

CHRISTCHURCH WOODLEY 13th June 2021 10:30

Bible Month: Mark's Gospel Sections 1 & 2 [Mark 1:1 – 6:6]

Opening Prayer

God our Father, we do not know how you will speak to us today:
out of silence or the spoken word,
through music or friendship's greeting,
by the words of Scripture or a spontaneous turn of phrase.
This we ask:
tune our ears to your voice, open our hearts to your Word.
Amen

Hymn: StF 82 How great thou art <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIPJ-5TqG0c>

- 1 O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
thy power throughout the universe displayed :
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee :
how great thou art, how great thou art !
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee :
how great thou art, how great thou art !*
- 2 When through the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees ;
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze :
- 3 And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin :
- 4 When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home — what joy shall fill my heart ;
then shall I bow in humble adoration,
and there proclaim : my God, how great thou art :

Stuart K. Hine (1899–1989)
vv. 1, 2, 4 based on *O store Gud* 1885 by
Carl Gustaf Boberg (1859–1940)

Prayers

God of time and space,
God of all things that are, or ever shall be,
we your people come to praise you.
You dwell with all your people, those nearby and those far off,
you are with us now, and you have been with your Church throughout past ages.
Distant, yet as close as breath, each silent moment praises you.
Height and depth, and breadth and length, the whole universe will praise you.

Silence

As we begin our worship this morning, we are conscious of so many things about ourselves
that influence our relationship with you, loving God.

We bring the weakness of our human life, and the strength of all we are.

We bring the doubts that disturb us, and the faith that forms our lives.

We bring our disillusionment and pain, and the flickering hope that is never put out.

We bring the strain of relationships grown tense or weary, and the joy of glad and fulfilling
friendship.

We bring the tasks that have become burdensome, and the joy of work well done.

We know that we come unprepared and unfit for the worship feast.

Cleanse and renew us with your truth, we pray,

and let your love for us call forth our praise

and embolden us to follow in your Son's footsteps.

Amen

Hymn: Junior Church Choice (not received)

Hymn: StF 158 Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBQ-ql7Xbv8>

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders,
unmistakable and clear,
mighty signs that show your presence,
overcoming doubt and fear.
O Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders. | 4 Lord, you often speak in Scripture,
words that summon from the page,
shown and taught us by your Spirit
with fresh light for every age.
O Lord, you often speak in Scripture. |
| 2 Lord, you sometimes speak in whispers,
still and small and scarcely heard ;
only those who want to listen
catch the all-important word.
O Lord, you sometimes speak in whispers. | 5 Lord, you always speak in Jesus,
always new yet still the same :
teach us now more of our Saviour,
make our lives display his Name.
O Lord, you always speak in Jesus. |
| 3 Lord, you sometimes speak in silence,
through our loud and noisy day ;
we can know and trust you better
when we quietly wait and pray.
O Lord, you sometimes speak in silence. | |

Christopher Idle (b.1938)

Reading: Mark 1:1-5, 7-28, 34-39

(should be read continuously without headings or pauses between sections)

¹ The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way”—

³ “a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”

⁴ And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ 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.

⁷ And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

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

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 has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

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. ¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ “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!”

²⁵ “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

³⁴ 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.

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

³⁸ Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” ³⁹ So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Sermon: BIBLE MONTH 2021 MARK: SECTION 1 & 2

Selected Texts: 1:1-5, 7-28, 34-39, 2: 13-17 (post sermon/ pre-Communion)

It may seem that in choosing the whole of the Gospel of Mark for study this year, the Methodist Church has set us a daunting task – and indeed in some ways it is daunting. Although the shortest of the 4 New Testament gospels, we have 16 chapters to reflect upon in the next few weeks. On the other hand, Mark’s style and content are very well suited to reading and reflecting upon a broad sweep of gospel material each week, rather than our usual practice of dissecting it into brief passages, individual stories and parables. It is, in fact, likely that Mark’s original hearers/readers first experienced the gospel narrative in this way.

Mark’s narrative takes the reader/hearer on a breathless journey, as Jesus makes his way speedily through Galilee and beyond, from one town to another, from one life-changing encounter to the next, often with a large crowd of spectators in tow, or huge crowds awaiting his arrival with excitement and anticipation. The narrative is peppered with words that convey a sense of urgency and haste: immediately, straightaway, the next day.....

Right from the beginning Mark’s readers are given knowledge that characters in the narrative have to discern for themselves, repeatedly asking, “Who is this?” Mark has no starlit, angel-chorused birth stories gently easing the reader into the story. Jesus’ abrupt appearance in Galilee begins the decisive in-breaking of the Kingdom of God on earth. He is greater than any prophet before him, he is no less than the Son of God. Every encounter with him is an encounter with the dynamic, saving power of God. Every encounter is potentially life-changing, eliciting a life or death response: a decision either to radically change life direction (repent) and follow where he leads, or to reject him and his message, with eternal consequences.

Jesus from Nazareth as portrayed by Mark, is greater than anyone, prophet, priest or king, who has gone before him. Yet, in being baptised by John, he deliberately aligns himself with God’s earlier promises of salvation, and with the expectation of God’s immanent, decisive action, asserting his sovereign rule over all the earth. Affirmed and equipped by God’s direct revelation to him at his baptism, Jesus immediately enters the wilderness to challenge God’s rival, Satan, for sovereign

sway over fallen humanity. As far as Mark is concerned, his readers do not need to know the details of this confrontation. Jesus emerges victorious and immediately casts out an evil spirit and frees a paralysed man from the guilt that is crushing him. Thus he continues to demonstrate God's sovereign power over all that would prevent the fullness of life God intends for his people. It may take Jesus' disciples some time to recognise who he is, but demons know him immediately and recognize his irresistible authority and power. His God-given authority extends over all that would destroy the well-being of God's people: demonic possession, sickness, social exclusion, guilt.

The essence of Jesus' message, in word and deed, is similar to John the Baptist's, but there is an added dimension. John the Baptist, as God's faithful messenger, declares the need for repentance as preparation for God's decisive saving event. Jesus, Messiah, Son and heir to God's Kingdom, declares the KAIROS moment has arrived, the waiting is over: 'The time has come. The kingdom of God is near (approaching like a plane touching down on the runway). Repent and believe' – God's Kingdom requires active engagement of us. The time of waiting is over: God's rule is breaking in – this is the decisive event – Jesus is the decisive event (Jeshua means 'God saves'.)! Nothing will ever be the same again!

And yet there were, and are, those who resist – who try to maintain the status quo, to keep everything the same: the same frustrations, limitations, injustices, cruelties. We say 'better the devil you know' don't we!)

Conclusion

Mark's Gospel is about challenge and change. Just to be in Jesus' presence is a challenge and an impetus for change. (Repentance is not about feeling sorry, it is about changing direction.) We have to turn away from some things in order to turn towards others.

As we emerge from Covid restrictions many people are seeing their lives differently and re-thinking their priorities in the light of what we have experienced or in the light of what new insights have emerged during lockdown. Many express a desire not to 'just go back to how things were.'

What might be the new direction in which God is calling you follow, and from what might you need to be freed, in order to answer that call? Maybe this is one of the Kairos moments in your life. What is it that you need to turn away from (let go of), so that you can change direction. Maybe there is something that was once helpful, but no longer nourishes and energises your faith. Whatever it may be that is holding each of us back from following where the Lord Jesus Christ is leading us at this time, let us bravely face it, deal with it and then let it go, so that we may move on, drawing ever nearer to the coming Kingdom of God.

Prayers of Intercession [Litany for the World: Ann Lewin: Words by the Way]

In the places of decision-making and the places of powerlessness:

Come, Lord.

In the places of wealth and the places of poverty:

Come, Lord.

Where we are healthy and where we are sick:

Come, Lord.

In the streets of plenty and in the dark corners and alleys:
Come, Lord.

In our places of worship and where there is no faith:
Come, Lord.

In the places of learning and in the depths of our ignorance:
Come, Lord.

In our homes and our welcomes and in places where strangers dwell:
Come, Lord.

Enable us, O Lord, through the power of Spirit,
to discern the signs of the Kingdom of God at large in the world.
Amen

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn: StF 447 Jesus, be the centre

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kq1AJxftCk>

1 Jesus, be the centre,
be my source, be my light,
Jesus.

2 Jesus, be the centre,
be my hope, be my song,
Jesus.

*Be the fire in my heart,
be the wind in these sails ;
be the reason that I live,
Jesus, Jesus.*

3 Jesus, be my vision,
be my path, be my guide,
Jesus.

*Be the fire in my heart,
be the wind in these sails ;
be the reason that I live,
Jesus, Jesus.*

4 Jesus, be the centre,
be my source, be my light,
Jesus.

Michael Frye

Reading: Mark 2:13-17

¹³ Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. ¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

¹⁵ While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹⁷ On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Communion

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Lord God,

your kingdom is here and not yet,

hidden, yet ours for the seeking:

Your kingdom come.

Your kingdom requires of us total commitment,

And gives us unlimited freedom:

Your kingdom come.

Your kingdom turns our values upside down,

For, as King you rule through suffering love:

Your kingdom come.

With angels and archangels,

and all whose lives have been changed by your kingdom,

we praise you, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
King of joy and love,
heaven and earth are full of your glory,
all praise to your name.**

Come to us now, most loving God,

as we remember Jesus, who

on the night before he died,

took bread and wine, blessed them,

and gave them to his friends, saying,

'This is my body, this is my blood.

Eat and drink, all of you.'

Come freshly to us now, Lord God.

Open our eyes to the signs of your kingdom:

Your kingdom come.

Call us again to commit ourselves to your service:

Your kingdom come.

Send your Holy Spirit,
that your life and vitality may flow through us,
and change the lives of all we meet:

**Your Kingdom come in us, Lord,
and transform the world,
to your praise and glory.**

Amen

Distribution of Elements

Prayer of Dismissal [Fred Kaan]

Now let us from this table rise
renewed in body, mind and soul;
with Christ we die and rise again,
his selfless love has made us whole.

With minds alert, upheld by grace,
to spread the Word in speech and deed,
we follow in the steps of Christ,
at one with all in hope and need.

To fill each human house with love,
it is the sacrament of care;
the work that Christ began to do
we humbly pledge ourselves to share.

Then grant us grace, Companion-God,
to choose again the pilgrim way
and help us to accept with joy
the challenge of tomorrow's day.

Amen

Hymn: StF 255 The kingdom of God <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXZsAM4T7iU>

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 The kingdom of God
is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores
what sin would destroy ;
God's power and glory
in Jesus we know,
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.</p> | <p>3 The kingdom of God
is challenge and choice,
believe the good news,
repent and rejoice !
His love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross,
our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.</p> |
| <p>2 The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace,
the prisoners are freed,
the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.</p> | <p>4 God's kingdom is come,
the gift and the goal,
in Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole ;
the heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory
to God all in all !</p> |

Blessing

Go in peace.

And may the God of grace encircle your soul,

May Jesus Christ reach out to touch you

and the Spirit shine light on your path.

Amen

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