

# The Beginning of the Gospel

"Follow Me in Anticipation" Series, Nov. 30 & Dec. 1, 2025 (Advent 1) | Mark 1:1

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Where should we begin the Christmas story?

## **Luke begins with angels appearing.**

Luke tells us that he wants to write an orderly account of the events of Jesus' life.

So, he starts before Jesus was born and records that angels announce the birth of John the Baptist. Then he records that an angel appears to Jesus' mother, Mary, as well.

Quickly, Luke turns to the record of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

Luke's account covers the details and is the most familiar to us.

## **Matthew begins with Jesus' family tree.**

Matthew emphasizes why Jesus was born.

His birth fulfilled prophecy, and He is the True King.

## **John begins before creation.**

John tells us that Jesus is God Himself, Who existed before creation.

John wants us to know that it's the Word of God, the Son of God, who took on flesh in Jesus.

## **Mark starts without fanfare or details.**

Mark gives us very little backstory.

No angels appear. There is no extended philosophical or theological reflection.

Mark starts with Jesus; here He is.

## **In so doing, Mark gives us an important take on Christmas.**

Mark 1:1 poses a simple but profound thesis.

This is Jesus. He is the Savior and Son of God, and this is Good News!

Mark focuses us on the essence and poses a critical question to us: How will we respond?

That's where Mark starts. This is the beginning.

This is the Gospel.

## **The word "Gospel" means "good news."**

We usually think of the Gospels as the first four books of the New Testament telling about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

But the word simply means "good news." This is good news.

## **The Gospel is the good news Jesus preached.**

We've already studied **Mark 1:14-15** together. Those verses tell us about the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, and they say:

***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."***

The Gospel is the good news Jesus preached, the good news that the time had come for God to intervene in the broken world. The rule of God is breaking in to change the broken world. Jesus preached this Gospel and called us to repent and believe in it.

### **But the Gospel is also good news about Jesus.**

Jesus' birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection ARE good news.

He is the Kingdom of God in the flesh, breaking in.

And Jesus is the ultimate victory of the Kingdom of God being won.

### **The Gospel is personal!**

The Gospel is good news.

The Gospel is the message Jesus preached.

And the Gospel is the news ABOUT Jesus. It's Jesus' story. It's Jesus Himself.

He IS the Good News. He is the Gospel. The Gospel is personal.

### **How do you understand Jesus?**

Do you think of Jesus as a set of ideas? Some of us who are considering faith in Jesus probably think of the claims about Jesus as the critical things we must evaluate. We think of them as if we had to decide whether Jesus really worked miracles and really rose from the dead. Some of us who have faith in Jesus also treat Him as a set of ideas. We think that if we get our theology right, then we understand Jesus. Those things are important, but Jesus is more than ideas.

Do you think of Jesus as a to do list? Some of us think that what Jesus wants is for us to do the right things in the right ways and not do the wrong things in the wrong ways. Obedience is incredibly important for disciples of Jesus, but Jesus is more than a to do list.

Do you think of Jesus as a person? Do you realize that you can KNOW Jesus and not just KNOW ABOUT Jesus? Jesus may not be a person in the sense that he is like the person sitting next to you right now. You can see and touch that person; you can talk with that person, and that person can probably talk back to you. Jesus, risen from the dead, is in heaven. You can't see Him (probably) or touch Him (probably). But you can talk with Him in prayer. You can hear from Him in prayer. He did have a physical body on earth, and now He has a spiritual and perfect resurrected body. So, He is very much like the person sitting next to you right now. You can know Him, not just know about Him. I know Him.

Jesus wants to have a relationship with you. Do you understand that? He loves you and want you to love Him. How will you respond to Him?

**This is the Gospel of Jesus the Savior.**

**To call Jesus the Christ is to call him "Savior."**

The term "Christ" is not actually part of Jesus' name; nor is it a last name.

The term "Christ" means "the anointed one."

The term "Christ" in English transliterates the Greek word for the Jewish Messiah.

That means that Jesus is the One anointed by God to lead and save His people.

The Messiah was promised by God and would be the perfect Prophet and Priest and King.

The Jewish people were looking for a Messiah to come, rally His people, restore their dignity, cast out foreign oppressors, and create a kingdom here on earth that would last forever.

That wasn't exactly God's plan. Not yet.

God's plan was to send someone—Jesus—who would call people to repentance, save them from their sin, reconcile them with God, give them new hearts, and establish a new covenant with them which would involve the Holy Spirit and be like having the Law written on their hearts.

God's plan was to send a Savior. Jesus is that Savior. That's what Mark is saying.

### **The life of Jesus is part of a bigger story.**

Mark tells us that we are at the beginning of the life of Jesus. But the life of Jesus fits into a much bigger drama that stretches all the way back to creation and before, and will stretch forward to the conclusion of history.

The Gospel really begins with Creation. God made the world. God made us in order to love us. That means that we aren't an accident; we are made intentionally by God out of love.

But then the Gospel must acknowledge the problem: Brokenness. At Satan's urging, we sinned. When we sinned, we broke our relationship with God. We fell. When we fell, we brought the penalty of death on ourselves. We broke ourselves. We broke the world. We can't fix a problem that big! But God decided to offer a solution. God created a special people, Israel, through whom He would send a Savior.

Then the Gospel comes to Jesus. Jesus is God who came to us and took on human flesh. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. Jesus lived a perfect and sinless life, then died on the cross to pay the price for our sin. God raised Jesus from the dead, victorious over sin, death, and evil.

Now, if we repent and proclaim our loyalty to Jesus, we can become His disciples. We can be forgiven for our sin, reconciled to God, adopted as God's children, filled with His Holy Spirit, given new lives, placed in the Church, and given gifts for serving Him. That's good news too!

But there is an ending to the Gospel. The "world as it is" is broken still. Jesus will return one day to rule. He will eliminate and judge all evil. He will make the "world as it is" into the "world as it should be." When He does, we will be resurrected and live with Him forever.

We are at the beginning of the life of Jesus, but we are in the middle of the bigger plot.

### **Jesus is THE star of the bigger story.**

Jesus was there before the beginning.

He is the One we longed for.

He fights and wins the defining battle.

Now, once again, we are just waiting for Jesus to return!

Jesus is THE star of the Gospel!

## **History has a problem inside, like an old timber-framed building full of deathwatch beetles.**

I've been watching a show recently about restoring old British homes.

These are grand homes that were built long ago—some as early as the 1400s.

This old construction comes from before modern steel. Big pieces of oak timber were used as structural beams. They have lasted for hundreds of years.

These buildings are expensive to maintain, and some of them have fallen into neglect.

They have problems with the roofs and the walls and the foundations.

Moisture is the big problem. When moisture gets into a house, it makes the everything weak. When timbers get weak, they tend to get an infestation of deathwatch beetles.

That's a dramatic term for a little bug that lays eggs whose larvae bore into these ancient timbers and eat away at them as they grow.

There is very little evidence that these deathwatch beetles are present, except tiny holes on the outside of wood when they're done eating the wood. But deathwatch beetles can destroy from the inside out the timbers in a beautiful old house that has stood for centuries.

The timber and the building can look fine from the outside but be turned to dust on the inside and teeter on the brink of collapse.

I want you to keep that picture in mind today as you think about the world around us. It looks fine on the outside. But inside, there is a sickness eating away at it like deathwatch beetles. The world around us is infested with sin. Sin is turning the world as it is into dust. It's sick, crumbling, and on the verge of falling down.

## **Can you see the need for a Savior?**

The world is rotting from the inside. It's crumbling—even the parts that still look good.

And that's true not only of the world but of our lives apart from Christ. They may look good from the outside, but our lives apart from Christ are all infested with sin, and that sin is eating away at our souls from the inside. Apart from Christ, we are crumbling now, we will die separated from Christ, and we will spend eternity in hell.

It's time to come to terms with this reality and recognize our need for a Savior.

We desperately need a Savior.

## **This is the Gospel of Jesus the Son of God.**

### **Mark reminds us repeatedly that Jesus is the Son of God.**

In **Mark 1:11** (just a few verses after Mark 1:1) Jesus was baptized, and a voice came from heaven (from the Father) and said:

**... "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."**

Again in **Mark 9:7**, when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, a voice came from heaven:

**... "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."**

Jesus is the Son of God.

### **Jesus, the Son of God, is fully human.**

Jesus is fully human in that He is born a human being with a mother, Mary.

He ate, grew up, played as a child, and experienced everything that it means to be human.

Jesus is truly one of us. And that's important because of our sin. We human beings have sinned. We have incurred a sin-debt or a sin-penalty. That debt had to be paid by a human being or that penalty had to be taken by a human being.

Jesus, the fully human Son of God is paid that debt and took our penalty.

### **Jesus, the Son of God, is fully divine.**

Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. God is one God in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That's who God is.

That's important because Jesus is God in the flesh, not just a good human being.

It's also important because the sin-debt Jesus had to pay is massive. Infinite. Only God could do that. Jesus, the fully divine Son of God, paid our entire sin-debt.

### **The Quecreek Mine Rescue reminds us that there are some things we cannot do for ourselves.**

It all unfolded on and under a farm in Pennsylvania more than twenty years ago.

On July 24, 2002, nine miners headed into the Quecreek Mine to work at 3 pm.

Just before 9 pm, they drilled into an abandoned mine. Maps of the old mine were wrong. The old mine was flooded, so millions of gallons of water flooded into the Quecreek mine. Nine miners were trapped 240 feet underground.

On the surface, rescue workers pinpointed the trapped miners underground.

They drilled a ventilation hole and discovered that all nine trapped miners were alive!

Later that day, a "super drill" was brought in, and crews began drilling a larger hole into the mine. By 10:15 pm the third night, the "super-drill" broke through.

By 3 a.m. on July 28, all nine miners were at the surface. Alive. The lives of those nine miners depended on a large team of people on the surface to save them.<sup>1</sup>

There are just some things we can't do for ourselves.

### **Can you accept that there are things you cannot do for yourself?**

That's a difficult thought to wrap your mind around, I know.

We like to think that we are in control of our own lives, that we don't NEED anyone else.

But there are things we can't do for ourselves. We can't save ourselves.

We can't save ourselves from the deep reaches of a flooded mine, and we can't save ourselves from the pit of brokenness that sin creates in our lives and in eternity.

And there isn't a team of crack engineers and rescue workers who can get the job done either.

Only God can do that. That's why it is so important that Jesus is the Son of God.

That's good news!

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/pittsburgh/news/20-years-later-timeline-quecreek-mine-rescue/>

## How will we respond?

### **This is the beginning of the Gospel.**

Mark is getting first things first. This is where the life of Jesus starts—with who He is.

Mark is also letting us know that all of the good news that comes next flows from and out of Jesus.

But Mark is also saying that this is a New Beginning. Creation was one beginning. Jesus is a New Beginning. We can have a new beginning in Jesus.

### **But let's fast forward to the ending of Mark's Gospel.**

Jesus had been crucified and had hung on the cross for hours.

Darkness covered the land as if heaven were hiding the Son of God from our sight.

In the darkness, Jesus cried out. Everyone waited anxiously. Then Jesus died.

That's when we read some of the most shocking and important words in Mark's account.

#### **Mark 15:39:**

***And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"***

This man got it.

He was a guard who was helping to crucify Jesus. And a Roman. Of all people. A Roman.

Standing at the foot of the cross, he got it.

"Truly this man was the Son of God!" He got it!

### **That's what Mark wants for us. He tells us so from the beginning.**

"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Son of God."

Mark tells us from the beginning that this is what He wants us to see.

He wants us to see that Jesus is the one who died to save us from our brokenness. He also wants us to see that Jesus is also the one who lives and reigns and demands our loyalty.

He wants us to say with the Centurion, "Truly this man was [and is] the Son of God!"

That's what Mark wants for us.

### **That's what I want for you.**

That's what I want for you today if you've never done it before. Will you accept Jesus as Savior and Son of God today?

And that's what I want for you today if you've come part way before. Will you accept Jesus as Savior who wants to rescue you from sin and have a personal relationship with you? Will you accept Jesus as Son of God who lives and reigns and wants you as His disciple?

That's what I want for you today.