

CHRIST: THE SERVANT OF GOD
(From the Gospel of Mark)

Mark's Portrayal of Jesus as Servant

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CHRIST, THE SERVANT OF GOD

The Gospel of Mark, the second book in the New Testament, is also the second "Gospel of Jesus Christ." There is Matthew, Mark, Luke, then John. It is believed to have been written by John Mark, who was a spiritual son to the Apostle Peter, as Peter refers to John Mark as "Mark my son" (**1 Peter 5:13**), and John Mark was the cousin of the Apostle Barnabas, or nephew, depending on what translation you use (**Colossians 4:10**).¹ Based on historic tradition and of the writing style and in how this story is told, it is presumed that the Apostle Peter either narrated this story for John Mark to write down or John Mark wrote this gospel based on much of what Peter had told him.²³ Each of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have been noted by Biblical scholars to focus more specifically on certain character traits of Jesus, where Matthew emphasizes Christ as King, Luke emphasizes Christ as the Son of Man, and John emphasizes Christ as the Son of God. Mark is agreed upon by many to focus on Christ as the Servant.⁴ Jesus hadn't come to rule the nations and He wasn't preparing His disciples for an insurrection, but that He was teaching them and leading by example, to be a servant of God. Most importantly, to go along with what can be said is the theme of the gospel according to Mark, in Christ being the Servant, the main theme really of all of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is that Jesus is the Christ! Christ is from the Greek word Christos that means anointed and in the Hebrew is the word mashiah (or mashiach) which translates to Messiah which also means anointed one or chosen one. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one. He is then Christ the King (Matthew), Christ the Son of Man (Luke), Christ the Son of God (John), and Christ the Servant (Mark). Jesus is the Christ, the Savior to all mankind to all who will believe and receive Him.⁵

John 3:16-17, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

John 1:12-14 "But as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt

1 Steve Shirley. "Was Mark the cousin or nephew of Barnabas?", Jesusalive.cc. <https://jesusalive.cc/mark-cousin-or-nephew-barnabas> (accessed Nov. 10, 2021)

2 William Barclay. Daily Bible Study Series, Gospel of Mark, The, pg. 4 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975)

3 Robert H. Gundry. Survey of the New Testament, A, pg. 150 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012)

4 Scofield Study Bible, The (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

5 New Unger's Bible Dictionary, The, pg. 839 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988)

among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

While it is certainly true that Christ is portrayed as a Servant in the book of Mark, and more specifically as a Servant of God, it can also be said that the book of Mark, the gospel according to Mark, points out that not just that Jesus was a Servant, but that He is the Way, the Way to be a servant, the example that has been shown to us, for God's purpose and will for our lives. While the Jews were mostly looking for the Anointed One to come with a rod of iron to rule over the nations as it says in **Psalm 2:9**, Jesus came as is portrayed in the book of Mark, as the Servant of God. As Jesus said to His disciples, "if anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all," (**Mark 9:35**) Jesus reiterated that message again when His ministry was nearing an end. Jesus was preparing His disciples for His time of suffering and death on a cross and the disciples were debating on who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus who was teaching His disciples to be the servant that He was, the disciples were concerned about their glory in heaven. Jesus said to His disciples, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**" There it is, the theme of the gospel of Jesus Christ according to Mark. In tying those words into the the words of Peter, which gives credence to the possibility that Peter had a strong influence on the writing of the gospel of Mark, Peter in speaking to the elders in the church, he says in **1 Peter 5:2-7**, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, **but being examples to the flock**; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, **all of you be submissive to one another**, and be **clothed with humility**, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." What this says and what Jesus is saying in the book of Mark is that He was and is the Servant of God, and that we are to be servants of God as well. Jesus served others by serving God. We serve others by serving God. Jesus was the Great blessing to God and to all who will believe on Him as He served God and we are a blessing to God and to others when we are serving God. Submitting ourselves to God, humbling ourselves before God and others. Just like Jesus.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd as the Apostle John quoted Jesus as saying in **John 10:11**, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." Mark referred to Jesus as the shepherd when he quotes Jesus who quoted **Zechariah 13:7**, "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But then Jesus says, "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." (**Mark 14:27**) The Apostle Paul explained the role of Jesus as a servant and how He is our example by saying, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (**Philippians 2:5-8**) Once again, Jesus said, "if anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all," (**Mark 9:35**) Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He has set before us His example. Jesus had also said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master." (**Matthew 10:24-25a**) We aren't called to be Jesus. He alone is THE Servant, THE LORD, THE King of Kings! But we are called to follow His example.

Mark starts his gospel out by saying in **1:1-3**, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.'"" How was John the Baptist preparing the way before Jesus arrived on the scene, before Jesus had started His ministry? **Mark 1:4** says "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." John the Baptist told his following that the One to be looking for was coming and was mightier than him and "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (**Mark 1:8**) What John the Baptist was doing was indeed preparing the way for the Anointed One, but also he was preparing God's people to be prepared for God's kingdom. The evidence of this is not in just what John the Baptist was preaching (that is, repentance for the remission of sins). Jesus arrives, has John the Baptist baptize Him in the Jordan River, and then in the words of Mark "immediately" the heavens parted and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove and then a voice from heaven said, You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then, "immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness, to which Jesus fasted for forty days and was tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him." (**Mark 1:12-13**)

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, **preaching** the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the

gospel." (Mark 1:14-15) As THE Servant of God Jesus was and is our example, pursuing the will of God, which included living a sinless life. None of us can say that. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Yet we are called to believe on Jesus for dying on a cross for our sins, then to follow Christ, and to forsake sin. To repent, which means to have a change of mind that looks no longer toward sin and begin looking to God, to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." (2 Timothy 2:20-21) After Jesus had begun His ministry, He was accused of fellowshiping with sinners and tax collectors. He said in Mark 2:17 "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Jesus was and is calling sinners to repentance. The way that John the Baptist was preparing the people for the kingdom of God was one and the same that Jesus was preparing them, saying, "**repent and believe in the gospel!**" John the Baptist prepared the way by baptizing his followers in the waters of the Jordan, but Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus overcame temptation by the devil and lived a perfect and sinless life so that He could be the perfect sacrifice for our sins against God. Jesus is the one who took our sins upon Himself dying on the cross for our sins so that we can have eternal life in Him. Yes Jesus is our life, and He is also our Way, our example to living as a servant of God, a child of God.

When Jesus told the paralytic man that his sins were forgiven, the scribes were thinking Jesus spoke blasphemies by saying that He forgives the paralytic man's sins. In Mark 2:10-11 Jesus said, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to **forgive sins**"—He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Jesus alone came to die on a cross for our sins, by the will of the Father in heaven but He also was showing the Way to serve God, be a servant of God. Jesus says in Mark 10:29-31 "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are **first will be last, and the last first.**" Jesus promised many things, most notably and importantly that all who will believe on Him will have eternal life but He also promised that following Him would bring about persecution. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." And just as it did with Jesus and the apostles, it is surely to be with us, that much of that persecution

will come from those in the church. Nevertheless, as the Apostle Peter said, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."" Jesus indeed was able to bear our sins on the cross for He IS holy, He IS of God, and He IS able to forgive us of our sins. He wants us to believe on Him for dying on the cross for our sins and He wants us to be holy as He is holy!

Mark doesn't talk much about the Holy Spirit and the role of the Holy Spirit in a person's walk in Christ. Yet Mark does quote John the Baptist in saying, "I indeed baptize you with water, but He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (**Mark 1:8**) It has been said then that the book of Mark is weak on the application part of the gospel of Jesus Christ, how we can apply it to our lives. But, the primary or fundamental or foundational starting point for us is in believing on Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins against God and then to repent of our sins and follow Jesus. Jesus may have led by example in feeding the 5000+ people (Mark 6) or the 4000+ people (Mark 8), He may have led by example in preaching the gospel of God's kingdom, and Jesus may have led by example in healing the sick, lame, blind, and mute, and delivered people from demons but without the foundation of believing and repenting, those works can then mean a whole lot of nothing. As Paul said in **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing." That is not just a good moral lesson. It is a Godly Principle. Unless that work is coming from Him, it is a whole lot of nothing. Paul said the fruit of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) is " love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control." (**Galatians 5:22-23**) It is the Holy Spirit that works in the children of God "to will and to do according for His good pleasure." (**Philippians 2:13**) That is why the foundation in Jesus Christ is imperative for us before we can begin to follow Jesus as His servant. We must be born-again which is believing on Jesus Christ as dying for our sins and raising from the dead on the third day, so that we too can have eternal life in Christ. Peter said of Jesus in **Acts 5:31-32**, "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." Believe, repent, and receive Jesus into our hearts so that we can be children of God and servants of God.

Jesus came to serve and to save. We are called to serve and to save. **Proverbs 11:30** says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise." (**Proverbs 11:30**) As Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads us, He has shown us by example to follow Him by sharing the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ. That isn't always or rarely is the grand and the glorious. Feeding the 4000 or the 5000 surely wasn't a picnic for the disciples. It most likely meant a lot of hard work. But that was sharing the love of Jesus. Preaching the gospel to the people while the Jewish leaders were ready to kill Jesus wasn't glamorous or glorious to the human eyes. But Jesus shared the good news of God's kingdom to the people anyways. Taking up His cross and doing the will of the Father was not something Jesus looked forward to doing. Jesus even prayed to the Father, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." (**Mark 14:36**) "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:1-2**) That is the process of God's working in us His kingdom of heaven. Believe on Jesus, repent of our sins, receive the Holy Spirit (to be born again), and to follow Jesus and His example (by being led by His Spirit) to serve God for His glory, honor, and praise and for His eternal kingdom. Amen.

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