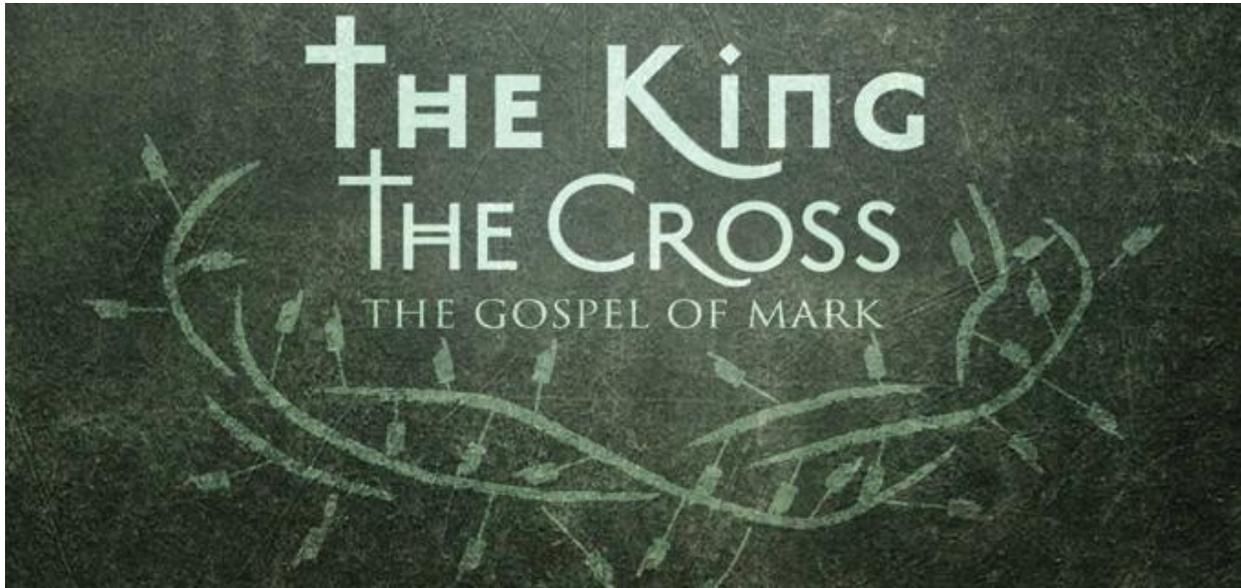


The King The Cross
Sermon Series on the Gospel of Mark
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
June 3, 2018

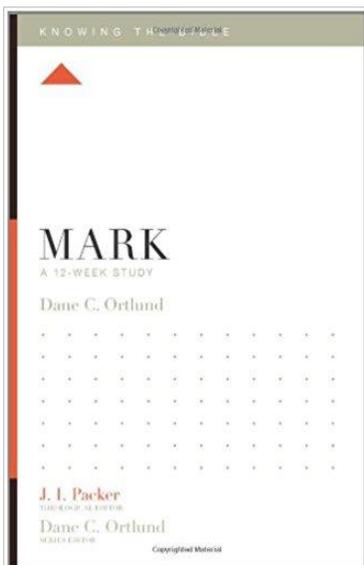
TEXT: Mark 1:1-15



Good morning, Beloved. This morning we begin a new series, but I want to tie up a couple of loose ends from our Spring Series, and I want to thank you, our church family, for praying for a group of us as we traveled to Lebanon. We just returned, and I want to tell you very briefly that the Jesus Christ we are going to be getting to know afresh in our Summer Series is the same Jesus Christ that is at work in the world today. We had the opportunity to see the local church in action. Hikmat Kashouh is the pastor of the Resurrection Church in Beirut, and the church has grown to 1,200 people in recent days. As the church is ministering and worshipping, those services are livestreamed throughout the Arab world. Satellite TV monitors how many people are watching, and a conservative estimate is that there are 30,000 people watching every Sunday morning. People are coming to faith week by week, and that was very powerful to see. We met the people who are leading small groups, and I met an Egyptian man that was on staff at the church. He is gifted with small groups. I asked, "How many small groups have you started?" He thought, and he said, "About 5,000." That local church currently has 300 small groups, and I asked the man next to him, "Tell me a little bit about your small groups." He said, "I oversee four small groups closely." I asked, "Who is in your small groups?" He said, "Well, half of the people in my small groups are former ISIS fighters." Jesus Christ is active in the world!

We taught the CASKET EMPTY material at the Arabic Baptist Theological Seminary. The material has recently been translated into Arabic. We provided material to support a pastoral training center in Sudan and got to know a pastor in Syria. I asked him, "How is the church in Syria?" He said, "This may be difficult for you to understand, but the war has actually been really good for the church. We are in a spiritual battle between light and darkness, and when you see the darkness and it shows itself as it really is, then people run to the light. Our church has grown from 30 to 650." We had dinner with him at the wonderful Mediterranean hour of 10 PM and then he was driving home, going back to Damascus. I suggested, "So, you are on the road to Damascus tonight." He said, "Yes, I am." "Do you ever think about that Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus?" He said, "I think about that every time. We know where it happened, just a few miles outside the city." Jesus Christ is on the move. We had a great window into the church in action; we had a great window into a hands-on ministry. Our medical team served, and they were indefatigable. They saw hundreds of patients in a less-than-ideal situation. They had the chance to pray with people and really reach out with the love of Christ in a very concrete way. Some of the children that were seen had never seen a physician in their lives. It was deeply moving to see the integration of the church and worship and then the church in the community. We also had a chance to see the seminary behind that, supporting and training future leaders. Thank you for praying for us. We are thrilled to be back.

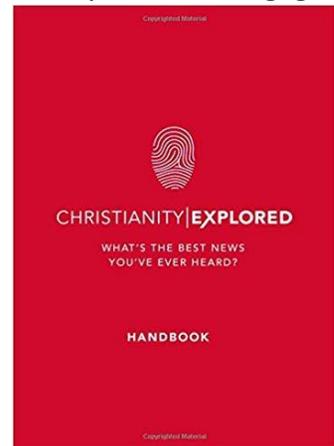
Let's turn our attention to where we are going now, the Gospel of Mark. Keep your Bible open. I want to encourage you right at the beginning. Pastor Scott has ordered materials for us to use. First is a journaling copy of the Gospel of Mark. I am hoping over the summer to see many of these small black books throughout the congregation. It has the text of Mark and blank pages. Some of our people at Kenwood are our doodlers. They doodle when the Spirit of the Lord comes on them. I had to be told this, because when you're preaching and someone is drawing,



at first you think, "Hey, I'm trying to explain the gospel up here, and you are drawing pictures!" But then, I found out later, that's the way they are really being engaged. So, if that's you, doodle away and make notes from the Gospel of Mark. This is a portable version. We want to get into the text, and we also have a study guide for our summer series. The real aim of this series is that we would follow and read along the Gospel of Mark with a view to reading the gospel with people who have not read the gospel before. Our hope and prayer for this summer is that we would have 25 evangelistic efforts, whether one-on-one or a small group in your neighborhood. Pastor Scott showed me the list on Thursday night, and it looks like we have 29 initiatives, and some of those are one-on-one. I praise God for that, because this is really our

task. Our task is not just to come to church on Sunday and be fed, but we are to come to church

so that we might be fed in order that we can feed others. Our prayer is that you would engage in this chance. We are going to do this together, some of us, with a study called *Christianity Explored*, which is a study that is based on the Gospel of Mark. It is really designed for you to read the gospel with people who have not read it before. The Word of God is powerful. We saw that day after day in Lebanon and we see that in our community here.



As we start this morning, we are going to look at the opening section of Mark's Gospel. Mark is a summary of Peter's preaching, and as we look at the Gospel of Mark, I want to frame the message this morning with the three questions that guide *Christianity Explored*. I want you to write these questions down, and I hope that they are clear to you by the end of the sermon. Then, I hope that through you, these questions become clearer to people in Cincinnati throughout the summer. The three questions of *Christianity Explored* are these simple but profound questions:

- Number one: Who is Jesus?
- Number two: Why did Jesus come?
- Number three: What does it mean for us?

These simple questions frame *Christianity Explored* with the prayer and hope that by reading through the Gospel of Mark we would come to understand the answers to these questions. As we look at Mark's Gospel, we begin with this first question in view: Who is Jesus? Mark 1:1 begins:

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

In Mark's opening sentence, we are told part of the answer to Who is Jesus? On *Christianity Explored's* website, the answer that they give to “Who is Jesus?” is that “He is the Christ. In other words, He is the King whom God Himself had promised to send and who would put everything right by setting up a kingdom of justice and love.” Who is Jesus? Jesus is a King, so the title of our summer series: *The King, The Cross, The Gospel of Mark*. The first thought that should come to your mind in answer to the question “Who is Jesus?” from the Gospel of Mark is that Jesus is King. The first thing Mark tells us about Him is that He is the Christ, which is the term describing an anointed, designated King. He is the King whom God promised to send. Mark's gospel links the identity of Jesus with a story that occurs before Jesus comes. In other words, God promised to send Jesus. Jesus comes into this world as God's next move of a great story, and Mark signals for us immediately the promise of God that is behind the moment when Jesus appears. Mark 1:2 says:

“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way,’”

Isaiah the prophet Isaiah prophesied about 700 years before of Mark. Some of us at Kenwood are more familiar with the Bible than others, and some of you might be feeling a little incongruity because this quotation is actually not from Isaiah. Mark gives us a double quotation but just one source. This quotation is actually from Malachi, the very last chapters of the Old Testament. Malachi 3:1:

“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me.”

Right before Jesus comes into this world, God sends prophetic messengers to prepare the way. Mark 1:3 gives us then the quote from Isaiah 40:3 about this messenger:

“. . .the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,'”

Some of you love construction projects. I love to see construction projects. I drive through them; I like to see the progress; I like to watch the videos online of what it's going to look like. Other people in our family or friends they don't like to did do that. It stresses them out. It's hazardous. One construction project we drove through recently revealed its hazardous nature, because we got home I had nails in my tires. Thankfully, that was easily fixed. But, this process of preparing the way is a massive theological construction project. It is leveling the mountains, filling in the valleys, and, according the prophet's vision, there will be a figure coming right before the Lord Himself arrives. Mark tells us that this is the figure of John, John the Baptist. Fulfilling this prophetic expectation, he appears in the wilderness, baptizing. He is immersing people in the Jordan River with a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. We have to take note of this carefully. What is the requisite preparation for Jesus' coming into your life? The requisite preparation in the Gospel of Mark is a signal to get ready for the Lord's own appearing by confessing our sins. God Himself is about to arrive. The people stream out to see John the Baptist. They confess their sins, and according the Gospel of Mark, John has a very peculiar outfit. He's wearing a camel-hair jacket or a camel-hair outfit and a leather belt. He has a peculiar diet: locusts and wild honey—something that probably none of us eat as the staple of our diet. Yet, John's clothing and his diet actually signal to us who he is. There was only one other person in the Bible that acts in this way, the prophet Elijah. The Lord had said in Malachi 4:5, the last breath of the Old Testament:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”

The New Testament witnesses that John is this figure, preparing the people for the arrival of the Lord Himself. Who is Jesus? Jesus as the King, coming into the world, promised by God. John says that he is not worthy to loosen the strap of His sandal. John says of Him in Mark 1:8:

“I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Then, suddenly, Jesus Himself enters the narrative in Mark 1:9. Jesus comes from Nazareth. He

is baptized in the Jordan, and as He comes up out of the water, the heavens open and the Spirit of God descends upon Him dove-like echoing the Spirit of the Lord in the opening sentence of the Bible: the Spirit of the Lord hovering over the waters, ready to bring new life and creation. A voice from heaven, the voice of the Father came and said in Mark 1:11:

“You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.”

The Father's voice is heard; the Spirit is visible; Jesus is identified as the Son of God.

“Who is Jesus?” Jesus is the Christ. He is the King God promised to send, and He's the King who would put everything right. This world is not right. The human heart is radically disordered, but the Son of God comes to set up righteousness and to set up the kingdom of God. The Spirit of the Lord leads Jesus into the wilderness where He battles with our ancient enemy, the enemy of our souls, the accuser. Jesus is tempted by Satan, and yet He defeats him in the wilderness. After conquering the devil as a prelude to His public ministry, Jesus, the promised King, comes now into full public view in Mark 1:14-15. These are the critical verses for us this morning. Mark 1:14 tells us the beginning of Jesus' public ministry as it took place. After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, and Jesus' primary activity was proclamation, preaching, heralding. Jesus heralded the gospel of God, the Good News of God. The royal announcement of God is on the lips of Jesus, the promised King. As Isaiah 52:7 had said:

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”

The good news of the gospel is the reign of God. You may be living in a reign of self, which is really of a reign of tyranny. You may be living under tyrannical human power. You may be swept along by currents of a culture that you can scarcely control. Jesus the King, the promised King, the Son of God, comes to establish the kingdom of God in this world. He proclaims the gospel of God. Then we have the content of the gospel in Mark 1:15:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

This is the content of the gospel, the center proclamation of Jesus' ministry. There are two declarations. Jesus says:

- Number one: The time is fulfilled.
- Number two: The kingdom of God is at hand.

The time is fulfilled, Jesus announces. According to God's promise, there was a time that would come. Those who remember the CASKET EMPTY series remember that God promised a sequence of kingdoms, and tyrannical power would be overthrown with the kingdom of God. Those who would exploit and oppress others, their tyrannical rule would be replaced with the rule of the Son of Man.

Jesus says the time is fulfilled. The Son of Man is here, the One who brings the kingdom of God into this world. Jesus declares openly the kingdom of God is at hand. This is a thrilling announcement! When I think of the places or moments in history where I would have liked to have been, this is right near the top of the list. I wish that I could have been in that crowd on the hills of Galilee, because no one had ever said this before. The promise of the kingdom was announced: it's the vocation of humanity in Genesis 1. It was announced clearly in Daniel 7 that God would set up a kingdom with an altar stone, the stone cut without human hands, which would strike the statute of the kingdoms of this world and they would topple. The kingdom of God would rise as a mountain large enough to accommodate all the peoples of the earth. This kingdom was promised. When you look at the liturgy of the synagogue in the intertestamental period, there is a prayer for the arrival of the kingdom of God that is prayed a thousand times a year. Everyone knew the kingdom was coming. They were praying for it, and finally, we hear for the first time, someone is standing out publicly. Everyone knows the kingdom of God is coming. Everyone knows that God is the real King of the world. Everyone is wondering when, and here comes this voice on the hills of Galilee saying the kingdom of God is here! This is the distinctive note of Jesus' preaching. Jesus doesn't mention the kingdom as a novelty. The distinctive note of Jesus' preaching is that the kingdom is here. No one had said this. Those who heard it, their hearts must have burst with joy. The kingdom of God is here. That means tyrannical powers' days are over. That means there must be a sacrifice coming when earthly power will be crumbling and the kingdom will grow, never to be replaced. The kingdom of God is at hand!

Jesus' announcement that the kingdom of God is at hand calls for a response, and it is a twofold response. It is twofold in the sense that it is two sides of one coin. What is the response that Jesus is seeking from His hearers then and now? Jesus asks us to repent, and that is to turn away from a life that's lived for self, turn away from sin, turn away from exploitation and oppression of others, and turn toward God with faith. Jesus invites His hearers then and now to repent of our sin and believe, that is to entrust ourselves to Him, believe in the gospel.

To the first question, we already have a lot to say in the first 15 verses of the Gospel of Mark: Who is Jesus? Jesus is the King. He is the promised Son of God who has come into the world to establish the kingdom. This is real. Politics come and go; this kingdom is forever. Jesus' public ministry demonstrates the reality of His kingdom. Again, back to *Christianity Explored*, the first question about Who is Jesus? The ending of that answer is that "Jesus proved who He was by what He did: He calmed storms; He raised the dead, and by doing these things, the King was giving a glimpse of life in His kingdom—a perfect place, no suffering, fear, or death. It's the world we all want." Jesus demonstrates this in the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark. He calls people to follow Him, and you know what? They do it. It's amazing, actually. This doesn't usually happen when someone just says, "Follow me," and people leave what they're doing. They follow Him. Jesus teaches with authority; people are astonished at His teaching. Jesus

frees people in Mark 1 from demonic oppression. Jesus heals the sick, demonstrating the reality of His kingdom, and Mark tells us that great crowds of people were following Him. Simon said to Jesus: "Everyone is looking for You!" I would love to be able say that in our community, wouldn't you, that everyone is looking for Jesus? Mark 1:45 says that "people were coming to Him from every quarter." This is my prayer for our church this summer. It is fun to see Kenwood on a map. About half of us live within 5 miles of this sanctuary, but the rest of us are just strewn about throughout the metro Cincinnati region. Some of us cross great rivers to be here! Wouldn't it be great if we could say by the end of the summer that people were coming to Jesus from every quarter? Who is Jesus? He is the King who brings the kingdom of God. The second and third questions we will touch very briefly this morning, because it's going to take the rest of the summer for us to grasp these, and we are going to follow Mark's telling of the story.

But, back to *Christianity Explored*. Why did Jesus come? *Christianity Explored* answers this concisely: "Jesus came to be rejected, to be killed, to rise again." This is surprising. The King, the promised One, the bringer of the kingdom, surely He would be honored if everyone is coming to Him from every corner. They must be gripped by His preaching. He seems to be the most popular figure of the first century! This King who brings the kingdom of God knows what will be required to bring the kingdom of God. Adoniram Judson and his wife Ann were the first missionaries ever to leave the shores of this country. The first ones ever; first foreign missionaries ever to leave the United States. They went to Southeast Asia to the country of Burma. They worked for six years and no one responded. Six years of learning the language, presenting Christ and no one responded. One of the men who seemed close told Adoniram Judson that Jesus could not be the Son of God. He could not be the Son of God because no king would allow his son to be treated in the way that you say God allowed His Son to be treated. He was scandalized by the cross, and Judson gently replied to him that he was still thinking like a human being and that he must reject human thinking to come to Christ. The real follower of Christ does not ask, "Does this make sense to my thinking, but rather says 'Is it in the Book?'" Brothers and sisters, it is in the Book! When Jesus Himself answers the question, "Why did He come?" we have to wait until Mark 10:45 when Jesus answers very clearly with a statement of vocation that is just so staggering. Jesus, the Son of Man in glory. Daniel 7, the Son of Man to whom is given a kingdom and glory that all peoples would serve Him. Jesus the One worthy of all honor and praise, Jesus the Son of Man, explains why He came in a single sentence. He says in Mark 10:45:

"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Why did Jesus come? He came to be rejected. The world's rejection of its true King is the final contribution to the sin of the world that Jesus would carry. God, who is outside of time, sees all

the sin of the world. I invite you even in this moment to define the sin around you. Find the easy sin first. It's the sin that others have committed against you. This is so easy to grab and remember. Make the transition away from how people have sinned against you and consider your own sin in your lifetime, any moment, any thought, any way that you did not honor God, any way that you did not do what God has asked you to do, any way that you did something that God didn't want you to do, Think of just your own contribution. Add the contribution of your family; add the contribution of the generations in your family; add our city; add the metro regions of our country; and then add the rural areas, add the sin of our entire nation, our continent, our world, all the offenses against God poured into a cup of wrath. Jesus came to absorb this wrath. He came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom. You see, when you aggregate the sin of the world, it makes the devil's job very easy. *Devil* means *accuser*. He is the prosecuting attorney from hell. You don't deserve to be in God's presence. Take a look at that mountain of sin. Jesus came to pay the ransom price. He came to be rejected, to be killed and rise again.

What does it mean for us? What it means for us is that a response is required. What it means for us is that indifference is impossible. If Jesus is the King, the Promised One who brings the kingdom of God to this world, if Jesus is the One who came to be rejected, killed, and rise again, and offer Himself as a ransom for the sin of the world, then a response is required. What does it mean for us? What it means for us is that we receive Jesus' invitation to come into His kingdom. Jesus, right from the beginning, tells us to repent and believe. Repentance means to turn around. We are all going in the wrong direction. Turn around and follow Jesus. To believe in Him is to trust Him in everything that He has done. Who is Jesus? He is the promised King. Why did He come? He came to be rejected, to be killed, and to rise again. What does it mean for us? It means that we are to repent and believe and that we then enter into His kingdom. Those who enter the kingdom of Jesus Christ find eternal life. Eternal life begins now. It's a life of deep security, satisfaction, and joy in knowing God and His forgiveness. It's being held by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, looking forward to the King's return when His kingdom will be fully established in all the earth. Jesus offers this to anyone this morning who repents and believes.

What is our response as a community this morning? Every first message in a series at Kenwood has as application: "Get the book," so you know that's coming. We have two books: the *Gospel of Mark Guide* by Dane Ortlund and the Gospel of Mark edition for journaling. The second application, though, is where it gets dangerous. We prayed for 25 evangelistic efforts. We are praising God that it looks like there are already 29, but there isn't a limit, is there? I really want you to consider who around you might be just might be willing to read the Gospel of Mark with you, whether that's over lunch every other week in the summer; whether that's over a barbecue. I was driving to Kenwood this morning, and I saw the one the synagogues in

Cincinnati was having a barbecue. I thought, "Wait a minute. How can they do that?" I looked at the subtext of the sign and it said: "Kosher Barbecue." I don't know what that is, but they are having a celebration. So, if you want to have a barbecue and invite people over, you can read the Gospel of Mark in connection with the time on your back porch. We have some who are meeting in the morning, early morning. Some people think really clearly at 5:30 AM. If that's not you, don't start your group at that time. You have to know who you are. But, we want to read the Gospel, and I just want to encourage you pray this morning that God would show you who is around you? One or two? Three or four? It doesn't matter, but this is what God is challenging us with as a community: not just to be hearers of the gospel, but bearers of the gospel. As we journey, let's get clearer and clearer about the answer to these questions: Who is Jesus? He is the King, the Son of God who brings the kingdom into this world. Why did He come? He came to be rejected, to be killed, and to rise again. What does it mean for us it? It means we must repent and believe in Him, and all who repent and believe in Him become bearers of that gospel.

Jesus Himself on the night in which He was betrayed in the presence of His disciples, He took bread and He broke it. He said: "This is My body which is given for you. He took the cup and said: "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood poured out for you." This is the table of the King, the Son of God, and all you need to do to partake is to recognize that you contributed to the cross. Each one of us made the cross of Christ necessary, and if you can acknowledge your own sinfulness before God and say, "Jesus, thank You for paying the ransom for me," you are welcome at this table. The New Testament says that when we partake together, we proclaim His death until He comes. So would you join your heart with mine as we prepare?

Lord Jesus, we worship You this morning, King of glory, saving Son of Man. We praise You that You have given Your life as our ransom, and we repent gladly, gratefully, and believe. Lord, as we partake together of Your table, we pray that the gospel will be written upon our hearts, that it would be evident in how we live, and that You would open up surprising opportunities to us. Persuade each one of us this summer about how You are moving in our community and that You desire to move through us, we pray.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.