

Goodnews. And about time too. Mark 1.1-8 / Isa 40.1-11, Psalm 85. Advent 2. Dec 4<sup>th</sup>.

## HOMEGROUPS

This is the last bit of HG notes for now. I'll start again on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> with more Ecclesiastes! From Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> we'll be preaching on the homework part of Mark's Gospel in Christianity Explored. The Christianity Explored course will be covered in your group. You'll need your own guide book, one in the group will want reference to a fat Leader's Book. I'm really excited about CE, its put together really well and I got a lot out of it last time I did it.

Welcome: What good news have you heard this week?

Worship: Sing a carol or two. O little town of Bethlehem, Hark the herald angels. (Psalm is 85).

Word:

1. Read Mark 1.1-8
2. Did I give a one word sermon? What was it / would it have been?
3. If you're struggling in your homegroups saying Ah but my footnote says "Son of God" isn't in some manuscripts – well spotted. It isn't in Codex Siniaticus which is a very important early manuscript. It is in Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Alexandrinus which are also very early manuscripts. There are good theological reasons for it being kept – the other place it is used is Mk3.11 and Mk15.39 (its also used in the other gospels where an angel says it, Luke says it, Matthew, John, John the Baptist, Natthaniel, Martha, its even Paul's first sermon (Ac9.20), a total of 40 times).
4. Why isn't it enough for Jesus just to be Messiah? (hint: adoptionism)
5. Why isn't it enough for Jesus just to be the Son of God? (hint: docetism)
6. Look up Malachi 3.1 and Isa 40.3 is there anything more we can learn from their original context?
7. Sorry I didn't preach on the other 7 verses, you'll get a really good sermon on John the Baptist this coming Sunday. Mark doesn't give us any of the Christmas story but instead launches with John the Baptist. Why?
8. If Mark only puts in the essentials, what are we to learn of vs 6.
9. What does John think he is doing with water? What does he think this messiah will do?

Works:

Pray, especially about who you could invite to Christingle, Carols, Nativity, Christmas Day, Christianity Explored? Who can you offer a lift to? Pray for yourselves that this Christmas you might catch that same overwhelming excitement that this is good news and Jesus has come!

*I'd be curious to know if any of you turned the page but I sort of went off this sermon and instead you got what you got. The points on the whole were the same but quite different at the All Age service and perhaps also at the Matins. Sorry about that.*

If you have ever **gone without coffee** or without alcohol or sugar for a long period – perhaps a Lenten fast. And then you get to that day when **chocolate** finally touches your lips again and you find yourself wildly excited and exuberant – then you will be coming close to my first reaction when I first looked up this morning's bible reading a week or so ago. I started physically shaking and laughing and giggling and praising the Lord.

All I read was: The **Goodnews** of Jesus **Messiah** the **Son** of God.

I've only really managed to get that far. Every time I have read the passage this week I have become terribly **excited** just at this opening sentence.

You have to picture me **pouring over ancient tomes** and the Hebrew and the Septuagint and exploring other people's sermons and all the time crying out to God **Why?** Why have you sent us this difficult book of Ecclesiastes? How long O Lord!

And then I open up Mark's Gospel and read The **Goodnews** of Jesus **Messiah** the **Son** of God.

Remind me next year to preach something **terribly dry** for November – perhaps something from the obscure depths of Ezekiel – because of the **giddy buzz** that I'm getting now. I would like to try and convey something of that joy to you.

Mark starts us off saying The **Goodnews** – whatever else that follows its is Good news. If at any stage you get lost or confused about what I'm saying – I'm trying to say that it really is **wonderfully good news**.

However you proceed to interpret or understand Jesus, His life, His teaching, His death and resurrection, His mission and purpose – if at any stage you start thinking “**This is not** Goodnews” – then you have **not** understood it. This is Good News.

From **mid-January** I'm inviting the whole church to do a course called **Christianity Explored**. It is a 10 week course – a bit like the Alpha Course – all the home groups will be doing it, in their homegroups. Mondays, Tuesday evenings, Wednesday afternoon as well as evening, perhaps even Thursday mornings – lots of different groups and we'll all be working our way through Christianity Explored.

I like it because it sets you **homework** – to read Mark's Gospel and it gives you some questions to be mulling over during the week.

**If you're in a HG** that's what's happening to you. If you're not in a HG **please can you seriously** think about joining one if only for the period of mid-January to Palm Sunday.

As we do this course together we will **explore what this Good News looks like** and what it means for us and how we are to live in the light of it.

The Goodnews of Jesus **Messiah**, the **Son** of God.

Lots of people want to make this word **Messiah** or Christ simply **equivalent** to the Son of God. But I would like to suggest to you something I have found quite useful.

Messiah (Mashicha) is the Hebrew – Christos or Christ the greek. It simply means the **anointed** one.

Lots of people in the Old Testament were anointed. **Aaron** (Ex28.41) is anointed as priest and his sons and they lead the people in their priestly role. **Saul** was the first king of Israel and he is anointed. David viewed Saul in a special light seeing Saul as the anointed one (2 Sam1.16). **David** is anointed.

Even **Cyrus** – Isa 45.1 – God anoints a foreign Cyrus for the purpose of sending the people of God back to their homeland.

The Isaiah 40 reading we just had begins to speak of it. It is for them the beginning of the end of the exile, the end of the Diaspora.

So Messiah or Christ is about God taking hold of an **ordinary** person and setting him **apart** for a special mission. Anointing him for a special task.

The key understanding here is that the **Messiah** is an **ordinary** person. We might think of him as a **hero** but he's really one of us.

And that's very important. If we are to be saved, we're going to need One of Us to do the saving., a **representative**.

The trouble is that if Jesus is **just Messiah** – then He is lacking something – in order to save us from our Sin we're going to **need more than a messiah**.

You may have come across people who think that **Jesus** was **just an ordinary** human being but terribly gifted – wonderful teaching and all that sort of thing.

But as we read our way **through Mark's Gospel** we'll find a Jesus who said and did things that you really shouldn't if you are **merely human**.

And I don't mean healing people and I don't mean multiplying loaves and fishes: **Jesus forgives people** in the same way that God forgives you. Its really quite astonishing and I'll explain some more when we get there.

The heresy that rose up was called **Adoptionism** – Jesus was just a human but he had been adopted to be the Son of God. The problem with that was as **Steve Chalke** put it (and he caused quite a stir) when he said that to many people what God does to Jesus **looks like divine Child Abuse**. God takes hold of the one good person on the planet and kills him.

We have our **sacrificial** lamb, but we don't have a high priest. We have our representative but we don't have one who can take our sin away.

For the gospel to be **goodnews** we're going to need Jesus to be **more than a human messiah**. And Mark says -

The Goodnews of Jesus Messiah the Son of God.

If the Messiah title shows that **Jesus is one of us**, then the other title: The **Son of God** shows that Jesus is also fully God.

**Only God saves**, only God can forgive sins, if we are to be truly saved, we're going to need our Saviour to be God.

**BUT If Jesus is only Son of God** – and you will hear this quite a lot from the pulpit, especially at Christmas and possibly from me taking a few theological short cuts – **God comes to earth to rescue us** – well yes He does but

But if Jesus is exclusively Divine, then His earthly **appearance is a sham** – He isn't really hungry or thirsty, He's pretending to weep, to feel pain. And the problem then is you don't know if **anything he said is true** or reliable.

The heresy in its fullness was called **Docetism**. We have our heavenly **high priest** but we have no **paschal lamb**.

If we are to be saved, we will need Jesus to be both **Messiah** and **Son** of God. And as we read our way through the Gospel of Mark **we'll begin to see what kind** of person Jesus is.

Mark starts us off, with some **bold** conclusions that he is going to have to support and demonstrate in his Gospel. So get reading it!

**But if Mark is right** then what he is saying is truly and astonishingly Good news. This is the Goodnews of Jesus Messiah, the Son of God. Amen.