

Lake Cities Community Church
Pastor Craig Schill
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Series: On Your Mark

“The One” (Mark 1:2-13)

He has been called “the hope of the entire world” (Farrakhan) representing “one giant leap for mankind” (The Sun newspaper, UK). He will usher in a “new era” (China), a “new deal” (European Commission), a “New World” (The Times, UK) and a “spiritual revolution” (France, Jack Lang). He is “how the world will change” (Australia) – the first “global president” (Thailand). **He is “The One”** (Oprah Winfrey). *He is Barak Obama.*

Regardless of your political views, whether or not you voted for Obama or McCain – (there are good Christian people on both sides of the political isle) - I think we can all agree that the expectations put on this man by the world’s community are staggering. *The expectations are Messiah-like* - that he will be able to save the world from its world’s problems and usher in a new era. Now, he does have unique opportunity to do good in our world? Yes, and we must pray for Him and his family and his administration. But, beloved, ultimately Barak Obama, like George W. Bush, like Bill Clinton, like George H.W. Bush, like Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon – like King Saul, King David and King Solomon – ultimately Barak Obama will disappoint - because the “Hope for the Entire World” job *is already filled*. “The Promised One” *has already been promised*. We met The Messiah last week – Jesus – The Christ, The Anointed One, the Son of God.

Review: Last week we began a new study in the Book of Mark by looking at the title of the book: **Mark 1:1 – The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God**. We talked about

God being a God of beginnings – bring the good news – the *euangellion* and a new kingdom. Mark’s introduction continues in verses 2-13. I invite you to turn there. These verses are a prologue – Mark has information that you and I as a reader need before he starts the story in verse 14. We are still in an introductory section. Here is what you need to know about Jesus Christ. I once worried John Reed my preaching professor and mentor at Dallas Seminary when I tried to cover four points in a 15-minute sermon. Well, he would be worried again today, because our passage has 10 points – 10 things you and I must not miss in understanding **The Promised One**, Jesus Christ.

The first point is in verses 2-3, that **The Promised One and his messenger were predicted in O.T. Prophecy (2-3)**. The O.T. quotation begins with “**It is written**” which is a phrase that carries legal force – get ready for something that is true – from “**Isaiah the prophet**”. Isaiah was considered the greatest of the O.T. prophets and this again underscores the authoritative tone. He says, “**(2) BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; (3) THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’**” This quote is a mix of Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. Isaiah is highlighted as the author (1) because of his stature as a prophet, (2) because the bulk of the quotation (all of verse 3) is from Isaiah 40:3, and (3) because Mark and Isaiah present the Christ as a humble servant and Mark wants us to make this link early in his book. Because Mark is written to Roman Gentiles there are few Old Testament references – but he begins with this one to note that while Jesus is bringing something new to the world – there is a continuity with God’s plan for all time – He and his messenger were predicted hundreds of years before.

And that lead to our second point – that, **The Promised One’s way was prepared by John the Baptist (4-8).** “John the Baptist” – verse four “appeared.” Mark does not give us any details about his birth or family – just that he shows up (4) “preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (5) “And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem...” Jesus’ coming was preceded by a time of intentional preparation. This is the set-up crew – getting things ready for the service. But preparation is not physical – there are no chairs to be stacked. The preparation is not economic – they don’t raise money. The preparation is spiritual - repentance, confession of sin and baptism. It is a call to get right with God because (7) “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. (8) I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” Everything John says and does is to prepare the people for the arrival of the Promised One. In other words, Jesus’ ministry could not have occurred without this preparation. There is a lesson there isn’t there? This service could not have happened without faithful preparation – Tim and Jenny’s ministry in Japan will have been preceded by years of preparation. Let’s not ever forget the importance of the ministry of preparation – we will see the fruits of John the Baptist’s preparation for Jesus, next week.

Observe with me, for our third point, that John the Baptist and **The Promised One meet us in the wilderness.** I had never noticed this before – but everything in verses 1-13 happen in the wilderness. The geography holds these verses together as a single unit. (3) “The voice of one crying in the wilderness”, (4) “John the Baptist appears in the wilderness” (12) “Immediately the Spirit impelled him to go out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness 40 days.” This is not incidental. The gospel of Mark does not begin in Bethlehem. Not with trumpeting angels or adoring Magi – no gold, frankincense or myrrh. We are met in the hot, dry, desolate, dangerous,

uncomfortable wilderness. *What did the wilderness represent for Israel?* In both a real and symbolic sense the wilderness was *place* of punishment. The Psalmist said, “How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness And grieved Him in the desert!” (Ps 78:40). Our sin leads us into the wilderness, and then the wilderness breaks us and leads to confession and repentance. We might ask, “Couldn’t John baptize them in elegant bathing pools of Jerusalem? Couldn’t the message be proclaimed from the steps of the temple mount?” Mark had a comfortable home in Jerusalem – couldn’t the movement have started there? *No – the Promised One is not going to be revealed in a place of blessing, but in a place of testing – the wilderness.* Are you in the wilderness this morning? Do you find yourself in a dry and unfriendly place – with pain and problems and trouble? If you are – be of good cheer for you are very close to finding Jesus Christ who meets us in the wilderness.

And the wilderness lead us to consider the next point (4th) that **The Promised One and His messenger seem out of step with the world’s system.** We are meeting for our picnic at Springfield Park – a beautiful Rowlett park. But what if I said – we are going to start this potential new chapter at the Dallas City Dump! That would be a little odd – the setting of the wilderness begin to give us the sense that Jesus does things differently. Look at his spokesman – John the Baptist, (6), “John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and his diet was locusts and wild honey.” He is a weird. Obama’s new Chief of Staff is Rahm Emanuel – a powerful and sophisticated man – Jesus’ chief of Staff eats grasshoppers for breakfast! A commentator wrote: “The description of John’s dress was nearly as unusual in John’s day as it would be in ours...and set him apart from the refined Temple cult in Jerusalem.” (Edwards, 32). Out of step. John is being linked to the prophet Elijah who was also a messenger and out of step with his culture. Now look at Jesus’ introduction in verse nine. “In those days,

Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee.” If John’s appearance was odd, Jesus’ introduction is not much better. The only detail Mark gives us is that Jesus is from Nazareth. Where is Nazareth? It is on the wrong side of the tracks. Nathanael would say later, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” David Garland said, “One might assume that the Messiah would cut a more imposing figure, who would immediately capture the attention of the crowds. Instead this Messiah, the one who comes from No-where-ville in rustic Galilee, seems indistinguishable from the rest of the crowds. He does not come with some special aura or halo.” (Garland, 47.) Mark paints a picture of a Jesus who is not going to operate by the world’s rules –he is not going to look like, sound like, or operate like the people think The Messiah should and this tension will continue throughout the book. I wonder – how in step with the world’s culture are you? Do you always seek what is stylish or accepted in our day? Or does your faith sometimes make you look a little weird? If you are always comfortable in the world, you will be uncomfortable around Jesus – if you are uncomfortable in the world, you will find a field in Jesus and His associates who teach a value system very different than the world around them.

Jesus is introduced – now where does he go? **Fifth point**, he meets us at the **Jordan River**. Like the wilderness the Jordan River has real and symbolic meaning to the Jews. The Jordan River is where Joshua led the people out of the wilderness and into the promised land. The Jordan River is a symbol of hope to the people of God. Many old Negro spirituals captured the hope of the Jordan River as the bridge between the wilderness and the Promised Land – between earth and heaven. One song says: “Roll Jordan, roll, Roll Jordan, roll, I want to go to heaven when I die.” Remember that verse from Swing Low Sweet Chariot? “I looked over Jordan and what did I see - Coming for to carry me home - A band of angels coming after me - Coming

for to carry me home.” We meet Jesus in the wilderness and he invites us to the Jordan River – a place of hope for a better future.

The Promised one is at the Jordan River to be baptized, “(9) Jesus came from Nazaeth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” In his baptism (6th point) **Jesus becomes our example**. The question comes up – Did Jesus need baptism for repentance of sin? Not at all. Jesus is baptized as a sign of his submission to God the Father and as an example to you and I. Baptism is associated herewith the beginning of his public ministry – underscoring the teaching that baptism is a public declaration that I am now “on the record” as a follower of God. If you have not been baptized and desire baptism – please let me know. We have not yet had a baptism service and I look forward to that special day when a young person or adult is baptized as a public witness to their faith in God.

But Jesus is not only our example – in his baptism (7th point) **Jesus is revealed as God the Son**, the second person of the Holy Trinity. We were told in verse one that Jesus is the Son of God, and here is the first evidence. (10) **Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; (11) and a voice came out of the heavens: ‘You are My beloved Son in You I am well pleased.’** While our focus in the gospel of Mark is on Jesus Mark says – always remember it is not Jesus only, or Jesus alone – but Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three in one work in perfect unity and love to work redemption in our world.

Notice also that during his baptism (8th point) that **The Promised One opens up the heavens**. We are almost expecting something to happen. At the Red Sea – Moses split the waters and led the people to find freedom. At the Jordan River, Joshua split the waters for the people to

travel to the promises land. But at Jesus' baptism, it is not the waters but the heavens that will be parted - "(10) He saw the heavens opening." But opening is not a great translation – something that is opened can be closed. I can open and close a mailbox, or a milk jug or a car door. But the word in Greek is *skizo* – schism – splitting – literally ripping open. It is the same Greek word when the veil of the temple when Jesus died – it was torn from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). The theological significance is more than the dove and the voice of God – Jesus' arrival has literally torn open the heavens – and that access to heaven previously unavailable is now possible through Jesus Christ. Something that is torn will never be the same.

Also from his baptism we see that the coming of the **Promised One is associated with the Holy Spirit**. This entire passage is dominated by the Spirit – He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes and rests on Jesus, and part of John's preparation is to announce a future baptism of the Holy Spirit, and in the verses 12-13 the Spirit leads Christ into the wilderness. The Spirit of God – who came and went infrequently in the Old Testament will now play a central role in the New Testament. And that Spirit, when he descends on Christ as a dove – ironically does not lead Jesus to peace with an olive branch, but immediately into battle.

10th and final point - **the Promised One battles Satan on our behalf**. Verse 12. (12) "Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness, (13) and He was in the wilderness for forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him." You see Jesus' mission on the earth was not just to be a friend and a model to you and I, but he came to fight evil. From the very start he does not run from conflict – he runs to conflict. He engages with the Evil One, Satan himself. Mark is again not concerned with all the details of the encounter, but only to emphasize the intensity of the trial, in the wilderness, for 40 days, being tempted by Satan and in the presence of wild beasts – it was

dangerous and evil and violent. We are reminded here that to bring in the Kingdom of God – the enemy of God must be defeated. We are reminded that there is a battle, beloved, that we cannot see – there are demons and angels at work and engaged in a battle that would make the most advanced science fiction movie look like a view master viewfinder. Our job is not to fight Satan – our job according to scripture is to resist him and flee from him, Jesus is the one who fights him, and who ultimate wins a victory on our behalf.

Summary: The Promised One – Predicted in the Old Testament – the way prepared by John the Baptist. He meets us in the wilderness and the Jordan River. He is not flashy or powerful in the world's sense – he is out of step with the world – He is our example of submission in baptism, He is revealed as God the Son – 2nd person of the Trinity. He opens up the heavens to us and bring the Holy Spirit. He fights for us – the darkest forces of evil. He is the Hope of the World – the Promised One.

Conclusion:

As a child George found himself one day in a chapel – and in the chapel he found the organ and began to play – improvising his own tune. He was naturally gifted and caught the attention of a man by the name of Johan Adolf, who asked, “Who is this remarkable child?” The remarkable child was George Frederic Handel who soon began composing music in Italy and then London. By his 20's he was the talk of England and the best-paid composer on earth. He opened the Royal Academy of Music and the next several years were wildly successful. He was the toast of the town -Londoners fought for seats at his every performance, and his fame soared.

But his glory soon passed. Over the years audiences dwindled. His music, once the rage, became old and outdated. The Academy went bankrupt and newer more fashionable artists

eclipsed the aging composer. You might say he entered into the wilderness. One project after another failed, and Handel grew depressed. The stress brought on a case of palsy that crippled some of his fingers. Frederick the Great wrote, “Handel’s great days are over, his inspiration is exhausted.”

Yet it was in the wilderness that he was broken. His sharp tongue was softened. His temper was mellowed. One morning Handel received by post a script from Charles Jennens. It was a word for word collection of various biblical texts about Christ. The opening words of that letter were from Isaiah 40 and they moved Handel greatly: Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. . . .The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

On August 22, 1741, he shut the door of his London home and started composing music. For 23 days he was barely seen by anyone. He wrote of that time, “Whether I was in the body or out of the body when I wrote it I know not.” The name of his composition was simply “Messiah.” The Christ. And in this greatest of masterpieces – sung often in celebration of Christ’s birth we have the words of Isaiah 40 – *the world of John the Baptist not of the Christ in a manger – but in the desert.* Jesus met Handel in the wilderness and met him there – He will meet you there too, and he will lead you to put your toes in the Jordan river and there tell you to look up – heaven has been torn open and the blessings of God fall upon you – through Him – Jesus the Christ – The One. The Son of God.