

The Gospel of Mark

A study on the servanthood of Christ

Week One: The Servant's Preparation

Introduction:

- A. Mark is the shortest and simplest of the four Gospels.
 - 1. He tells the story of Christ the servant who is on the move, constantly preaching, healing, teaching and finally dying for sinful man.
 - 2. He portrays Jesus as a man of deeds, a servant busy about His Father's business. He emphasizes Christ's works rather than His words.
 - 3. The key verse is Mark 10:45 ***"The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."***
 - 4. **This pattern of selfless service becomes the model for those who would become servants of the Lord.**
- B. Mark's writing style mirrors his purpose.
 - 1. The narrative is crisp, vigorous, and unvarnished. It is a Gospel of action.
 - 2. Mark is writing to the Romans or Gentile Christians who would have had a western-mind-set.
 - a. The western mind valued power but despised servitude.
 - b. Mark used what they valued (displays of power) to teach them about what they despised and devalued (being a servant).
 - 3. Mark omits the details of Christ's birth and boyhood in order to plunge immediately into His ministry in Galilee.
 - a. The fever-ridden and demon possessed, the palsied and leprous, the blind and lame all experienced His healing touch.
 - b. Jesus spoke a total of 70 parables, but only 18 are contained in the Gospel of Mark, and many of these are summarized in a single sentence.
 - c. However, of the 35 recorded miracles of Jesus, Mark includes more than half, showing that his emphasis is clearly on Christ's work rather than His words.
 - d. Of the 19 miracles recorded in this book, 8 prove Christ's power over disease; 5 show His power over nature; 4 demonstrate His authority over demons; and 2 show His conquest over death.
 - e. **The by-product of Christ's power is always service.**
 - 1) That was the purpose of Christ's coming.
 - 2) And that was the message the western-mind-set was missing.

Learning task # 1

- 1. When power is disconnected from service, what is the usual result? Give some examples.
- 2. Think of a business which has an outstanding customer service policy and compare it to a more ridged and unaccommodating business. Which business is more appealing to you and why?
- 3. We are the representatives of Christ's kingdom to the world. Why is our servant hood important?
- 4. In order to plant a garden, what would be some essential steps of preparation to follow in order for your garden to be the most productive? How might that apply to becoming a servant?

Read Mark 1:1 – 13: Preparations for the coming of the Servant

A. Preparing the time and season.

1. In the mind of God. (Vs. 1-3) Mark begins nearly 700 years before Christ's birth with the proclamation of the prophet Isaiah. (Read Isaiah 40:3-5)
 - a. History is not a random Kaleidoscope of disconnected events; it is a process directed by God who sees the end in the beginning.
 - b. History is His story.
2. God prepared the events for the exact right time.
 - a. **Spiritually:**
 - 1) There had been 400 years of scriptural silence between the Old and New Testaments.
 - 2) 400 years of being beaten down and oppressed by foreign nations.
 - 3) Israel was hungry for a Messiah to deliver them and restore their national sovereignty.
 - b. **Politically:**
 - 1) Rome was the current dominant world power oppressing and suppressing the Jews.
 - 2) Rome's pagan customs, practices, and philosophies were anathema to the Jewish mind.
 - 3) The Jews were desperate for a political savior.
 - c. **Culturally:**
 - 1) Roman and Jewish values were often diametrically opposed. One historian described Rome as a cesspool of iniquity.
 - 2) The people of Israel abhorred Rome's godless practices and longed for justice.
3. Just as God was preparing the time and season for the coming of the Messiah so likewise, God has prepared the events of our day and age for the exact right time for us, His servants, to accomplish His purpose and plan. (Esther 4:14)

Learning task # 2

1. What are some of the spiritual, political, and cultural conditions in today's world that prepares the stage for the Gospel to advance and for you to be a servant whom God can use?
2. Share some ways you recognize God has been shaping and preparing you for being His servant.

B. Preparing the soil.

1. By the forerunner, John the Baptist. (Vs 4-8)
 - a. No doubt, if we were selecting a herald for Christ, we would have chosen one of high birth, university trained, a man of wide reputation, elegance and impressiveness.
 - b. Not so with God. God often picks the foolish things to confound the wise. (I Cor. 1:27-28)
2. In preparation for Jesus the Servant's coming, John called the people to **cleansing and repentance.** (V.4)
 - a. Water Baptism was a symbol of this cleansing and repentance.
 - b. The Greek word "baptizo" means to immerse or to drown. It was used to describe the process used by the Greeks to dye their cloth. They would immerse the cloth in

dye and leave it there until every fiber had been permeated and the color absorbed into the material.

- c. Repentance was a picture of change. The Greek word “metanoia” means to turn around and go the opposite direction.
 - 1) Part of repentance is confession (v.5)
 - 2) The Greek word for confess (“homologeō”) means to “say the same about”.
 - 3) True confession is to say the same thing about your sin as God is saying. It is looking at sin from God’s perspective and acting accordingly.
- d. Real repentance means that a man not only is sorry for the consequence of his sin, but he has come to hate sin as God hates it.

Learning task # 3

1. The Bible says that it is the goodness of God that leads to repentance. (Rom. 2:40) How might we be light in our sphere of influence to prepare the soil of people’s hearts so that they become receptive to the Gospel?
2. Share an example of someone you’ve seen become receptive to the Gospel because of an individual’s patient preparation of the soil of that person’s heart and mind.

C. Preparing the Servant.

1. By practicing obedience. (1:9)
 - a. Jesus had no sin of His own, of which to repent, but in baptism He identified with the sinful. The servant must identify with those he is going to serve.
 - b. Jesus was baptized according to Matthew 3:13-15 in order to fulfill all righteousness. It was a point of obedience. The servant must be obedient and know how to follow orders.
 - c. The Father confirmed His approval of the Son with a voice from heaven saying, “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased.” (1:11) Likewise, He speaks His confirming voice to our inner man when we are pleasing Him.
2. By being empowered with the Holy Spirit’s anointing. (1:10)
 - a. Jesus began His ministry only after being empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. This same anointing is available to each of us.
3. By being tested and tried. (1:12 – 13)
 - a. Testing is a necessary part of our preparation. It shows us what is in our heart and it exposes our weaknesses, allowing us to recognize where we need fortification.
 - b. Angels attended Him. Jesus was not left to fight the battle alone, and neither are we. There are ever Divine reinforcements available to refresh and strengthen us.

D. The Servant Was Now Ready

He picked up the scroll of Isaiah and announced that He was ready to serve. (Read Luke 4:14 & 18)

Learning task # 4

1. Pretend you have just hired a servant to help you with your work load. What would you want his attitude to be? What qualities would you seek to develop in him?
 2. Now pretend that you are the servant who has been hired, what qualities in you would need to be fortified and strengthened in order to make you a servant of worth?
- On the back of this page, write a paragraph describing the following:

- a. What, in you, needs to be washed and cleansed?
- b. What areas of obedience, in you, need to be challenged?
- c. What areas of weakness, in you, need to be strengthened and empowered?

Read Mark 10:35 – 45

1. James and John had been jockeying for position in the kingdom. The word “jockeying” comes from the name Jacob which means supplanter or grabber.
 - a. What did Jacob grab in order to get his name? (Gen.25:26)
 - b. Later, what did he grab from his brother Esau? (Gen.25:31-34)
 - c. What did he grab from his father? (Gen. 27:22-33)
2. In Genesis 32, An angel wrestled with Jacob at Peniel to prepare him for servant hood. The angel incapacitated Jacob in order to bring him to an end of himself so he could no longer jockey for position, all he could do was to cling to God.
 - a. What did God rename Jacob? (Gen. 32:28)
 - b. Israel means God prevails. Only when God prevails is a servant of God affective.

Learning task # 5

1. Based upon these insights about a servant’s preparation, this week, write a paragraph on how you see God’s preparation in your life and circumstances, for such a time as this. Be prepared to share your paragraph with this group when we meet next week. What has God done in you to develop a value for service?
2. List some practical things you can do in order to keep yourself in a place yielded and surrendered to the Lord

Throughout this study we will learn how the servant life of Jesus, both in His teachings and in His living, translates into practical application for us to live the life of servant hood to which we are called.