lived my life. Can't you tell me of someone who can have mercy upon me and save my poor soul?"

Then he wrote, "I stood there in the presence of a dying woman, and I realized I had nothing to tell her. In the midst of sin and death, I had no message. In order to bring something to that dying woman, I leaped back to my mother's knee, to my simple cradle faith, and I told her the story of the Cross and of a Christ who is able to save to the uttermost." The tears began to run down the woman's cheeks. "Now you're getting it," she said. "Now you're helping me."

Berry concluded the account by writing, "I got her in, and praise to God, I got in myself." Are you in? Can you help someone else get in?

## Introduction

In last week's message, we looked at the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ starting with Repentance and Forgiveness. If you don't start there, you're not going to understand what we're talking about today. Make sure you have started at the beginning with your understanding of the gospel.

Only with that foundation will the message of the second half of the gospel start to make sense.

### I. Jesus' Baptism

#### A. He Comes to John

So, let's pick up where we left off last week. We'll start our reading at verse 9 of Mark 1.

Mark 1:9-11 9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

All four gospel writers record this event in Jesus' life. That tells me that God thought this event to be pretty significant. But not only is it significant, it's also pretty strange at first glance.

As we saw last week, a great spiritual awakening had broken out in Israel at this time. People were leaving their homes by the hundreds, if not thousands to go into the desert to hear a man by the name of John, preach a simple message of repentance and forgiveness.

And it was into this desert place that the man who had been born in a manger in Bethlehem, 30 years before, now came. Jesus stood before John, wanting to be baptized.

If you read Matthew's account of this incident, he tells us that John protested when Jesus came to him to be baptized...

Matthew 3:14-15 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

John and Jesus were second cousins. Their moms were best of friends. So, John knew that Jesus was a paradigm of virtue. And he couldn't understand what sins Jesus had to repent of-and in fact, Jesus had none. But He still insisted on being baptized. Why? Let me give you three reasons:

#### B. Three Reasons Why

1. First, Jesus' baptism was an identification with each in the human race. When Jesus took our place by dying on Calvary's cross, and He assumed the consequences of our sin, that wasn't the beginning of His identification with us. His identification started here at the Jordan river, in the waters of baptism-in an act of repentance.

I love the writings of theologian and pastor, Dr. Harry Ironside. He wrote the words that are on the front of your WIG's this morning...

"...we are paupers who have accumulated so many debts that we cannot pay them. These are our sins. These tremendous claims are made against us, and we cannot possibly meet them. But when Jesus came, He took all these mortgages and notes and agreements we could not meet and endorsed them with his own name, thereby saying that He intended to pay them, He would meet them. This is what His baptism signifies, and is why Jesus said to John the Baptist, 'thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' He declared His intention to meet the righteous demands of God by Himself undertaking to pay the debts of men." (Dr. Harry Ironside).

So, the first reason for Jesus being baptized was clearly identify with each of us. We're the ones who need to repent and receive forgiveness because of our sins-Not the Son of God-not Jesus! But He chose to be baptized anyway, to identify with each one of us-who are members of sinful humanity, and whose debt He was going to pay.

2. Second, it was an empowering moment. Look at verse 10, again...

Mark 1:10 10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

At this point, Jesus received the Holy Spirit. As we discovered last week, the Holy Spirit's power was the missing piece to John's baptism and message. The Holy Spirit indwelling a person is what keeps that person from continuing in sin. Without the power of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives, we are doomed to falling back into sinful patterns and turning our back on the relationship with God we have.

Furthermore, verse 8 tells us that the one who was coming after John-Jesus-would have the Holy Spirit and baptize or immerse people into this reality for their lives.

Illustration: When I got my drivers license when I was 16 years old, like most 16 year olds, I wanted a vehicle of my own. In fact, I wanted a Corvette! But I didn't have the money to be able to afford a Corvette, and my father didn't have the money to buy me a Corvette. But because my dad loved me, he allowed me to use what he had. He had a white 1968 Chevy pickup truck. And he said I could use it on weekends.

The point is that you cannot give what you do not have. My father couldn't give me a Corvette because he didn't have one to give. All he had was a white Chevy pickup, so that's what he gave me to use.

This display of the heavens opening up and the Spirit of God descending on Jesus was the visible sign that Jesus now had the missing piece of the Gospel to give-He had the Holy Spirit of God. Which when possessed by an individual, has the power to make true repentance a lasting reality.

3. The third reason why Jesus had to be baptized was because Jesus needed assurance that He was in God's Will.

Friends, don't lose sight of the fact that while Jesus was God, He was also fully a man. He was a human being just like you and me. Therefore, He needed assurance or approval that He was in God's will. He needed assurance that what He was about to embark upon was indeed what God wanted Him to do. So, the voice of God came out of heaven and said, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

The approval of our parents is very important to us, isn't it?

Illustration: I can remember when Jori was preparing to take her driver's test. We spent time in the church parking lot driving around, and learning to parallel park. At the end of each of these sessions, she would turn to me and ask, "Do you think I did alright?" Even though I wasn't the one who was going to be issuing her her driver's license, and even though I wasn't a part of the DMV, my approval-parental approval-was very important to her. It is for all of us.

And this is what God the Father was giving to Jesus the Son-His approval. That's the third reason for Jesus' baptism. But something else happened that speaks of Jesus' identification with humans. Look at the next two verses...

### III. Jesus Temptation

Mark 1:12-13 12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, 13 and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Being baptized by John was just a part of the identification that Jesus needed to accomplish. Because life isn't just mountain top spiritual experiences. Life is painful at times. Life hurts sometimes. Life is hard and difficult sometimes.

In order for Jesus to be our Savior-and fully identify with our humanity-He needed to identify with not only our high points, but also with our struggles, difficulties and temptations. And so, He was led out into the desert, in the wild, and was tempted by Satan. Let me show you four things about this further identification with our humanity...

## A. He had the Power of the Spirit

The first thing to notice is that temptation didn't occur until Jesus had received the Holy Spirit. Being immersed in the Spirit of God is what keeps us from giving into temptation during difficult times. We would completely collapse under the weight of discouraging times or extreme temptation if we didn't have God's Spirit residing in us.

Illustration: A movie I liked a number of years ago was entitled, "My Bodyguard". It was a story about a shy, timid high school student who was getting beat up on a regular basis by the bullies of his school. He was intimidated by people, and he wasn't confident in most circumstances. So, he hired a big, strong, older teenager to be his personal body guard. From that point on, when he faced any opponents he had been afraid of in the past, he approached them with no fear. Why? Because he knew he had a power behind him that was much stronger and more experienced than any power he had to face at his school or with his peers.

Well, that's one of the reasons why Jesus could now go to the desert and go one on one with Satan himself. Jesus, in His humanity, knew for a fact that He had a power behind him that was greater than anything he'd face in the desert. And friends, we have that same power...

1 John 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

## B. He stayed while in difficult circumstances

A second thing I want you to notice about this desert experience, is that Jesus didn't try to get out of the desert when Satan attacked. He remained under difficult circumstances-in fact, He stayed there for 40 days!

Have you ever been in a desert? I'm not talking about living here or in Phoenix-I'm talking about hard times. All of us have. Some of you, I know, are going through some desert experiences right now. Life is hard and unfriendly. You have everything you can do to live till the next day. Some of you actually fear for your life because of a disease you're carrying. And others of you are despondent because of recent things that have happened that have been out of your control.

It's during these "desert experiences" that followers of Jesus have a choice. Either we can choose to trust in God and His power, or trust in us and our power. Trusting in God is humility. And trusting in ourselves is pride. And God says...

James 4:6b 6 ... "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Jesus was in the desert, and He made it through. It lasted 40 long, hard days, but He made it through on the power of God's Holy Spirit in His life. And that's the example He sets for each of us-We can make it through any "desert experience" if we rely on God's power, rather than our power.

## C. He was with the wild animals

A third thing that I want you to notice is something that Mark makes a big deal of in verse 13... He was with the wild animals.

I don't want to get too metaphorical here, but I see an important point in this phrase. There are wild things in desert places. Things like: snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, wasps, hornets, lions, coyotes, termites, bees, vultures and other creatures that are just ready to take advantage of and attack a fatigued individual going through a desert. And the same is true for the desert experiences of our lives.

I've experienced "wild animals" in some of my "desert experiences". And I'll bet you have too! -People who were friends, turn against you because they don't understand your situation. -Lies and half-truths are spoken about you. -Authority figures aren't sympathetic to your needs, or don't have time to spend with you. -People you look to for comfort and sympathy, don't and aren't. -You feel attacked by the ones you look to for security. -You feel utterly alone. Do you know the feeling? Folks, Jesus was there! And He knows what it is like to face the wild beasts. It is another way He identifies with us.

#### D. Angels Attended Him

The final thing I want you to see, is something very exciting! God provided angels to attend Jesus. Actually, the construction in the Greek reads, "angels were continually serving him." In other words, they didn't just serve him at the end of His time in the wilderness. Rather, all through the wilderness experience angels were there serving, protecting and attending to His needs.

And that's one of the beauties of the reality that is going on around us, that we don't see with our eyes. Paul taught in 2 Corinthians that what we can see now is only temporary, and therefore not permanent reality. Only that which is not seen is truly real.

All around God's children is a mighty force of angels protecting and attending us during our times of need. Jesus experienced it in the desert, and we can experience it in our "deserts" as well. The key is to lean on the everlasting arms of God, and not our own human understanding.

#### IV. Conclusion

This section in Mark concludes with these verses...

Mark 1:14-15 14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

John the Baptist's ministry was now over. And it had to be. As we saw in last week's message, John's message was incomplete. It needed something else. Jesus knew what that something else was, because of His complete identification with us. Once the Holy Spirit had been given to Jesus, John's incomplete ministry of just repentance and forgiveness ended, and Jesus' complete message of the good news began.

What did Jesus add to John's incomplete message of good news to make it complete? Two simple things to complete the good news...

#### A. The Kingdom is near

First, The Kingdom is near. What did He mean by that? Simply put, He meant that all these things that we've been considering this morning-our desert experiences, repenting of sin, being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, facing wild beasts, being attended to by angels... all these things are part of a kingdom that was not revealed before, but now it is.

Jesus is saying that we are surrounded by an invisible spiritual kingdom, with great forces of good and evil all around us. In that kingdom, God is king. He reigns supreme. And that kingdom governs all the events of history, all the events of our daily lives, and all of our circumstances. So that when we are related to that kingdom, we are related to the ultimate power and authority in the universe.

#### B. Repent and Believe

Then the second part is, Repent and Believe. This combines John's message of repentance with the ONE who was greater than John, and whom John looked forward to. -Repentance says that you WANT to be holy. -But Belief is what MAKES you holy. -Belief means that you trust only in the fact that Jesus is the One who forgives your sins, and purifies you from unrighteousness. -Believing the good news means you trust it as the only way to take care of your sin debt. -Believe means that salvation is nothing you do, and everything that Jesus does. Friends, that's the good news of Christmas. It's simple and uncomplicated. It is simple enough for you to tell someone about. And it is simple enough for you to understand it accept it.