

Mark's Remembering

Pastor Ostella

7-4-99

Preface

I love to repeat the fact that we have the privilege to meet here in the Lord's house, on the Lord's day for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Some *prefatory remarks* will help us focus our thoughts. 1) First, emphasis should be placed on remembering – remembering the Lord Jesus. That means that self-examination is not the key to communion. It is a natural by-product of course. Self-examination is a daily Christian responsibility; it is not distinctively a communion responsibility. 2) Second, we remember Him according to the remembrances – the Gospels with the rest of Scripture. Thus *we are to remember Him along the lines of God's reminding*. That is why we call communion a preaching rite. As Calvin put it, the minister is to point the people to that which is pictured by the bread and the wine: to the Lord Jesus as life-giver, as life giving nourishment. 3) Third, though we look to all of Scripture, the center of our remembering has to be that ½ of the NT that we have in the Gospels. There we have the history of the person and work of Christ. Last communion I took up the Gospel of Matthew. This morning we come to *Mark's remembering*.

1A. Some matters of introduction (for broad overview)

1B. Author

That John Mark mentioned in the book of Acts in association with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 12:12; 13:5; 15:37) is the author of this account is based on very good extra-biblical sources. These sources also indicate that he became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered. But nowhere in the book does the author identify himself (though he may refer to himself in 14:50-52).

2B. Mark's way of remembering

The *narrator's perspective* on the events is rarely given, that is, in his own words or commentary. He is the one who is reporting and who introduces many quotes (1:43, etc.) and gives definition to Aramaic words (7:34; 15:34). He presents his view through the words of others.

What he includes and what he omits serve to bring out the gospel message. There are *some notable omissions*: 1) there is no genealogy for Jesus or John the Baptist and no birth narrative. John and Jesus burst on the scene as adults.

2) There is no record of the Sermon on the Mount or the Lord's prayer in the middle of the book. 3) At the end, there are no resurrection appearances recorded and thus no Great Commission (the book ends at 16:8, vs. 9f. are very early scribal additions). The last time that Jesus appears in the story line presented by Mark is when He is on the cross.

One final thing about the writer's way of remembering: *He will cause us to remember Jesus in terms of our Lord's own words and works* with very little commentary (Mark recedes to the margins). Its brevity contributes to its fast pace. In chapter one, we have the record of the shift from obscurity to regional popularity (1:9, 28, 45). This is the kind of *pulse beat* that Mark presents throughout his gospel. Common words are "straightway" and "immediately" which show the obedience of Jesus to the Father's will. He is active and decisive as the Servant of the Lord.

3B. Theme

We get the theme of the book from the introduction (1:1-8)

In one word, the theme of Mark's remembering is the *gospel*. But more fully, it is *the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1:1)*. The term "gospel" means good news. Something new happened in history that impacts the course of history in a good way; so it is good news. The good news centers around Jesus. And He is no ordinary person. This man from Nazareth in Galilee is the Christ, the Anointed One, the promised Messiah. He has finally come. This good news is something extraordinary for two initial reasons. 1) First, Jesus Christ is the Son of God. That means that He is uniquely *of the same essence as God*. He is *one* with God. The promised one to come is the Lord. This is good news because God the Son has come into the world to forever alter the course and direction of history.

2) Second, history up to this time was characterized by promise. That has all been changed. The time has come (Mk. 1:15). That is, the time of fulfillment of the promises has been brought to realization by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Now we can fill out the theme from the introduction that extends to 1:8. *Why call this whole section the introduction?* Because the main figure down to verse 8 is John the Baptist and his appearance in the story line is brief and preparatory. He is introduced according to the promises in Malachi (3:1) and Isaiah (40:3). He is a forerunner preparing the way (1:2-3). He does this by preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (1:4-5). But he had a central message; he announced *the coming one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (1:7-8)*.

Once Jesus enters the picture, John fades immediately from view never again to appear in the narrative (his imprisonment is mentioned, 1:14, he is contrasted with Jesus, 2:18, and his death is recounted after it had happened in a flash back, 6:14).

Thus Jesus is introduced as the son of God who will baptize with the Spirit. He is baptized by John and receives the Spirit in order to be *the* baptizer. Jesus is the true Baptist as we speak of John the Baptist, John the baptizer so we have Jesus the Baptist, Jesus the baptizer. This is part of the theme but if we read through the book looking for this baptism we will not find it.

What we have is the origin of Pentecost which came after the events recorded in this book. Pentecost is the day when Jesus poured out the Spirit on the church (Acts 2). That gift of the Spirit to the church is rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son of God. So how does the gospel of Jesus the son of God, the baptizer, begin? Mark 1-16 tells us.

So the theme is the gospel-good news concerning the fulfillment of all that God had promised, fulfillment that comes through Jesus Christ, the Son of God and baptizer with the Holy Spirit. All the blessings of the gospel are obtained by Jesus and applied by the Holy Spirit.

The theme will be complete if we summarize what was promised.

Our cue is taken from the way preparer who preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The fact of sin is presupposed. We were created male and female in the image of God, we have fallen from that image, and we thus stand in need of restoration in the image of God.

Genesis 3 informs us as to the essence of sin and its radical effects. The essence of sin is the assertion of autonomy or independence from God. Adam and Eve acted outside of God's command; they sought to be free of God's authority and control. They went their own way in departure from God. What resulted? *Satanic and demonic oppression, physical disorder, alienation and death were the radical effects of the fall.* Recall the incident of the first children where Cain took the knife to his brother Abel spilling his blood into the freshly created earth. In departing from God man became a threat to his neighbor. When we cut ourselves off from obedience to God we lose our very humanity. And we have to ask, "what happened to the human race?" What happened to *human* in human race?

But back there in the garden God promised a coming one who will crush the head of the serpent and bring restoration from all the effects of the fall. This promise was repeated again and again in the OT looking ever forward to the coming of the Messiah whose coming would be preceded by a messenger in the wilderness making straight His pathway.

Mark speaks of the *beginning* of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This refers to its *origin*. His book tells us how *the gift of Holy Spirit restoration* from all the effects of the fall was proclaimed and obtained by Jesus Christ the Son of God.

4B Outline

One of the best ways to outline the book is by time frame. The first 10 chapters cover the three years of our Lord's ministry. The last 6 cover roughly one week. As you read the section covering the three years, one thing stands out immediately: every chapter records a miracle. A good question for meditation in your reading is to ask, "what title can I give to these two sections that describes all that is going on in them?"

As a start (and not a finish) I will use this outline today for the whole of Mark: Jesus is remembered as a preacher (1-10) and as a priest (11-16). This is a tentative outline and subject to change but it will serve us well this morning. In outline, the gospel began with Jesus as a preacher and as a priest.

Therefore, the good news of restoration from the fall began, was brought to realization, by the Lord Jesus as preacher in chapters 1-10 and in Jesus as great high priest in chapters 11-16. Now let's consider each more closely.

2A. The Gospel began with Jesus As Preacher/Teacher (Mk. 1:14, 38)

He gave us the gospel by preaching it.

Mark is the shortest Gospel so how does he present Jesus as the Preacher of the gospel? Preaching is a rich notion. It includes teaching, exposition, exhortation, announcement and proclamation but it is much more than these things. Most of all, it includes *words interfaced with deeds*.

Mark accents the origin of the good news that is found in the *miracles* of Christ. Miracles are not simply validations of the deity of Christ as displays of divine power. They are *enacted parables of restoration* (Ridderbos). Consider the first miracle recorded in **Mark 1:21-28**. Jesus went into the synagogue to teach (v. 21). He amazed the people with His authoritative teaching (v. 22). Then He healed a man who was possessed by an evil spirit (vs. 23-26). And the news (gospel good news) spread (vs. 27-28). But note the bond between His teaching, His authority and His healing of the demon possessed man. *This is good news: one has come who teaches good news with authority in both word and deed*. We wrestle not with flesh and blood but Jesus has bound the strong man and is plundering him of his goods (Mk. 3:27).

"Satan's power and might are great and he is armed with cruel hate. And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him."

He shows us the good news He preached (**Mk. 1:39**, preaching and driving out demons).

Leprosy separated the sick one from the people of God. It was a sign of alienation from God due to the uncleanness of sin. But look at the good news in **Mark 1:40-41**. With compassion, Jesus cleanses sinners and brings the alienated home to God and to His family.

Consider the *paralytic* who was brought through the roof as Jesus preached to the crowds and note what good news Jesus gave to this man who could not walk (**Mk. 2:1-5**). *He did not immediately say, "rise and walk"!* Why does He delay the healing like this? And why does He eventually heal the man? The healing embodied the gospel message (**2:9-12**). He healed the man to show that He has come to bring restoration from all the effects of the fall into *sin*—He preached the gospel with authority *both in word and deed*!

Next Mark puts two Sabbath accounts together (2:23-3:6). In the second account, He healed a man with a *shriveled hand* (**3:1-6**). This teaches the true spirit and intent of Sabbath keeping. But in connection with **Mark 2:28**, it also teaches that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, that He is the Sabbath king who will bring history to final and ultimate rest in heaven. God created man with that destiny in mind and despite the fall Jesus will bring His image bearer, male and female, to the eternal Sabbath rest that has been promised since the beginning of creation.

The *loaves* in the feeding of the five thousand were something to be understood—they contained a message. This is brought out by the words of Christ to the disciples when *he walked on the water* (**Mk. 6:47-52**). What is the connection between the loaves and the calming words of **Mark 6:50**? His teaching with compassion includes the good news that *He is the bread of life that sustains life in the midst of the troubled and groaning creation*. So "take courage, it is I," he

says, "don't be afraid." The gospel of this life giver is comfort and encouragement in the literal and figurative storms of life. He stills the storms and walks on the waters that we may know that we will make it to the other side of Jordan and home to heavens glory because we are safe and secure in His loving embrace. In the midst of the storm, listen for His faithful gospel word: "it is I, be not afraid.!"

In the region of Decapolis a man who was *deaf and mute* was brought to Jesus and He healed him (**Mk. 7:31-35**). Think by analogy with me on this. He cannot hear or speak. What is it that he cannot hear or speak, that is, literally and physically? He cannot hear the voice of God and the wisdom of God that sounds forth throughout the earth in the creation. Remember that Psalm 19 tells us that there is speech uttered each day to the ends of the earth declaring the glory of God. And this man cannot speak of that which he cannot hear, nor can he utter praises from his lips to the majestic God of creation.

O, *how this pictures fallen man* unable to hear the truth and unable to praise God from the heart. But there is good news to sinners bound in sin. Here is the gospel: *when Jesus prays for someone and says to their deaf ears, "be opened" then their ears are opened and their tongues are loosened.* They hear the voice of God in Scripture and they fall down before the majesty of God in gratitude, worship and praise clearly flowing in abundance from their lips. They will believe in their hearts and confess with their mouths that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

3A. The Gospel began with Jesus as great high priest (**Mk. 10:45**)

There is a gospel word and deed par excellence. To what do you think I refer? What deed or action of Christ is the gospel in the superlative? How is it a combination of word and deed in this book? The deed of course is the cross. And there on the cross, Jesus makes the proclamation of proclamations. And Mark leaves us with this as *the pinnacle remembrance of Jesus* because that is the last time Jesus appears in the narrative and His last words recorded by Mark ripple from outside Jerusalem across the ages from eternity to eternity (**Mk. 15:33-37**).

By that word from that tree Jesus opened the way to the holiest of holies in the temple-to the place of the presence of God. There He gave His life a ransom for many. There He secured for sinners complete restoration from all the effects of the fall. This preacher is also great high priest who was both offerer and offering for the sins of God's people.

Then Mark tells us that He has risen from the grave (**16:6**). This unusual priest who offers Himself on the alter of sacrifice *continues His intercession*. Alive from the grave, He mediates the application of all that He accomplished on the cross. In this way as preacher in both word and deed, including the cross, He became the baptizer with the Holy Spirit. By His Spirit He sees to the application of what He obtained. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ the son of God.

Therefore, the time has come. Therefore, repent and believe the good news!

Lessons

1) This is gospel: Mark's Gospel is gospel. Forgiveness of sins and restoration to a place of submission to the rule of God (the kingdom of God) are secured by the death and resurrection of Christ. *The cross is the way to forgiveness, the only way.*

This preacher and high priest proclaims and secures restoration from sin, condemnation, demonic affliction, physical sickness, and death. These are decisively overcome by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the baptizer with the Spirit. The miracles are enacted parables of restoration that embody the good news announced and proclaimed by the Lord Jesus.

The Spirit that raised up Jesus will also quicken your mortal body. In Him you have the safety and security of your whole existence, body and soul before the law of God, before God as all-knowing Judge, now and forevermore: in the midst of the storms of your life, listen to his strong voice, "It is I, be not afraid."

2) We end with a call to worship the risen Son of God. Like the women after the resurrection, we are awe struck that the Son of God was forsaken of the Father on behalf of sinners, put to death and raised to newness of life.

So He invites us to fellowship with Him and with the Father at His table of welcome with the access way to God split wide open for us to enter boldly to receive help in time of need.