



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Mark 1:1-13

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English Standard Version

“Trust and Obey”

The 1st Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled
“The King and His Cross”

Mark 1:1-13

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send My messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, ³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,’”

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, “After me comes He who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.”

¹² *The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness.* ¹³ *And He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And He was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to Him.”*

Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. We know what the Gospel is, but we rarely do what the Gospel demands. And we know who Jesus is, but we are not often amazed by what He does. Lord, forgive us and prepare us to be Your disciples. Teach us to be faithful to Christ and obedient to Your Word. We need to know what it means to follow Christ. We need to know how to be so immensely grateful for the work of Christ. We need to know that the righteous One died for the unrighteous ones ... like us. Thank You that today we begin a year of learning from John Mark, the protégé of the Apostle Peter and follower of Jesus, as he brings us the earliest eyewitness account of the life of Christ. Help us to hear it, understand it, believe it, and obey it. And so we pray, speak through the Gospel of Mark this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, in His name we pray, amen.

INTRODUCTION: *Why Should We Believe Mark?*

The gospel of Mark is the first written account we have of the life of Jesus. So why did Mark write the life of Jesus down? Or, for that matter, why did Matthew, Luke, and John write the life of Jesus down? For about 30 years or so after the life and death of Jesus, there were no written accounts. The gospel of Jesus Christ was spread orally. It was all shared verbally.

One of the reasons why there weren't any written accounts was that it was difficult for any distorted accounts of who Jesus really was to take hold. It was hard because of the presence of eyewitnesses. So for example, in **1 Corinthians 15**, the Apostle Paul is writing to the church of Corinth ... about 20 years after the death of Jesus, he's writing to the church, and he's talking about the resurrection. He's talking about what the resurrection means and how it happened. Then, he lists the people who actually saw the risen Christ. At one point, he says there were 500 people to whom Jesus Christ appeared at once. He says, "Most of them are still alive, if you want to ask them. Go ahead and talk to them. They're still around." In other words, within the first few decades after the life of Christ, it was very difficult for someone just to make up things about Jesus, because so many people were around who were actually there, who knew Him.

For example, you couldn't say, "Oh yeah, Jesus. He used to fly through the air between preaching engagements. He was divine, so he could fly through the air," because there were too many people around who said, "No. I was there. That didn't happen." Now, one generation after the resurrection of Christ, when the apostles were starting to die off and when the eyewitnesses were starting to die off, then arose the danger that people could decide who they wanted Jesus to be.

They could make up a Jesus of their own. They could lose touch with the real Jesus, and therefore, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the gospel writers, began to pull together the eyewitness accounts of the apostles, and they turned them into these gospels of Jesus, even though Mark is the only one who actually calls it a gospel. So for example, Luke, at the very beginning of his book, says to Theophilus, who was a person of means he had written his gospel for, **Luke 1:1-4**, "*Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses** and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all*

things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”

So what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did ... was they took eyewitness accounts, wove them together, so that we could have **the real Jesus** ... Not a Jesus we make up, not a Jesus of our own imagination, but **the real Jesus** ... as He really was ... what He really said ... what He really did. We desperately need that today, and here's why. When I started pastoral ministry in the early 90s, there wasn't much interest in Jesus. Jesus was old hat. Jesus was "been there, done that." There wasn't a great deal of interest in Jesus, but man, **has that changed!** There's been an **explosion** in the last decade or so of **spirituality**, and everybody's interested in Jesus, **but on their own terms**. And yet, here's the rub. A Jesus you shape, a Jesus you make up, a Jesus that fits your desires, a Jesus of your own imagination, ironically, **can't really** change you, **can't really** transform you, because a Jesus you make up **can't really** challenge you, **can't really** contradict you. Why? Because he's **just like you**. You made him up. So the irony is a Jesus you create, can't really change, renew, and transform you. If you want a Jesus **who can really help you**, if you want a Jesus **who can really change you**, if you want a Jesus **who can really affect you spiritually** ... then you have to get **the real Jesus**. And that's what you have here in the Gospel of Mark.

In fact, in some ways, Mark, out of the four gospels, might be the best place to get **the real Jesus**, because all the other gospels are longer. Mark is the shortest. The other gospels are longer because they talk more about Jesus. So, for example, look at how Mark starts versus the other gospels. **Matthew** starts with the genealogy. "Who is Jesus? What are His roots? Who's His family?" **Luke** starts with Zechariah and Elizabeth and Mary and Joseph. It's all very interesting. **John** starts at the creation of the world. Big thinker. He's a big picture guy. However, Mark starts right in on Jesus. **Boom**. We begin with ...

v. 1-8: AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PROPHETS ¹

In fact, not only don't you get much teaching about Jesus and commentary about Jesus, you don't even have much teaching **by Jesus** in the book of Mark. Mark just wants to give you Jesus (who He is, what He's done), and that's why, because we're in the midst of a culture that desperately needs **the real Jesus**, and because that's what this book is written to give us ... a Jesus who can change our lives ... we're going to be in the Gospel of Mark for the next year. We'll take a break at Advent and Christmas, but other than that, we're going to live in the Gospel of Mark for the next twelve months.

Mark is a man who minces few words. Right away, he tells us, **verse 1**, "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*" Who is Jesus? He's the Christ, which means "anointed one." Jesus, **the real Jesus**, is the anointed King. Mark, in these first eight verses, gets right down to who this king is. In this first chapter, we're told three things ... who the King

1 The Introduction and Exposition of the text is adapted from the sermons, "Man in the Wilderness" 1/8/06; "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" 1/15/06; and "The Shield of Faith – Part 2" 3/29/92, all by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, [The Tim Keller Sermon Archive](#), [Logos Bible Software 8.7](#); and "Writing the New Story" by Dr. David Strain, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, MS, 5/6/18, www.fpcjackson.org. And the books, *Let's Study Mark* by Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, pages 1-8; *Preaching the Word – Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior* by Dr. R. Kent Hughes, pages 19-33; *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Mark* by Dr. Daniel Akin, pages 1-15; and *New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Mark* by Dr. William Lane, pages 39–62.

is; where the King is going, and how you do you get to meet the King. That's the gospel, right there.

So, what does he say? First of all, Mark tells us who this King is, **verses 2 and 3**, *“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send My messenger before your face, who will prepare your way,³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,’”*

For the Jews, this is a historical bombshell ... Mark is quoting the Prophet Isaiah, from **Isaiah 40**, who said, “Someday, the Lord Himself will come to Jerusalem and show the nations His glory, and a messenger will call out and prepare the way before Him.” That's the prophecy. Mark identifies the messenger with John the Baptist, and that means Mark identifies the Lord who is coming, the Lord of **Isaiah 40, with Jesus**. When Mark starts off his gospel with this prophecy of Isaiah, he is rooting the gospel of Jesus Christ into the ancient hope of Israel for a king to come someday who would take down every mountain and raise up every canyon and heal the world of all of its disease and brokenness. Mark is saying, *“That King has come.”*

Then we get the next prophet —John. John the Baptist, even though he appears in the New Testament, is really the last Old Testament Prophet. He **looks** like an Old Testament Prophet. He **acts** like an Old Testament Prophet. He **sounds** like an Old Testament Prophet. He preaches in the wilderness. The people have to go out and get baptized in the wilderness, starting at **verse 4**, *“John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.⁷ And he preached, saying, “After me comes He who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.⁸ I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”* What's important about John the Baptist being in the wilderness?

It's very important because John the Baptist, in the wilderness, **baptized** people. Hence the name! “Well, that's doesn't sound like such a big deal.” But it is! It's an enormous big deal. You see, before John the Baptist, there'd always been what you might call washings and cleansings and immersions. The Jews understood they needed to wash their hands before going in to worship God. It was a way of saying, “I need to be cleansed of sin. I have some uncleanness in my life,” and so it was a ritual for purification of sin. Not only that, but Gentiles who wanted to go into the temple to worship God ... They not only had to wash their hands, they had to pour water all over themselves. They had to immerse themselves, there had to be a complete cleansing, because they were Gentiles; they were really unclean. They didn't just wash their hands; they washed everything ... because they were Gentiles and consider ritually unclean.

The idea that you washed ... in order to make yourself pure from sin and go in before God ... has been done for centuries. But get this. I didn't realize this until I started preparing for this sermon. You always did it **yourself**. Always. The Gentiles did self-immersion. The Jews did self-cleansing. For the first time in history, John the Baptist says, “Nope, doesn't count anymore. **I have** to baptize you. All of you. Not just Gentiles, but Jews too ... everybody. It doesn't matter where you come from. It doesn't matter whether you're a Pharisee or a prostitute. It doesn't matter whether you're a Jew or Gentile. You're going to have to receive your fitness

for **this King** from the hand of another. I'm going to have to baptize you. Later, Jesus is going to have to baptize you. I'll do it with water; He'll do it with the Holy Spirit. The point of the matter is **you cannot save yourself.**"

Do you know what this means? Let me make it personal. There's always, at Potomac Hills, a few people who are searching. Here's why you're searching. Your well has run dry. Let me give you an example. Let's just say you got into all the right schools, and you're doing really well. You're on your way, and financially, you're making pretty good money. You thought, "Man, this is going to be great," and then you had some **major** financial reversals. Your future is very cloudy, and you're in real financial trouble. Guess what? You thought the money **was just a nice thing**, but now you've come to see that **it was the main thing**. You're experiencing a lot of emotions. You can't relate to people. You're having trouble making commitments to anybody else. You're having trouble liking yourself. You're having some dark thoughts about yourself. You're starting to realize, perhaps, that you didn't want all this after all. But you say, "Well, I wasn't even that religious," **but yes you were, because this was your savior**. It was the knowledge that you were savvy, you were smart, you were making a lot of money, you were doing very well. Now it's gone and you've suddenly realized you're experiencing **major identity loss**. It was your well. It was your living water. It was your bread of life. And it's gone.

Now you realize, "I'm empty, and I need something." So you start to go to church. You start coming here. You start to read your Bible, and you say, "This is what I need. I need God." Then, do you know what you're going to do? The first thing you're going to do is you're going to say, "Well, I'm going to be really good. I'm not going to lie anymore and I'm not going to do all the nasty things I was doing in order to get ahead. I'm going to really clean up my life." And John the Baptist says, "**No ... You're still trying to save yourself! You're getting religious, instead of not going to church. You're not caring so much about money; you're caring about religion. But you're still trying to baptize yourself. You're still immersing yourself. You're still trying to save yourself! You haven't really changed your foundation.**" And so John says, "I'm going to have to baptize you. Later, Jesus is going to have to baptize you. I'll do it with water; He'll do it with the Holy Spirit. The point of the matter is **you cannot save yourself.**"

And so we have the announcement of the prophets ... next, we have...

v. 9-13: THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND SATAN ²

We're told Jesus Christ begins his ministry. He's baptized. He's commissioned, and at that moment, we're told, starting at **verse 9**, "*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."*

So, did Jesus really need to be baptized? Yes and no. No, since there was no cleansing from sin required, but yes, since He was now identifying with us who do need cleansing from sin. Sinclair Ferguson helpfully explains, "Here already, Jesus indicates how He will become our Savior – by standing in the river in whose waters penitent Jews had symbolically washed away their sins, and allowing that water, polluted by those sins, to be poured over His perfect

² The part about temptation is summarized from "Sin, Shame, and Pain Below the Surface: How to Make Sense of Same-Sex Attraction in the Church" by Dr. Kevin DeYoung, which can be found at <https://gospelreformation.net/a-time-to-stand-conference-recap/> or <https://vimeo.com/346495749>

being.” That’s the picture. He’s identified with sinners. He’s taking on the guilt and condemnation of our sin. Jesus, by undergoing baptism, was teaching us that He was willing to endure what we deserve, that we might receive true cleansing. The baptism we need, He received, because the curse we deserve, He endured. Because of Him, you can be made clean. The presence of God the Father and God the Spirit is giving Jesus this powerful experience of God’s love and power. After this high point, He will begin His ministry. He’s moving out into ministry, and He’s just had this incredible experience of God’s love.

But before He gets there, we’re told what? Starting at **verse 12**, “*The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness.*”¹³ *And He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And He was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to Him.*” Christ has just had the greatest experience of His life, and immediately He’s **assaulted** by Satan. He’s **tested**. He’s **attacked** with fiery **trials**. He’s **beset** with all sorts of **temptations**.

And yet, because we have the whole Bible, we know He didn’t give in to any of these **temptations**. Matthew and Luke cover them in more detail, but there’s three things I want you to notice about this passage. The first one takes us away from the passage, but because it’s a hot topic these days, and it’s in this text, I want to quickly address it. And it has to do with **temptation**. **Hebrews 4:15**, talking about Christ, says, “*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*” Because of that passage, many people will tell you that **temptation**, in and of itself, is not sin. It’s only when you give in to **temptation** that it becomes sin. And they’re right. **But they’re also very wrong.**

How can that be? Well, I’m going to summarize a long talk by Dr. Kevin DeYoung given at the Gospel Reformation Network conference in June, which took place the day before General Assembly. You can find it on YouTube or Vimeo if you want to hear the whole thing. I’ve put the link in your outline. It’s really good. So this comes from him, and if there’s any errors, they’re mine, probably because I’m summarizing an hour lecture into two minutes. But what’s important to understand is that when it comes to **temptation**, we have to make distinctions between **external temptations** and **internal temptations**. **External temptations**, often called **testing** or **trials** in the Scriptures, come from **outside** of us. **Something or someone else wants us to do some bad thing**. And they are sinful when we give in to them. These are the kind of **temptations** Jesus experienced when, **verse 13**, He was “*being tempted by Satan.*”

However, some **temptations** are **internal**. They come from **within**. They come **when I want to do that bad thing**, **James 1:14-15**, “*But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.*”¹⁵ *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*” And these **internal temptations**, due to our sinful nature, caused by original sin and our total depravity, *enticed by our own desires ... are always sinful*. So, if Dave Dorst wants me to punch Frank Wang in the face, I’m going to say, “No! I like Frank. I’m not going to punch him. Why would you say that?” And yes, that would be sin on Dave’s part, **but not mine**. But, if just a half-hour later, I started to think, “You know ... it’d be kind of fun to punch Frank in the face. I just might do that.” Now, I still wouldn’t do that, but just having those **thoughts**, those kinds of internal temptations are actually **sin**, and they need to be confessed. **Temptation** is sometimes distinguished **from** sin and sometimes identified **as** sin. **Internal temptations** are always sin; **external temptations** may not be sin.

Okay, back to our text and Mark's brief explanation of Jesus' **temptation** by Satan. The second thing we see here is interesting and encouraging. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all talk about Jesus being **tempted** in the **wilderness** right after this experience of being baptized and affirmed by God the Father and God the Spirit. This is typical, I mean, we should **expect** it. Mark is the only one who says He was with the **wild** animals. You don't see that in Matthew. You don't see that in Luke. You know why? Mark was written to Roman Christians who were being persecuted, who were being **sent to the lions**. This was Mark's way of saying, "Because you dared to put your foot on the wall of the Enemy, you're with the **wild** beasts. You're walking in there, and you're being torn up. There's not a single fiery trial that can come upon you that Jesus Christ Himself has not had. None of these things are alien to Him. He was with the **wild** beasts too. He was misrepresented like you. He has been betrayed like you. He knows all of it because, you see, as soon as He had His highest experience of God's power and love, He was immediately assaulted. It's to be **expected!** You will be **tried, tempted, and tested**. It's part and parcel of the normal Christian life."

And the third thing we see here is a very intentional connection with Genesis. Think about it. You go back to Genesis and after the Spirit moves across the face of the water, God speaks things into being, right? Creation is launched and what's the very next thing that happened? **Satan, temptation, the garden of Eden**. Here, at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ, the inauguration of the new creation, Christ comes up out of the water, the Spirit moves upon Him, God speaks, and *bingo*, same thing: **Satan, temptation, wilderness**.

But notice the difference. And there's a big difference between the first Adam and the second Adam. The first Adam was in a garden, and the second Adam is in a **wilderness**. The first Adam was with lions who, I guess, were in wonderful harmony with man. But the second Adam is out there with the **wild** beasts. This is Mark's way of saying the second Adam had an infinitely **harder** test, an infinitely **harder** path to walk than the first Adam.

And of course this **temptation** isn't over in **verse 13**, but it goes throughout Christ's life ... He's assaulted by Satan His entire ministry and it comes to a head in the garden of Gethsemane, the ultimate anti-garden to the garden of Eden. Here's why. Think of the two tests. God says to the first Adam, "Obey me about the tree." God says to the second Adam, "Obey me about the tree." Only this time, the tree is a cross. God says to the first Adam, "Obey me about the tree, and you will live," **and he didn't**. God says to the second Adam, "Obey me about the tree, and you will die," **and He did**.

And that's why the Apostle Paul writes, **Romans 5:19**, "*For as by the one man's disobedience [the first Adam] the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience [the second Adam] the many will be made righteous.*" And why the Apostle Peter writes, **1 Peter 3:18**, "*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God...*"

Let me tell you what happens when **He brings you to God** ... when you're about to meet the King. Nathan Cole, a Connecticut farmer, had a diary he kept in the 1740s. Historians find it remarkably interesting. They study it all the time because he makes so many interesting references to social and cultural stuff of that day. He became a Christian listening to a sermon by George Whitefield, the great evangelist, who was preaching outdoors in Connecticut in 1740. I've never forgotten his account of how he became a Christian. It was in a sermon, and I'm paraphrasing, but he says, "**My hearing him preach gave me a heart wound, and by God's**

grace, my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness could not save me.” See? He was in the wilderness. He saw his foundation broken. He realized that he could not save himself. And at that moment, he met the King. So ...

CONCLUSION: *Where Do You Go To Meet the King?*

You can meet this King in the wilderness. The whole theme of this chapter is if you're going to meet this King, you have to go out into the wilderness. I love the word wilderness because it has the world wild in it, and I like that. I like the Old English way of saying, “They went out into the wild.”

The trouble with the word wilderness is for you and I, living in North America ... to us wilderness means a forest, and that doesn't get across the biblical meaning of the word, because a forest, here in North America, is a place teeming with life. It's easy to live in a forest. You can hunt, you can fish, you can grow things. I mean, all you have to do is find a clearing where the sun comes through the leaves. It's a place exploding with life, but the wilderness, as the Bible defined it ... is what we would call ... a desert.

Because the wilderness is a place that cannot sustain life. The wilderness is a place of thorns; nothing grows. It's a place of thirst; all the wells are dry. There's no bread out there, because you can't grow wheat. You can't grow crops; there's just thorns. There's no water out there. There's a place of thorns, there's a place of thirst, and there's a place of terrible loneliness, because it can't support a community; it can't support life.

What's important in the wilderness? And why is it important that the people have to go out into the wilderness? Well, interestingly enough, this is one of the themes of the Bible. In general, you meet God in the wilderness. In the history of Israel, they met God in the wilderness.

Where did Moses meet God in the burning bush? The wilderness.

Where did Jacob wrestle with God face to face? The wilderness.

Where did Israel meet God? In Egypt? No, at Mt. Sinai, in the wilderness.

That's where they were made the people of God in principle. In 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, they became the people of God in practice.

Why is the wilderness generally the place where you meet God? The wilderness is a place where **you can't stay alive** without the intervention of God. All the wells go dry, so you have to have the water of God out of the rock. All the bread goes moldy, so you have to have the manna of God.

Out in the wilderness, Israel learned what we all have to learn, and that's **God is not an add-on**; He's not a vitamin supplement. Apart from the saving intervention of God, you have no hope. Ultimately, all wells run dry, except the water of God; all bread goes moldy, except the manna of God. “Okay,” you say, “what does that have to do with us?” **Everything**, because the book of Hebrews, which we looked at four years ago, says we still meet God in the wilderness. You know what that means? Just as in a literal desert you come to find out all wells but God's go dry, and all bread but God's goes moldy, so in our lives we generally only meet God when we go through wilderness experiences.

Do you know what a wilderness experience is? It's when something you have looked to as your real hope ... Oh, you may believe in God, you may believe in Christianity, but the real hope of your life, the real well, the real bread, the real thing that keeps you alive, the real spiritual life, the thing that really makes you feel worthwhile, your real savior, your real lord,

your real bread and drink, **runs out**, or you find out that it's inadequate. And then you realize that it's time to **meet the King**. Not that you decide you're going to get a little bit religious, but that something happens in your life that makes you look at the very foundations of your life and realize, "I'm going to die without God. **It's not** my career. **It's not** my family. **It's not** my looks. **It's not** my friends. **It's not** my achievements. **It's not** the money. **It's none** of these things. **It's not** a great husband. **It's not** a great wife. **It's not** great kids. **None** of these things are ever, ever, ever going to actually make me happy."

Every well will run dry, except for the water of God. Every bread will go moldy, except for the manna of God. When you realize that and when you realize, "Without the direct intervention of God in my life ... I'm dead ..." When, and only when, you experience that, and you're **in the wilderness** when you experience that, can you meet the King. Because this King went into **the ultimate wilderness** and lost God ... so that you and I can go into our little wildernesses and find God. So when you head to the **wilderness**, remember, this King knows what you're going through ... and He's waiting for your arrival.

Think about that. You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. God our Father, we confess to You that we would rather trust in ourselves than trust in You. We would rather live in our unrighteousness than trust You to drive us into the wilderness in order to make us righteous. Give us a greater desire to proclaim Your Gospel - to know that it's powerful to change our lives; to know Your Spirit - to know Your presence within and among us; to know Your Son - to know His perfect righteousness. Forgive us for our lack of faith, forgive us for being afraid of the wilderness, and work in each of us this year as we live with Mark, the protégé of the Apostle Peter and follower of Jesus, as we hear what he hears, given to him by eyewitnesses of the life of Christ. Teach us to respond with a greater trust in You and Your Word, and through this Gospel, to draw us every closer to Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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Mark 1:14-15

"Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."