

St. Mark  
Mark 1:1-15

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

When was the last time you had heard some Good News? Or when was the last time you had good news that just was bubbling up inside you and was about to burst out if someone didn't ask you about it soon. Sometimes it is news you heard from someone else and you just can't want to share the news with your wife or husband, a friend or co worker. Perhaps it was the kind of good news that only you know, that your about to propose or your pregnant. These times of Good news just make you want to tell it, and share it and pass it on just as fast as you can.

But some other times you need to wait with the Good news, and wait for the right time or let it build up first. Many times you have to give some background and explain first, you can't just run right to the news without telling the story behind it and how it came about. Reading Mark's Gospel is like Mark is in a rush to pour out everything. St. Mark is regularly agreed upon to be the first written Gospel. After all it is the shortest and as you know the more a story is told usually the longer the story gets. But Mark here is brief only sixteen chapters of which five are simply about the last week of Jesus' life on earth. Mark simple wants to tell you the Good News quickly and to the point.

The other three gospels give a gentle introduction, setting the scene before they bring Jesus onto centre stage. Matthew gives Jesus' family tree, tells us how Joseph was informed in dreams what would happen, the visit of the wisemen, Luke tells of Mary being visited by an angel, the census, Jesus' birth and the shepherds. John goes even further back to begin at creation, In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God and all things came into being through him. Matthew and Luke have Jesus walking back and forth across the countryside preaching and teaching. John being not a synoptic or synopsis of Jesus' life simply concentrates more on the important definitions of Jesus as the light, the Word, the Good Shepherd, the Door, the I am, etc. But Mark jumps right in. Right there in the first line he blurts out his main message, "The Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This is the only Gospel of the four begins with the idea that they are relating the Good News, the Gospel. We believe and say all four are Gospels, but Mark was the only one to come right out there at the very beginning and say this is the Good News, Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

It is interesting to note that according to traditions, that the Gospel of Mark was written around 65-67 A.D. in Rome with some help from eye witnesses. Remember now Mark wasn't one of the twelve disciples. He may have been nearby, one of the seventy. Some think he was the young man who ran away when soldiers grabbed his clothes in the garden of Gethsemane. Some think he is a traveler with Paul, the Mark mentioned in our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading. But most scholars agree that this text was written around 65-67 A.D. probably in Rome and perhaps with the help of some eye witnesses perhaps even Peter himself. One theory is that Mark is recording Peter's actual account of the ministry of Jesus Christ, and we all know Peter was brief, quick to speak and always in a rush saying whatever he was going to say with out putting much thought in it before hand. Peter was one who was quick to act, and so maybe there is where Mark gets his tendency to be quick also, showing Jesus doing this and then immediately they are here and immediately they are there, and immediately the leave, and immediately the wind stops, and immediately, immediately, immediately...well you get the point. For whatever reason Mark is right to the point and immediately tells you what you need to know.

'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God'. Brief and right to the point but also so important. He goes right to the end, that fact that Jesus was the Son of God, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near, repeat and believe in the good news." The good news only becomes the good news until after three years when Jesus dies and is resurrected, promising that through him all people are forgiven of their sin and for those who believe they are welcomed into the kingdom of God. This very first line presupposes that you know the outcome of the story, that you know that Jesus is alive. That is why the gospel, the good news is still relevant today, because we do not preach stories about a dead man, or meet to discuss the ideas of a teacher of the past, instead we have a living Lord, who has risen from the dead. And has power over the living and the dead forever more.

But also Mark in this one line ties in everything that went before. The good news starts with God. The one who is and was and always will be. Before time began, before the universe was created, the Lord was. Jesus is God, a visible sign on earth of the Godhead, one part of the trinity that we can see and hear and witness. Mark believes that God had planned to come into this world to save us from our sins from the very beginning. He quotes from Isaiah, 600 years before Christ's birth, to show his point. The gospel of Christ was not a spur of the moment decision by God; it was a total, planned, committed promise that he is fulfilling.

So the long-term planning of God and the centuries of preparation he made for the coming of Christ speak to us of our eternal security. That we are given the Good News to give us hope and promise.

Again remember this is the very first thing Mark wants to tell us this is good news . Then he immediately moves right on setting about to show you how he knows this.

This is the Good News of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Mark wants us to hear who Jesus is, what Jesus is about, How Jesus makes the news Good. The gospel is about us. It is about how we are moved or changed. It isn't about what I can get out of it. Instead it is the point of the Gospel is Jesus.

It was He who came, it was he who died and it was He who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. It is He who is enthroned in heaven, who loves His Church and is working in the world today through His Spirit. We have a good news of eternal salvation and security, which we can receive through faith in Christ and repentance for our sin, but it is Christ's salvation through and through, we can take no credit for it. This is a gift from God, simply a gift, because Jesus is the very son of the eternal Lord.

This first line of St. Mark is very important.

Today, April 25<sup>th</sup> is the commemoration of St. Mark day. And we here at this congregation take our name in this saint, this evangelist. We are given that same first line, that simple line that starts his entire book. We are given that same message to live by and to share. The Good news is Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Let us share this news with the same excitement we share other news we receive. Let us announce and be bold that Jesus is the Son of God, who came into this world to redeem the world. To make a path straight to the Lord, to bring his creation into his presence now and forever. Let us hear that message and share it, the Good news needs to be told always.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.  
AMEN.