

The Approved, Battling Son

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Date: 23 April 2023

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[0 : 00] Well, we're continuing to look at, in our series of Mark's Gospel, we started it last week. And we're looking through sort of the first few chapters, really.

And really, the whole point of looking at Mark's Gospel is one of the questions that we're asking is, who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? Why did he come? What's he about?

And importantly, how do we respond to knowing who he is? Because we looked at that last week, that we can't be neutral about Jesus Christ. We can't sit on the fence with him. We have to respond. And in today's reading, there's lots going on, isn't there? There's lots going on in just a short, in just not many words. There's three significant events that perhaps you could say, Mark, the start of Jesus' public earthly ministry when the kingdom of God is near, Jesus says.

There's three significant events. And that's what we'll be looking at, each one of them. About the kingdom of God and what it means and what it is like.

[1 : 08] Recently, I was traveling. I was in America. And you always notice this, don't you, when you go abroad. You notice the differences between your own home country and the one you're visiting.

There's lots of different things. There's different laws, values, different cultures. The ruling leaders from country to country, they have a different ethos.

The way that the rulers are chosen politically, it varies differently. We have democracy, but other systems of government are chosen differently.

And here, at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, what we're getting is three snapshots of what a kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is about.

That's what we're getting, three snapshots about what it will be like. How Jesus is appointed, how he fights evil, and then how he proclaims his mandate for the kingdom.

[2 : 10] So that's what we're going to look at. The anointed appointed son, the battling son, and the proclaiming son. The anointed appointed son, the battling son, and the proclaiming son. Before we jump into it all, just a quick recap from last week.

I don't know if you remember. The summary statement, the purpose, Max. Gospel is verse 1. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That is the summary verse, the blurb on the back of the book, the subtext.

This is what you're going to be reading about. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the anointed king, the second person of the Trinity. And everything we read in Mark's gospel is about explaining what verse 1 really means.

Good news. The significance of it. And so, here we get to the anointed appointed son. From verse 9 to 11, as you'll notice, we get an account of Jesus' baptism.

And strangely, for such a momentous occasion, you'll notice there's not that much said in Mark's account for such a famous event. It's one of the few events in Jesus' life that is recorded in all four gospels.

[3 : 22] But in this account, there's not as much detail as perhaps you might remember in Matthew or other writers. The other gospel writers, each gospel writer really focuses on something quite different when we think of Jesus' baptism.

The other ones, particularly Matthew, will focus on Jesus' sinlessness. And that Jesus is identifying with the sins of the people in being baptized. There's nothing at all about that here.

Mark is telling us something slightly different. His main focus, really, in this baptism account, very short, is the identity of Jesus. His sonship. The real point is that the Father is anointing and appointing and approving, actually, that this is the Son.

This is my Son. It's the weight of approval from the Father. That's what we see here. Jesus' baptism is the weight of approval from God the Father.

And the anointing is really from the Spirit. Approved by the Father and anointed by the Spirit. Just look with me in verses 9 to 11.

[4 : 34] At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open, and the Spirit descended on him like a dove, the anointing.

And a voice came from heaven, You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased, the appointed, the approval. We know from last week, John had been baptizing people in the Jordan. And people had been coming from miles around to see John. Imagine if you were one of these ordinary sort of blokes. You'd traveled all the way from somewhere way off in the Judean countryside.

It's taken you ages to walk to see this John the Baptist fella who people have been speaking about. You can see him. There's loads of people.

It's a huge crowd. And at the back, as you've gone towards this strange-looking man in the wilderness, you can see him in the distance and hear him talking about the coming Christ, the Son of God, about repentance and forgiveness.

[5 : 39] The whole other side of the river is packed. And there's lots of people going forward, dunking the river, hordes of people, and they're responding to what John has to say. Perhaps there's a bit of jostling as people try to get a better view.

But just in front of you, there's another very ordinary-looking bloke. Nothing surprising or special to look at.

Steps forward and goes towards John, just like everybody else. It's dunked. But as he comes up with the water still dripping off his face, the extraordinary happens.

This is no ordinary man, is it? This is no ordinary man. The heavens are torn open, the sky's written, and an audible voice from heaven speaks to this very ordinary man.

You are my son. Come on. With you I am. Well, please. And there, see you. The Holy Spirit coming down. We read like a dove.

[6 : 43] Now, we're not sure what it actually means when it says like a dove. Was it in the... Was it... Did it actually look like a bird? Or was it...

Did it come down in the sort of manner that it came down? What a dove like? There's much debate about what that actually means. But the important point is that what it's saying is that the Spirit came to rest.

It's fulfilling the prophecy from Isaiah 11, the Spirit of the Lord, in rest. Imagine being stood in the... The witness of this. You see a visible and audible commendation. The Trinitarian God is fully in view. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, saying, This is my God.

My God. This is the King. Well, let's just... I just want to pause a minute.

[7 : 47] Just... This is not like Jesus just found out who he was. It's not that until that moment he was asking, searching questions of himself. And he always had the hopes.

God was always his Father and he always knew that God loved him. But this is his approval directly from heaven itself to appoint him for his earthly ministry.

He's approved and appointed to everyone watching that day and to us. God, the Father, speaks directly for everyone to hear, loud and clear. This is my God.

Authenticated, appointed, ready for public ministry. It is inauguration day. The inauguration of the kingdom. I wonder if the question on maybe people, on the lips of those watching, is...

Okay, well, what is he going to do now? Jesus, if this is the Son of God, if this is the King, what should we expect of him? The people there who are seeing this happen have been waiting for centuries, hundreds of years, for the Messiah, Christ, to arrive.

[9 : 06] What is he going to do? What is he going to do? What should we expect of him? Which is where we're going to go with our next point. I suppose it's a little bit like, you know, with the new president of America.

There's always a... Why is it with... I don't think this is an American thing, but the first hundred days in office is always a really sort of pivotal time frame. They want to know what the president has as his particular agenda.

Something... He always wants to get through a certain thing. He wants to say, what is this president like? Well, what does Jesus do? What is important is, what does Jesus do first?

Because that will indicate something about why he's here. The second thing. Battle of the Son. Battle of the Son. Not only does the first thing Jesus do tell us something about why he's here, but it also backs up who he is.

It's true in life, isn't it? It's true in life. Life is what you do backs up who you are. If I started telling people I was an astronaut, I'd have to back it up, wouldn't I?

[10:21] I'm guessing people would want to see my ID from the British Space Programme, and maybe a photo of me in a space suit, or some footage of me floating around in a space station. And if I was, I'd be a lot more famous than I am right now.

But you need the right qualifications and credentials to be able to back up who you say you are. That's just how things work. Jesus' next action does exactly that.

It authenticates and solidifies his position. He's the battling son. He's good and he fights him. Just what we mean. When we think of temptation, that is normally seen as a negative event, and it's normally something that we would, for ourselves as Christians, we would normally say that we need the Holy Spirit to be able to fight against temptation, don't we?

And I'm pretty sure that this is probably one of the easiest periods in Jesus' life, but you notice here what the Spirit does. It's very interesting.

It is the Spirit of God that sends Jesus out into the world. To come face to face with Satan and evil. The same Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus for his public ministry, who came down like a dove, it's the same Holy Spirit that is the orchestrator of sending him into the wilderness to face evil.

[12:05] Before anything else happens, the Holy Spirit sends Jesus out to protect him. We should hear echoes here, back to the exodus of the nation of Israel, as Israel is tested 40 years, and Jesus is tested 40 days.

The number is not accidental. He's being tested just like Israel was. But interestingly again, if you were to look at the other accounts of this event in Matthew and Luke, you get a much fuller picture presented, where the individual temptations themselves are looked at and explained, and we see Jesus' obedience and his dialogue with Satan.

But here we don't get that. In this shorter account, it sort of leaves us hanging. Jesus' obedience is not really the focus. What's really in the foreground of the scene is Jesus battling them.

It's going to be face to face with the opposition. We even see further hints of it in verse 13. It's almost like we get the mention of wild animals or beasts straight after Satan.

It almost implies that part of nature has joined forces with evil. And alongside Jesus, he gets the angels to come and attend to him.

[13:28] It's that this battle between the kingdom of heaven and of evil is much bigger than just between Jesus and Satan, but it has cosmic ramifications.

Even nature is somehow involved in this. Jesus is the battling son. As soon as he's been approved, appointed, and anointed by God, he's battling with evil.

His actions qualify him. He has the credentials. He is there to prove. He's proving his identity. We'd expect Jesus to do this, wouldn't we?

We expect Jesus to be battling. Jesus opposes what God opposes. He is God. And he fights and confronts evil. He makes the task. He is led by the Spirit to face evil.

And it is a pattern that will continue for the rest of his ministry. It's a great encouragement for us here today because it means that the Son of God, the King who we follow, that he's the real deal.

[14:32] He's the real deal. He's not a phony who just looks, who just sort of looks and sounds good, but who just talks a good game. It's the real deal.

He goes out to meet evil. And stare it down. Stare it down. He's the battling son. And he has the credentials. And ultimately we see his fight with evil doesn't end in the desert, but it takes him all the way to the cross.

The battle we see in these very early days of his ministry serves as a picture of the battle Jesus has his whole life all the way to the cross.

Where he really was on. Where he really did experience a spiritual wilderness. And just as the Spirit sent him into the desert, there was always the plan that what looks like defeat and trouble is Jesus' biggest victory.

This is who Jesus is. It's the battling son. Now I don't know what we feel when we see evil in our world, in the news.

[15:50] Gareth prayed, there's been a lot, there's constantly, for over a year, there's been constant news of the war in Ukraine. There's new things every day. The fighting in Sudan.

There's been countless shootings over in America. And there seems to be a lot of darkness, doesn't there? It does seem that there's, that there can be an overwhelming feeling of darkness, of evil.

And I don't know, sometimes it can feel like the, perhaps the darkness, the evil, that the spiritual powers are just too big. Here we get a different picture of this guy.

Jesus is fighting against the founder of lies. He's battling with the origin of all evil.

And he will defeat him. It is comforting to know, but when we look at the mess, in our world, and we find it overwhelming, that this is who Jesus is.

[17:02] This is who our king is. He is the battling son, who battles, who fights, in our place. He doesn't sit back, but he has the credentials, and he fights for all of us. He fights for you.

He will win. So we've seen the appointed son, and then the proclaiming.

So we've talked a little bit about, what it means when a new leader takes the stand. We've talked, I just mentioned, their first hundred days. The other thing that you, before that all, before that all starts, the first hundred days of the new leader.

We always have the, sort of the mantra, don't we, of the new leader. what they say, when they first take the podium. We've had countless, ones perhaps that we remember our leaders by.

Trump, make America great again. Obama, yes we can. Boris, get Brexit done. It's kind of their mantra, what we, what we remember them by. Famous taglines, the mandate.

[18:17] The mandate. This is, this is what, this is what I'm going to say, at the beginning of my period of office. about what my leadership will be about. Jesus has been appointed, approved, he's battled evil.

What's the thing that he's going to say? What is the thing he's going to say? What's his mandate?

Let's see what he, well he, you can see what he says in verse 13 to 15.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of him. And here it is, time has come, he says, the kingdom of God is near.

Repent and believe, good news. You'll notice, John is taken out.

His ministry is, that he had before Jesus arrived, in preparing the people for Jesus to come. It's not needed as such, because the one he was preparing the people for has come.

[19:23] Time has come, Jesus says. Kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God is near. Kingdom needs a king. And here he is, announcing and proclaiming the start of his new reign.

And did you notice, and did you notice, how his ministry is different to John's? John was in the wilderness, waiting for the people to come to him. But here, Jesus goes into Galilee, proclaiming to them.

He doesn't wait for them to come to him, but he goes to them. Repent and believe the good news. It is a similar, it is similar to John's message, but different.

It is different, because John was saying, repent for the forgiveness of your sins, prepare the way of the Lord. But Jesus is saying, I am the Lord.

I'm here. Repent and turn not to one who is coming, but turn to me. Believe, I am your king.

[20:22] Who will be rich? He's saying, turn from your sin. Turn away from it, and believe that I am your king. Now we talked a little bit last week, about repentance, what that might look like, about three key words.

Saying sorry, sorry for our sins. Thank you to Jesus for dying for us. And please, would Jesus come into our lives. But let me give you another illustration, another way to think about repentance.

Repentance, it is, repentance, it is doing those things. Repentance really, is turning your back on sin. Turning your back on sin.

And turning to believe, that the king will give you victory. Over it. That is what repentance is. And we know, don't we, how much of a, you know how much of an insult, turning your back on someone is. You can imagine, if this were happening, or if this has happened to you, it is, it is quite a, embarrassing situation.

Imagine I'm having a chat, say with, with Gareth, I'm having a, a lovely chat, and, and, ask him, how his weekend's been, how we're talking, and halfway through, his response.

[21:37] I just turn my back on, and ignore it. If I did that, it would be really rude. It's insulting. To turn your back on someone, to ignore them.

And someone's speaking to you. Well, Jesus and sin are completely opposed. And when we turn, to live our own way, when we turn our backs, on Jesus' words, that is what sin is.

It's when, the living God, Jesus, when we hear the words, from the Bible, of how we're supposed, of, to believe and trust in him, and we hear him speaking to us, but we turn our backs on him.

Turn our backs, on Jesus. And if turning, my back, on Gareth, would insult him. How much more, does it insult, not me, is it?

Repentance, is turning your back, on sin. Away from you. Away from sin. And turning towards, the living God.

[22 : 42] Two commands, repent and believe, are actually two sides, of the same problem.

Repentance is what, you turn away from. Belief, is what you turn towards. We turn away from sin, and put our trust, and our belief, in God's word.

Turn away from sin, put our belief in God, to be appointed, and be anointed, and be anointed, and be anointed, and be anointed. So, and you will only turn away, from sin, if you believe, who Jesus is.

You will only turn away from it, if you believe, that this is who Jesus is, that he is, the king, who has been approved, who has been approved, by the power, anointed, by the spirit, and battles, and has a mission.

This is his mandate, the kingdom of God, is to repent, and believe. The good news, he says the same, to each of us, today, his instruction, and his mandate, has not changed, Jesus is in, he's the reigning king, his kingdom.

That is what he says. And, third, and back, so. So, as we come in, for landing, who do we say, that Jesus is?

[24 : 00] He's the son of God, appointed, approved, anointed by God, anointed by the spirit, appointed by the father. That is what we see, as we see. As the battling son, fights him, he fought all his life, defeated it at the cross.

That is his victory, and he fights for you, today. The good news, is that each day, we can turn from, the way that we've lived, we can turn our back, and repent, and believe in him.

This is the gospel of God. This is the good news. This is the good news. And the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, is as near to us now, as it ever has been.

It is just as true, today, as it was when he said, the kingdom of heaven, is near. Jesus is real. So we look to the king, look to the king, as the one who, offers us life, by turning to him, by believing, trusting, in him.

Almighty God, we do praise you, and thank you, and who you are. and thank you, that you're the king, and we thank you, that you fight, on our behalf.

[25 : 29] Thank you, that you, have beaten, our greatest enemies, in sin, evil, and death. Thank you, that you're kingdom, is near.

Just, turn our backs, and sin, just again today. Turn, 180 degrees, and give us, where we make mistakes, and give us where, our sinful condition, is manifested in itself.

pride, and lust, and lies, and we've lived, in the wrong kind of way, too. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have put out trust in me, and believe in you, and have made you.

Pray, as we turn to you, that you would, experience the fullness, of what it means, to only, and be the relationship, of the people, to have you, rule, and reign, others, and perfect, be it, and elite, re-ster, and all that extrêmement.

Thank you, that you have redeemed us, and rescued us, because if anything, that we hope, is a pure love, your resilience. This world is...