

Upside Down – The Servant Comes in Power

March 1, 2020 – Pastor Randy

Mark 1:1-8

This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began just as the prophet Isaiah had written:

“Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way. He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming! Clear the road for him!’”

This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. His clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. John announced: “Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!”

For the next several weeks leading up to Resurrection Sunday I will be preaching a series of messages from the Gospel of Mark. I have given this series of messages the title “Upside Down”. The title reflects the idea that the world has been turned upside down by sin and Jesus has come to turn it right side up. However, as we will see, Jesus’ actions were often interpreted as turning things upside down because those he came to had an upside down view of what it meant to be right side up.

Mark wasted no time introducing us to Jesus in a manner that makes his identity crystal clear: He is Jesus ‘Christ’, meaning Jesus the Messiah. He is the Son of God, which is also a reference to the Messiah. Jesus name in Hebrew is Joshua which means “Yahweh (God) is salvation”.

Mark tells us he has written the “gospel”, the good news about Jesus. The word gospel did not refer to any type of good news, but especially great news. The word “gospel” signified world changing news. It is a word specifically used in Isaiah to speak of the coming of God’s salvation and kingdom rule. In Isaiah 40:9 we read,

“O Zion, messenger of good news, shout from the mountaintops! Shout it louder, O Jerusalem. Shout, and do not be afraid. Tell the towns of Judah, “Your God is coming!”

1

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And again in Isaiah 52:7

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings **good news**, who publishes peace, who brings **good news** of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."*

The good news is that God is coming to reign. He is coming to be King. The title King denotes the one with all power and authority!

Next, Mark weaves together three OT passages to make the point that John the Baptist had been sent by God to prepare the way for God to come, bringing salvation and ushering in His Kingdom. Mark equates God's messenger who will prepare the way for God to come and save with John preparing the way for Jesus to come and save. Mark tells us this OT promise from God is mainly from Isaiah 40:3. Why did he combine it with Exodus 23:20? In Exodus 23:20 God promised to lead his people through the wilderness and into the promised land, thus completing their exodus from Egypt. Isaiah prophesied when Israel had once again been removed from their land, subjugated and oppressed by foreign nations. God spoke through Isaiah promising a new "exodus" that would save them and bring them into God's perfect, eternal kingdom. Mark is telling the good news that God has now come, in the person of His Son Jesus, to fulfill His promise to save!

Mark's use of Isaiah is critical. He quoted from Isaiah 40:3 which begins the second part of Isaiah in which God promises that he will come will come as a warrior to destroy all his enemies, all who do evil. He will also come as a Shepherd who heals his people and feed his people, both physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But most of all, he will come as the "Suffering Servant" whose suffering will provide forgiveness and redemption for all people from every nation.

Within the second part of Isaiah (40-66) we have a lengthy section (Ch. 40-55) which focuses on God's suffering servant who will by his suffering secure salvation for God's people. This part of Isaiah has provoked a lot of discussion and debate as to the nature and identity of the servant. At times it is clear that the servant is the nation of Israel but at others the servant is clearly an

individual. From a NT perspective the mystery becomes clear: Jesus is the Messiah, God's servant who fulfilled the mission that Israel failed to fulfill and in doing so he became the savior of Israel and the world.

Jesus Baptism

The signs that occurred at Jesus' baptism pointed to the arrival of God's Savior King.

As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy."

The heavens being split apart fulfills the words of Isaiah in 64:1

"Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down."

The Spirit coming on Jesus was a sign that Isaiah's promise of a new exodus for God's people was coming to fruition through Jesus. (Is. 32:15; 44:3; 63:11)

Notice that Jesus didn't confess any sins at his baptism. That is because he did not need to. He submitted himself to baptism to show that he was identifying with them so that he could later act as their representative and bear the sins of the people upon himself just as Isaiah described God's suffering servant would do in Isaiah 53.

Jesus Temptation

Jesus' baptism followed by his 40-day temptation is a re-enactment of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Israel passed through the waters of the sea and into the wilderness. Jesus went into the waters of baptism and then immediately into the wilderness. His 40 days in the wilderness is analogous to Israel's 40 years in the wilderness.

Each temptation experienced by Jesus has a parallel in the temptations the Israel faced in their wilderness. In each instance where Israel failed, Jesus succeeded. Jesus is both the Savior of Israel and the Savior that Israel was supposed to be for the world. Mark did not detail these temptations but Matthew and Luke both did: (Luke 4:1-12)

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.

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Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread."

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, People do not live by bread alone"
What "scripture" was Jesus referring to? Deuteronomy 8:3.

Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them," the devil said, "because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will worship me." Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

In Deuteronomy 6:13 Moses charged the people to not repeat their previous episodes of idolatry.

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, 'He will order his angels to protect and guard you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'"

Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the Lord your God.'

In response to the devil's third temptation Jesus quoted Moses words in Deut. 6:16, warning the people not test God's mercy by being challenging Him.

In a moment we are going to see that the primary purpose that Jesus temptations were recorded for us is not to teach us how to overcome temptation. However, Jesus' actions are a great model for us. All temptation starts in the mind. It begins with the lie that the sin which dishonors God and destroys us is somehow beneficial to us. Once we believe that lie, the choice to sin is inevitable. The best antidote to falling victim to deception is to renew your mind continually on the truth. Jesus said the truth will set you free!

Jesus Power and Authority

As soon as Jesus overcame temptation in the wilderness he immediately began to demonstrate his power and authority. When he taught the scripture the people were amazed at the authority with which he spoke. When he called the disciples they immediately dropped everything and followed him. After that Mark, in rapid fire succession, recorded incidents of Jesus healing people from sickness and delivering others from demonic spirits

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By confronting and conquering powers of darkness Jesus fit Isaiah's depiction of God as a warrior coming to rescue his people from the powers of darkness. *Yes, the Sovereign LORD is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. Isaiah 40:10*

When Isaiah speaks of God using his power to judging evildoers and war against evil, he often speaks of "the arm of the Lord". God's arm is representative of his power. In Isaiah 53 "the arm of the Lord" is God's suffering servant who is none other than Jesus Christ.

In the beginning of chapter 2 Mark records an incident where a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus to be healed. The first thing Jesus did when he recognized this mans faith in Him was to publically forgive the man's sins. The religious leaders were outraged by Jesus assuming for himself the authority to forgive sins. "Only God can forgive sins", they said.

Why is God the only one with the right to judge or pardon? Because as one who is perfectly righteous he has the moral authority to do so. The same holds true for Jesus. It is not a coincidence that Jesus exercises his authority to forgive sins right after he demonstrated his power to resist temptation during his 40 days in the wilderness.

Jesus has come in power to save us and the first thing we need saving from is the sin and evil inside of us. Before Jesus went out to defeat the devil's work in the lives of others he first had to defeat him on a personal level. Jesus has the power to rescue us because, while he became one with us in our humanity, he didn't become like us in our sin. The primary purpose of the story of Jesus' victory over temptation is to declare that Jesus has come to do what God said, through Isaiah, his suffering servant would do: *"the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."*

God's means of saving us seems so "upside down". The one who was up came down. The righteous one is treated as a sinner so we sinners can be treated as if we were righteous. The one with all power and authority submitted to suffering and by his death he destroyed the power of death.

