

**“Good News in a Bad News World”**

Mark 1:1–8

11 March 2018

**GETTING TO KNOW YOU**

1. Would you prefer to vacation in the wilderness with its isolation, roughness and risk, or in the business of a town and city surrounded by lots of people and structured activity?

**WORLDVIEW**

2. How does the Christian worldview of being secure, blessed and protected in Christ correspond to the reality that Christians often find themselves in the wilderness, facing a desert of difficulty?

**INTO THE BIBLE**

3. The author of this book is John Mark. We will come to appreciate his particular urgent and emphatic style and his obvious love of the gospel and of Jesus Christ, who is the gospel. But Mark was not always steadfast in this gospel truth. What do you appreciate from the following passages regarding the journey that he took in coming to love the gospel?

**Acts 12:1–3, 11–12**—About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread.... When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” When he realised this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

**Acts 12:25; 13:4–5, 13**—And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.... So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.... Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

**Acts 15:36–38**—And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

**Colossians 4:10–11**—Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

**2 Timothy 4:9–11**—Do your best to come to me soon. 10 For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

**1 Peter 5:12–13**—By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.

What do you also learn about his relationship with the Apostle Peter, whom many scholars see as being a great influence in Mark's Gospel?

#### DIGGING DEEPER

4. Can you comment on the significance of the wilderness motif that is already apparent in this introduction to Mark's gospel? What's the theological significance? What are the pastoral concerns that motivate Mark (and perhaps Peter) to develop this motif?
  
5. Are we to view the four Gospels at the start of the New Testament simply as biographies or narratives of the life and times of Jesus Christ? Do they form part of a bigger picture? How do you justify your answer from these opening verses? Of what relevance is this to you?
  
6. What do you appreciate about the proclamation of the gospel from John's approach to doing so? What comparisons and contrasts to current proclamation, even in your own life, do you see?
  
7. Too often nowadays, Jesus Christ is regarded simply as a humble, Galilean peasant who had some wise words and a way with people. How would John respond to such an estimation of Jesus? What would you say in response to such a statement that would point to really good news?

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As you do your regular grocery shopping, please remember to add something to your trolley to donate to the Food for the Family ministry. Regularly used items include: rice (1kg or 2kg); juice; washing powder (auto or hand wash); cooking oil (750ml or 2-litre); peanut butter; syrup; jam; tea; coffee; sandwich spread; pilchards; tuna; cake flour; baked beans; butter beans; mixed vegetables; tomato and onion mix; other canned foods; Cremora or long-life milk; pasta; noodles; condiments (tomato sauce, mustard), etc.; sugar (1kg or 2.5kg); mielie meal; bath soap; deodorant (roll-on); toothpaste. Speak to Patson Ngidi for more information.