



Hope & Help

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Mark 1:9-13

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⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." ¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

(Pastor prays)

When you're down in a pit, it's pitch-black dark; you've tried several times to get out of that pit but the sides are too slippery and the walls are too high and you can't climb out, so you sink down and drop into that pit. When you sit in the darkness of a pit like that, there are two things that you need: You need hope that you're gonna get out, and you need help.

John Mark realizes that. We will just call him Mark. Mark wrote his Gospel differently than the others. Mark skips right over the genealogy, the birth narrative. Matthew and Luke covered that. Mark doesn't slow down to talk about Jesus in the synagogue and His childhood. He gives us none of that. Mark runs right up to the edge of the Jordan River to the beginning of God's grace. The first time we meet Jesus in this Gospel, He is a full-grown man, getting ready to start His ministry. There in Jordan He would begin. In the Jordan we see His baptism and in the desert we see His temptation. In the

Jordan was His baptism which gives us hope. In the desert we see His temptation which gives us help. And I want you to see that...

God's Grace in Jesus Means There is Hope and Help

Let's start in the passage in verse 9 with the first point.

In Jesus there is great hope

You see there in verse 9 the phrase **in those days**. Mark uses that phrase, **those days**, as a tool throughout his Gospel. Mark takes all of these pictures and stories of Jesus and he lines them up like a storyboard and pulls them together and tapes them up. And the tape he uses is the phrase **in those days**. He takes us to the very beginning to show us that Jesus gives us hope. I want you to see that the baptism of Jesus has great meaning for us.

I want you to find hope in His humility. Look at His humility as the text opens up. ⁹ *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee*. Nazareth, what did Nathaniel say when he heard that Jesus was from Nazareth? "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament. You don't see it in the townhoods. You don't see it in Josephus, who writes the history of the Jews. You don't hear anything about Nazareth and Mark knew that. This Gospel is written to the church at Rome and to give them some bearing he says *Nazareth of Galilee*. It's as if somebody from Nevada asked me where I live in North Carolina and I say Mint Hill. They don't know where that is so I'll say Charlotte. John Mark tells us *Nazareth of Galilee*.

Jesus is from an unknown town, nobody knows where that is. Evidently Jesus is now standing on the banks of the Jordan River and this will be the very first time in the Biblical record that John the Baptist and Jesus actually are face-to-face. John the Baptist has been out there in the wilderness preaching Hellfire and calling people to repent. He's baptizing them, and the baptism he's doing is one for the repentance of sins. Person after person is being baptized. There Jesus stands in anonymity. What did Isaiah tell us? He had no form or majesty such that we would look on Him. What did Paul say in

Philippians? Being found in that human form He humbled Himself. Now Jesus is among the crowd of sinners, it's starting. Have you ever been humbled? Have you ever been humiliated almost to the point of not being able to recover? Fly to Jesus; run to Jesus, the One who was humbled for you. You can find hope in His humility. But we can't stay there long because the story starts to unfold in verse 9.

I want you to find hope in His righteousness. Look how brief Mark is in describing His righteousness. Mark just says in verse 9, He was baptized in the Jordan River. He was baptized by John in the Jordan.

So I want to know more about that, so I flip over to Matthew and then take a look at it over in Luke. So Matthew gives us a fuller account. Matthew tells us that, evidently, John is baptizing people; he's got him lined up. They're being baptized for the repentance of sins. And we get to the line and the person in front of Jesus is baptized and there's Jesus standing there and John says, "I am not baptizing you!" John has already said, "I'm not worthy of unlatching His sandals...I'm certainly not going to baptize you. In fact, *you* should baptize *me*," he tells Jesus in Matthew. And the story goes that Jesus says, "You will baptize me." But what is John's problem? Why won't he baptize Jesus? Jesus just tells him, "let it be so now, baptize me so that we might fulfill all righteousness." What does he mean? Why does John not want to baptize Jesus? John knows that Jesus is not like all these other people he has been baptizing down here in the Jordan River. They're all sinners who need to repent. Not Jesus. He is without sin.

Here you see the beginning, at the very onset of His ministry. Jesus came to save sinners, not by example. Although His example is always perfect. We look to Jesus for His example, In fact, for Him to be baptized is a good example for any of you who have not been baptized. But we don't look to Jesus just for His example. His example doesn't save us; His substitution saves us. When I say "substitution" what I mean is: Like Paul said, He became sin who knew no sin. Jesus became sin for us so that, in Jesus, we might become the righteousness of God.

You see Jesus at the banks of the Jordan River. Why is he being baptized? For the very first time, He now is identifying with sinners. He's identifying with you down in the pit. Think with me a moment. You want to take a bath so you run the hot water and fill up the bathtub. If you're a woman you may have put some sort of bubble bath or perfumed soap in there. (If you're a man and you did that, we've got a more significant problem.) So it's filled it up and it smells so good and you're ready to take your bath. But before you can get in, a line of rugby players who have been in a match show up at your house. They run up the stairs and, one after the other, they get in that bathtub and they're filthy. They bring all of their teammates, one after the other, and gradually the water goes from clear to gray to black and it's nasty. So that's like all those sinners being baptized in the Jordan River.

Jesus is going to be baptized, not for Himself. He goes in where all the sinners washed all their filth so He would be identified with you and me. Not by example but by *substitution*. He wasn't the sinner; He came to identify with me and you. Our father, the very first Adam of creation, was created to have fellowship with God, but He fell into sin and took all of us with Him. He was supposed to be the example for us. But now, the second Adam, who is Jesus, has come on the scene. Not as an example. He's come as our substitute. I want you to find hope. If you sinned and are separated from God and you feel the guilt of it. I want you to look at Jesus being baptized, identifying with you. The Bible says that all of our righteousness is like filthy rags. Will you run to the righteousness of Christ? Not to your own.

I want you to find hope in His baptism. Join me there in verse 10. Jesus has been baptized by John in the Jordan. And verse 10 tells us that He **immediately** - you're gonna see that word a lot in the gospel of Mark. You will see the word, "immediately," 41 times in Mark. You see it because Mark moves us along. Notice what it says in verse 10. ¹⁰ *And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*

There is a lot to look at here. The heavens being torn open. You see that phrase, “torn open.” It is the word *schizo*. Its where we get the word “schism.” You only find it two times in the New Testament, and both times it is in Mark. Those two times mark the beginning of this Gospel and the end of this Gospel. In the very front end of this Gospel, Mark chapter 1, you’ll see that when Jesus came up out of the water, the spirit has descended and the heavens are torn open. It’s the same phrase that Isaiah will use in Isaiah 64 when he’s praying, God I wish that you would tear open the heavens and come down. This word being “torn open,” the heavens being torn open, is a foreshadowing of the cross of Jesus. The baptism of Jesus is a foreshadowing of the cross. Go with your mind to Mark chapter 15. Jesus has been nailed to the cross and He’s very close to the end. Mark 15:37-39 says, *And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!* Mark has done this on purpose for us. The very beginning of his story he gives us the word “torn open.” So when we read the whole story and we get to Matthew 15, we are told the temple curtain is torn open, the holy of holies is exposed, you are now welcomed into the presence of God. Here the baptism of Jesus foreshadows the cross of Jesus that grants us access and hope. I want you to find hope in His baptism.

The Jordan River is a pretty insignificant river by way of size and flow and capacity. But it’s played a large part in the story of the Bible and God’s people. There are some great men who have gone down into the Jordan River. Joshua was the first one. Joshua went there and split the Jordan. What a great story that is. But the great preacher Elijah who was the forerunner of John the Baptist, Elijah goes down to the Jordan River and splits it. Or Elisha, who did more miracles than Elijah, he goes down to the Jordan River and splits it. What power those men had! The Lord Jesus goes down into the Jordan River and splits Heaven, giving access for all who will believe in Him. I want you to take hope in the baptism of Jesus.

I want you to take hope in His anointing. Verse 10 tells us that the spirit has descended like a dove. I call it anointing because in Luke Chapter 3, Jesus says in the synagogue that “the Lord has anointed me, the spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good news.” There is something else here. I kept wrestling with it - what else is here. I’m thinking about the spirit over the Jordan, Jesus coming out of the water. You have the spirit hovering over the water and as I thought about it, what started coming into view was the Creation. You remember the story of creation. In Genesis 1 and 2, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And in verse 2, the spirit hovered over the water at creation. Now Jesus is down in the waters of the Jordan and He’s ushering in a new creation. Is 2 Corinthians 5: 17 your favorite verse? It should be. Paul writes, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

Will you come to Jesus and be made new? Will you come in and say “I’ve fallen so far, so short of the glory of God. I know I’m created on purpose by God but my sin nature has kept, my sins and offenses, have kept me away from God. I want to fly to Christ. I want to run to Jesus and receive the righteousness He earned and have Him take my sin away at the cross. “Will you come and give your life to Jesus? I want you to find hope here.

I want you to find hope in His power. This passage is one of the great trinitarian passages of the New Testament. We are trinitarians. We believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We have a trinitarian salvation. God the Father planned our salvation. God the Son accomplished our salvation. And God the Spirit applied the salvation. And here the Trinity is on full display! ¹⁰ *And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”*

Here we see God the Son obeying, God the Spirit descending, and God the Father declaring. Here is the power of God in salvation. Let’s not cheapen it to say that if you would raise your hand at the end of a service or look up at a

preacher at the end of the service or even if you're baptized and nothing happens. The power of salvation is God bringing you from being *dead in sin* to being *alive*. And we even talk about it with words like being "converted." Why do we use those words? Because there are a lot of people here who are genuinely saved but are genuinely worried about their security of salvation. For those of you who genuinely love God but struggle with the security of salvation, I want you to look at the power that is shown here to accomplish this work. Don't have hope in *yourself*. Have faith enough because God has grace enough! I want you to find hope in His power.

I want you to find hope in His rule. Verse 11 is basically a coronation or enthronement. Let's read it together. *"And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."* What God says in verse 11 is a fusion of Psalm 2:7a, which is a messianic declaration and Isaiah 42:1, that speaks to the suffering servant. This fusion is the perfect expression of the double nature of Christ. Israel was God's people that failed in the desert. Jesus is God's son who will triumph in the desert. God's grace in Jesus means there is hope. Now to the desert we go. In Jesus there is great hope.

In Jesus there is great help

Verses 12-13 tell us of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. And out in the wilderness we will find out that Jesus is not only a new Adam and a second Israel, he's a better Moses. Jesus gives us help in our fights. We have fights with sin and in our culture. Verse 12 is filled with all kinds of aggression. ¹² *The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.* Again, we see that word, immediately. And then look at the rest of the verse. The Spirit immediately drove Him out. That word "drive" is the word for "thrown out." It's the word of urgency and then Mark compounded with that word with "immediately cast out." We know He goes into the desert to have a war with Satan. He goes there into the desert but He doesn't meander into the desert, He is thrown. Why is it like that? Because we know that in the desert Satan will be defeated by Jesus. You find the effects of that later in Chapter 1. Jesus comes up on someone the demons that have possessed and they say, "have you come to

destroy us? “Chapter 5 of Mark, we’ll get to that a couple weeks, but the whole pack of demons (called “Legion”), they say, “what do you have to do with us, Jesus son of the most high God? We beg you please don’t torture us.” It’s as if they know what happened in the desert.

What are you fighting? What besetting sin are you fighting? What addiction are you fighting? Do you feel like you’re in the wilderness, fighting? Let’s join in there in the fight. But before we do, I just want you to know there’s nothing, there’s no demon in Hell, or demon in your nightmares, there’s no demon in your past that Jesus has not defeated at His cross. There’s help in your fight, but let’s go to the temptations. Join me there.

There is help in your temptations. In verse 13 we see that Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days being tempted by Satan. ¹³ *And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.* Matthew gives us a fuller account of the temptation that Satan had in mind and he will usually start them out with the phrase, “If you are the Son of God...” Do you happen to remember the last thing Jesus heard before He was thrown out into the desert? It’s in verse 11. “*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.*” So we have Satan saying, “if you are” and God saying, “You Are!” The first Adam was tempted in paradise and he failed. The second Adam was tempted in the desert and won! Our help is not in the nature we inherit from Adam which is sinful; our help is in the spirit we received from God in Christ which is cleansing.

Remember what Hebrews 2:18 says about Jesus being tempted and why He was tempted and how that helps us. ¹⁸ *For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.* And we see it again in Hebrews 4:15 which says, ¹⁵ *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* We run to Him for help and for His righteousness. There is another thing He helps us with.

He helps us in our waiting. Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days without food and surrounded by demons! He was starving, suffering and waiting. It is so bad that angels were dispatched to minister to Him. The amount, 40, turns up a lot in the Bible and it's usually dealing with testing or judgment. During the flood it rained 40 days and 40 nights. After Moses killed the Egyptian, he lived in the desert 40 years. Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights. Moses interceded for Israel for 40 days and 40 nights. Israelite spies were in Canaan for 40 days. Israel spent 40 years wandering in the desert, and Goliath taunted Israel 40 days before David killed him.

Jesus was on earth for 40 days between the resurrection and the ascension. Jesus suffered through all the pain and frustration and temptation while waiting. And Jesus takes all the torture of judgment and testing on our behalf and turns waiting away from judgment and into refinement. So as the angels ministered to Jesus, even more so does the very son of God minister to us to give us hope in a life of struggle and help in every fight that we are in. The grace of God in Jesus means there is hope and help and that's good news!

(Pastor prays)