

Who is Jesus?

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Mark chapter 1. Before Christmas, just as we came to Christmas, we were looking at Colossians. And at the end of Colossians, the last chapter, we had that list of people.

There was various people that Paul is thankful for. And he lists them out and he sends greetings and he gives news of different people. And he mentions particularly somebody, Paul mentioned somebody that he'd fallen out with in the past.

John Mark, he'd split, they'd gone their separate ways, there had been a nasty following. But some years later, Paul has John Mark with him in prison and he is on good terms with him.

And he is going to help deliver some of these letters that Paul was writing. And it's thought by some of the commentators, we're not sure about this, that whilst John Mark was with Paul when he was in prison in Rome, he wrote the Gospel of Mark.

We don't know exactly if that was the time. But what we do know is that it was John Mark, it was Mark who wrote this Gospel. Peter would have been giving him the eyewitness accounts that he writes of.

[1 : 16] But it was Mark himself who penned this Gospel. And that in itself is an encouragement. Because Mark is somebody who may have thought when he failed, Mark on his first missionary journey, he failed badly, he deserted Paul.

He left him high and dry, he made a right mess of things. And Mark may have thought at that point, well there's no way back to any kind of Christian usefulness for me. In actual fact, he couldn't have been further from the truth that that was what he thought.

Because we have this Gospel which God used Mark to write. So there's encouragement even before we start reading this passage. But we'll read the opening sections of Mark chapter 1.

The beginning of the Gospel. If you could turn with me back, please, now to Mark chapter 1.

Let's pray as we go there. Father, we thank you that your word is to our feet a lamp and to our path a light. And we thank you that that word is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

[2 : 44] And we thank you that that same Holy Spirit, he is our teacher. And as we call upon him to help us to see our sin and to see Christ and to see our need of him, and we pray that the Holy Spirit would be active in this place with us, within us, with the children, Lord, as the teachers seek to bring the Gospel message simply and clearly to them.

Lord, we need your help and we pray that you would draw near to us now. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Have you ever been in a situation where you have been offered a lift somewhere in a car and you've accepted the lift?

And then when you're hurtling down the motorway or along a single track road, you really wish you hadn't accepted the lift. I remember once accepting a lift from Loch Cairn it was all the way to Glasgow, which is a long drive.

And I accepted the lift from Rory Barbas, the Reverend Rory McRae. He has one eye and he has a right foot that I think is made of solid lead.

Because it didn't leave the floor of the car. From the second we left Loch Cairn until we got to Glasgow, we just flew at breakneck speed across country.

[4 : 12] It was like being in a car with a rally driver. And it struck me as I was reading again through Mark this last few days, that Mark is the rally driver of the Gospels.

Mark moves at lightning fast speed through the life and the death and the resurrection of Christ. In these 16 short chapters, he wastes no time, no words. He just moves at such pace through the Gospel.

His favourite words, his two favourite words. One is immediately. 41 times in Mark's Gospel, he uses the word immediately. And his other favourite word is and.

He doesn't believe in commas and full stops if he can get away without using them. He just goes from one episode, one encounter, one scene to another scene. And rather than order the grammar in a way that's full of finesse, he just takes us with another and.

[5 : 21] And immediately this happened and immediately that happened and immediately they moved there and immediately they moved there. He's a man who's in a hurry. He hasn't got time for good grammar and paragraphing.

He just takes us by the hand in a sense and he says, Hurry! We need to, you need to see this. We need to move through this at pace. This is good news and you need to understand it.

You need to see Jesus for who he is. So that you'll trust him. And you'll share what I have.

And so off Mark goes. He bypasses the family line, the genealogy of Christ. He bypasses the birth, the incarnation of Christ.

He leaves Mark. He leaves, I'm sorry, Matthew and Luke to concentrate on that. And he just launches straight out into the ministry of Christ.

[6 : 18] Now this week, as we heard already from Anthony and Duncan, Christianity Explored begins. And the main recurring questions in that course, which is grounded in the Gospel of Mark.

There are three main questions that one keeps being taken back to in the Christianity Explored course. One is, who is Jesus? Two is, why did he come?

And three is, what does he call us to do? Who is Jesus? Why did he come?

And what does he call us to do? And Mark, in the opening verses of his Gospel, he answers these questions. And then, as the Gospel progresses, he digs down further and deeper to impress the answers that he's given us on page one almost.

To impress these answers more and more on us, as we are called to look to Jesus. So, as some here will do Christianity Explored over the next seven or eight weeks, and I would really hope that as many as possible will do that.

[7 : 40] Young ones as well. There's no age limit on the course. Some will do the course. Some will walk through the Gospel of Mark using that materials.

As they do, as a congregation, I kind of want to walk alongside them. I wasn't quite sure where we would go at the beginning of this new year.

But I want to, for the next seven or eight weeks anyway, dip into various bits of Mark's Gospel and walk alongside those who are doing this Christianity Explored course.

So, in characteristic Mark's style, let's not waste any more time. Let's not dither around here. Let's just get going. Three points today.

Three questions. And so, three questions that I've mentioned already. The first question, first point is, who is Jesus? The second question is, why did he come?

[8 : 43] And the third question is, what does he call you and I to do? So, first of all, who is Jesus? And that's the million dollar question.

You and I can get the identity of many people wrong, and it has little consequence to our lives. We can sometimes come across a dignitary or royalty or somebody of great importance as far as the culture goes, and we don't know them.

We might be in a situation where we don't recognize them, and we don't speak to them in the way that we would have spoken to them if we'd known who they were. But it doesn't have any great impact on our life.

But if we get the identity of Christ wrong, if we don't see him for who he is, then not only will it have an impact on our life in this world, and that we'll be going off in the wrong way, but it will have an impact on eternity.

Because unless we see him for who he is, and confess him as the one who he reveals himself to be, then we cannot be saved.

[10 : 02] So who is Jesus? Well, Mark makes very clear from the opening here that he is the Christ. He is the Son of God.

First one. The beginning of the Gospel. Just to give you a bit more of the impact of this, the opening word of this Gospel is the, in terms of our English translation.

The doesn't exist in the Greek text here. Mark hasn't even got time for the. The opening word is beginning. Never mind the the. Let's just get cracking.

This is so important. This is so urgent that you see this. He just begins with beginning. Beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

It is written in Isaiah the prophet, I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way. A voice of one calling in the desert. Prepare the way for the Lord.

[11:04] Make straight paths for him. And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and 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 Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist and he ate locusts and wild honey.

And this was his message. After me will come one more powerful than I. The thongs 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. Mark, in the opening words of this Gospel, he takes us back to Isaiah.

He's quoting from Isaiah. He's also quoting there from Malachi. He takes us back to the ministry of John the Baptist. He was the last of the Old Testament prophets.

[12:07] And he does that so that we'll see that the Savior, the Messiah, the promised one, the one who was promised all the way from Genesis 3, all the way through the Old Testament.

Over all these years, he wants us to see, as we listen to John, as we're taken back to the Old Testament. He wants us to see that the Messiah, the Christ, is Jesus.

Jesus is not simply a wise philosopher. He's not simply a skillful teacher. He's not a revolutionary. He's not simply some miracle maker. But he wants us to see that Jesus is the Christ. Every promise of the Old Testament of salvation and deliverance.

He's not simply a skillful teacher. He wants us to see that Jesus is the Christ. He wants us to see that Jesus is the Christ. We sang over the Christmas period in one of these carols. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

[13:20] For Christ is born of Mary. Who is Jesus? He's the Christ.

The promised one. The Savior. The only Savior. And he's the Son of God.

And that again takes us back to the Christmas story. That verse that we return to every year.

Matthew 1.23. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son.

And they will call him Emmanuel. Which means God with us. God with us. Who is Jesus?

He is God. The Son. With us. There's a song in the 90's.

[14:21] And the line that was repeated in the chorus was. What if God was one of us? And the truth is that he was in Christ.

God the Son. As John reports it in chapter 1. He takes on flesh. The word became flesh. And he made us dwelling amongst us.

The creator. The one who has all authority and all power. And all majesty. He comes close. He comes to the place. And to the people that he himself made.

Now think about this. What kind of state was the world when he came? What kind of stewards were we as a human race?

Of the world that he made and placed us in? Were we good stewards? What was our heart condition?

[15:29] As a race. Were we loving the Lord with all our hearts? Were we loving our neighbours as ourselves? Well the answer to that is no. And Jesus saw that.

Before he came. And as soon as he came. Sometimes when I'm walking the dog at night. I'll walk down towards the marina.

And in the marina you see various boats. Wee boats and bigger boats. Some of the owners of the boats I know are here.

In the locality. And some of the owners of the boats don't live here. They live somewhere else. Far down in England. Or some other area. In the country.

But they've asked people locally to keep an eye on their boats. To make sure their boats are looked after. And they're in good shape. And they're not neglected. Now.

[16:28] If the owner of one of these boats. Who'd been away for a period. Came back. Only to see that the boat that he's entrusted to somebody else to care for.

Has been neglected. And it's battered. And it's scratched. And it's starting to sink. As one of these wee boats were. Some weeks back. What kind of reception would there be?

Well there'd be trouble. When God came back. When God the Son.

Came into his world. Were the people he created in good order. No they weren't. The world was sin saturated.

The people he made for himself. To be in fellowship with himself. To be those who would glorify and enjoy him forever. They were in a state of rebellion against God.

[17:32] So what would we expect. When the God of all creation. Comes back into the world that he created. Not to find things good. But to find this.

Rebellion. That was unfolding. What would we expect. When the one. Who has all authority. And who reigns supreme.

Makes a visit back to the world. That he has made. Fearful life. Amen. Escape. For. Everybody. Through this. For mercy. We expect. i People.

That would. They expect. They expect. Judgement. Industry. We expect. This. To be the first chapter. In a story of very bad news.ense. but Mark tells us that this is good news Mark tells us that the coming of Jesus Christ the son of God into this world was good news and that takes us to the second point why did he come?

who is Jesus? he is the Christ, the promised one he is the son of God no less God the son so why did he come?

[18:53] well he came not to be our judge and executioner he came as it says in John 3.17 not to condemn the world but he came to be our substitute and keep that word in your mind for the next five minutes why did Christ come?

he came to be our substitute sometimes when you're watching a football game we see a team and they're starting to flag maybe one of the players has become injured he's taking a knock the whole of the rest of the team is struggling because of this player that's taking a knock or you see a player he's just off form or maybe he's losing the head the red mist has fallen and so the manager is having a powwow at the side of the pitch with the officials and soon enough you see the player who's injured being called off and a substitute goes on and it can be a game changing move now Jesus coming from heaven into this world was a eternity changing move for some of us here because he came to be our substitute and we see that in two ways in the next few verses how did Jesus become my substitute and yours of your trust in him?

well he came first of all to take our wrongs from us and he came secondly to give his righteousness to us and we see that in these next few verses Jesus as our substitute he came to take our wrongs from us look at verse 9 it says in verse 9 at that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan at that time Jesus remember who we're talking about here Jesus the saviour the Christ the son of God he came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized baptized baptized by John in the Jordan sometimes you see someone and they just look out of place you know if you were to wander onto a big building site and you saw an elegant woman wearing a ball gown with a shovel and a hard hat on digging a trench in a big puddle of mud you know you would say to her what are you doing here you don't look you don't like that you should be here you look out of place here you shouldn't be digging this hole now as we look at Jesus standing in the Jordan River being baptized by John and remember that the baptism that is signified here is a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin and Jesus is standing there and he's baptized by John with this baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin we want to see as we look at Jesus in this verse what are you doing there why are you standing there why is John baptizing you and although Mark doesn't take the time to tell us he hasn't got time to go into that if you want to go and read Matthew 3 we're not going to go there just now but you can do that later

Matthew records that John actually speaks to Christ when Christ comes and says I shouldn't be baptizing you you should be baptizing me and Jesus says no this is the way it has to be I have to stand here Jesus insisted to John that he receive this baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin now what sin did Jesus need to repent and be forgiven of no sin he never sinned he knew no sin and the testimony from heaven bore witness to that look at verse 10 as Jesus was coming up out of the water he saw heaven being torn open the word there in the Greek is the same word that speaks about the curtain being torn from top to bottom 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 see Jesus life was a sinless well pleasing life to the father and the spirit so why was Jesus standing there why was he standing in this place being baptized with this baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin when he had no sin well he was standing there in our place he

was being our substitute St.

[25 : 12] Ferguson says what we have here is Jesus public acknowledgement that he had to come to stand where sinners should stand receive what they should deserve and in return give to them his gift of grace and fellowship with God Jesus stood there and received this baptism as our substitute this was the beginning of my sin and yours being transferred onto Christ this was the first step towards towards the cross where he who knew no sin would become sin for us and take our wrongs from us Jesus

Jesus came to be our substitute he came to take our wrongs from us and he came secondly here to give his righteousness to us look at verse 12 at once at once at once immediately the spirit sent him out into the desert and he was in the desert 40 days being tempted by Satan he was with the wild animals and angels attended him there's some numbers in the bible that have a particular significance the number 7 for example is a number that speaks of perfection and infinity the number 6 is a number that speaks of evil and the number 40 is a number that signifies testing so here we read about Jesus being sent out driven out by the spirit into the wilderness and for 40 days Jesus was in the wilderness under these test conditions for 40 days he was tempted verse 12 by Satan and although Mark doesn't take the time to give us the details we can go to Matthew 4 verses 1 to 11 you can do that later and what we see there is that Jesus passed the test Satan through everything that he had at Christ but Jesus stood steadfastly and he did not yield to temptation and he did not sin not in thought not in word not in deed there was no wrong doing he got 100% perfect score he was 100% righteous and he did that not for his own sake to justify himself but he did that he took that test for our sake because we failed it over and over and over and over again we fail so if

God's justice if his standard was to be met one who was perfect would have to stand in the place where we failed and Christ did that for us he did what we could never do and he did it as our substitute Jesus Christ the son of God came to this world as our substitute and he came to take our sin our wrongs from us as he stands in that Jordan river receiving that baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin and he came to give his grace and his righteousness to us and we see the beginnings of it in

Mark chapter one in the Jordan river and in the wilderness this but as the gospel progresses we see more and more of the perfect righteousness of Christ we see more and more of the sacrificial love of Christ and it reaches its pinnacle on the cross Peter who's guiding Mark as he writes this gospel Peter writes later in 1st Peter chapter 2 I think it is he sins and live for righteousness by his wounds you have been healed for you were like sheep going astray but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls and that takes us to our final point what did and what does [31 : 21] Jesus call us to do for he's the shepherd and we are the sheep so he calls us to follow him who is Jesus he is the Christ he's the son of God why did he come he came to be your substitute to take your wrongdoing away and to give his righteousness to you and I for us to receive that what do we have to do we have to follow him who are we following as we go into another year what track are we on now the word following is a word that it's got much greater impact I think today than it has done in a few generations we follow people today friends and causes and teams and organisations and politicians and journalists we follow people on these wee devices in a way that those who've gone ahead of us in terms of the different generations they never had these kind of influences these figures that we follow have far greater influence on us today than was ever possible before through these social media avenues so who are you following today have a glance through your devices this afternoon think about that who are we following and are they having a positive or a negative influence on our spiritual health

Jesus calls us to follow him verse 14 we're just finishing now 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 is near repent and believe the good news the time has come maybe the time has come for somebody here today it's the first day first large day of a new year it's today and in biblical terms today not tomorrow but today is always the day of salvation and Jesus calls us as he called them and he calls us to repent of the sin that all of us are infected with he calls us to turn away from the sinful pursuits and influences that shape our lives in that bad way he calls us to repent to change direction and to turn in faith to follow him why should you follow him well follow him because of who he is he's the

Christ he's the son of God he's the one whom we will all stand before in judgment one day and follow him because of what he's done as our substitute follow him because he is the one who can take our sin from us who can take us off the road to hell and give his righteousness to us and put us on the road to heaven the disciples followed him verse 16 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 make you fish as a man and they said well I need to give some thought to that and I need to go through various courses I need to spend some years possibly decades considering this need to speak to everybody I know and consider everything that I possibly could and then maybe when I've done all that for 15 or 20 years and I've lived a good solid clean life that the Lord will look well upon maybe then I'll consider following you Christ that's what some of us have been saying for decades we hear the call we say maybe tomorrow or tomorrow or tomorrow or tomorrow or tomorrow maybe when I know more maybe when I've read more maybe when I've done more maybe when I'm doing less bad stuff maybe when I look about better maybe then I'll respond come follow me Jesus said for the first time and

I will make you fishers or men at once they left their nets and followed him when he 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 a boat with a hired man and followed him you know if you're still listening if this is making any sense then Jesus is calling you just as he called them but the question on the first Sunday of this new year is what will you do will you follow Jesus let's pray heavenly father we thank you for this short and fast and furious gospel we thank you for the inspiration of the

[38 : 13] Holy Spirit that led Mark to write this with such clarity and such urgency we thank you that as we look to Jesus this morning in the text of scripture we see that he is the Christ the promised one of God the promised saviour he is the son of God God the son who came from heaven to earth we thank you that as we look we see that he came to be our substitute he came to do for us what we could never do for ourselves he came to take our sin away from us and give his righteousness to us and we thank you Lord that we see that we receive all of that not when we deserve it or when we pay for it or when we earn it we know that we can do none of these things but simply when we hear the call of Christ to come and we follow help us

Lord to follow you pray and we ask it in Jesus name Amen