**BCM Bible Study – Aug. 25/26, 2021**

**Mark: Introduction and 1:1-20**

**Introduction:**

While there is debate, the Gospel of Mark is accepted by many scholars as being written the earliest. This Gospel is the shortest and this is exemplified by it diving into action, with only 8 verses prior to Jesus’ baptism and temptation. Most of Mark continues this trend of short, quick bursts which are meant to point to Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

* While there are several theories, the early church and many scholars point to the author as being a man named John Mark who wrote the book based on Simon Peter’s recounting of his experience with Jesus.
  + 1 Peter 5:13 mentions “my son Mark”, which could indicate a close relationship between the two of them.
* This Gospel was written to the Gentiles, traditionally believed to be initially written for those within the Church in Rome.

**Read Mark 1:1-8**

* V. 1 starts off the entire book as a thesis statement of sorts and sets our expectations immediately. What phrase or words stand out to you?

**Read Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1, and Isaiah 40:3**

* + V. 2-3 are a combination of these verses and simply attributed to Isaiah. If Mark was written to a primarily Gentile audience, then why would the author even include this fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy here?
* *History note:* Baptism for the Jewish people is something that in this moment of history would have been totally unheard of and revolutionary. The closest concept would be the baptism which Gentiles who converted to Judaism underwent, but that was for ritual cleansing of the past. Yet, within Jewish culture this was truly mind-blowing.
* How would you respond to a preacher or someone like John the Baptist today?
* What is the significance of John the Baptist appearing and working in the wilderness? (*The wilderness is the location where God takes his people for new things [Exodus from Egypt ie]. What a great place therefore to begin the ushering in of the New Covenant!*)
* John preached a baptism of repentance and made people aware of their sins. How does this resemble the way that we should prepare our hearts for Jesus when first meeting him? What about daily?

**Read Mark 1:9-15**

* One of the first things which stands out from this passage is the baptism of Jesus and why it even occurred. Any ideas on why Jesus did the baptism of repentance?
  + Hughes said “he needed no baptism of repentance. But in his baptism he associated himself with us sinners and placed himself among the guilty - not for his own salvation but for ours…” (24).
  + After Jesus was baptized he saw “the heavens being *torn* open...” What does this imagery symbolize to you about Jesus’ baptism and his mission?
* If you’ve been baptized, what do you remember about it? Is it something that is a great memory, something you barely remember, or something else entirely?
* How does Jesus’ baptism here impact your understanding of baptism? If you’ve been baptized, how does it impact that for you personally?
* An important thing to note is that Jesus did not begin his ministry until he had received the Holy Spirit. What does this show about the work of the Trinity together?
  + What kind of effect should this then have on the way that we think about our relationship with each person in the Trinity?
  + What effect should this have on how we do ministry in our daily lives?

**Read Matthew 4:1-11**

* When compared to both Matthew and Luke, Jesus’ testing by Satan is barely mentioned. Why do you think Mark chose to do this? (*While we can’t be 100% sure, it very much fits the style of his gospel and the speedy nature of it. It could also be a choice as this was a momentary battle with Satan and Mark wants the glory to allude to Jesus’ ultimate victory later on)*.
* When Jesus marks the official start of his ministry in v.14-15 it seems lackluster compared to how we might think today. If you were in charge, what would you have added to Jesus’ ministry kickoff event?
* How should we interpret “the kingdom of God has come near”? (Jeremy Treat explains it as “The kingdom is *God’s reign through God’s people over God’s place*.”)
  + Jesus’ message seems pretty straightforward here, consisting of only two instructions - “Repent and believe the good news”. How might you or Christians in general overcomplicate this and add to it?
  + How can we grow to trust in this simple message Jesus offered?

**Read Mark 1:16-20**

* *History note*: Once again, here is another event that would have been very unheard of to the Jewish person of the day. One of the biggest reasons for this is that students would normally seek out a rabbi and ask him to be their teacher, as opposed to the opposite seen here.
* What can we learn from the way that Jesus called his soon-to-be disciples? (Even as he begins, Jesus is the shepherd seeking sheep personally, as opposed to waiting for them to come to him.)
* How does Jesus’ approach to being a rabbi reveal the character of God?

The call to relationship with God is exhibited in this passage through Jesus and the beginning of his ministry. It starts with a call that is simple and relies upon trusting Jesus. We then respond to this, just as the new disciples did.

* How have you been responding to God lately? Spend time over the week praying about this and seeking to trust in the simplicity of the Gospel.

Extra Notes:

* While there is more dispute, many believe that John Mark’s mother was Mary found in Acts 12:12 (Akin)
* This is the same John Mark that accompanied Paul on his journeys, turned away irritating Paul, and they then reconciled
* The mention of the wild animals in the wilderness was very intentional, as it was meant to heighten the severity of what Jesus was facing as wild animals would have been associated with adversity and persecution (Akin)

Note: The staff are writing the studies with notes from three different commentaries (Hughes, Garland, or Akin) so if you ever see one of those names, it's a commentary author! If you would ever want to come by and read some more to gain clarity or learn more, just let staff know!