

Sermon: “God Is Doing A New Thing” NSAC September 8, 2024
Series: Book of Mark—“On The Move With Jesus” Dave Sattler
Text: Mark 1:1-8 & Mark 10:45 Sub-Texts: Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1, Mark 16:15, Acts 15:36-41, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 Sources: Bible Gateway, NIV Life Application, & Indigenous Bible. Commentaries: R. Alan Cole, David Guzik, & N.T. Wright. Books: “*How To Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy)*” by Sam Chan (2020), “*The Writings of the New Testament*” by Luke Timothy Johnson (1986), “*Jesus and the Powers*” by N.T. Wright & Michael Bird (2023). Online: Next-Gen Barna Study/Webinar (Alpha Canada 2024). Images: unsplash.com.

I. **Introduction:**

- Good morning, everyone! I’m Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at NSAC. Thank you for joining us today in person and online; it’s wonderful to be together, worshipping Jesus, and, being transformed by God’s revelation to us through His Word!!
- **<Slide>** Today I’m excited to launch our Fall Series in the Bible Book of Mark: “*On The Move With Jesus.*”
- Chronological, action-packed, and concise, Mark’s Gospel offers a rapid barrage of vivid pictures of Jesus *in action*. While the *teaching* of Jesus is important, the gospel writer’s most concerned with illustrating how Jesus backs up His words with *action*. ***In this book, Mark sets out to reveal the true identity of Jesus by what Jesus does.***
- Rather surprisingly, the author presents Jesus not as ... the prettiest, or the most popular, or the most successful leader—by common standards.
- Instead, Mark tells the shocking story of Jesus the Servant willingly dying a criminal death to save the human race.
- **<Slide>** Displaying this radical vision of leadership, in the marquee verses of the gospel, Jesus Himself declares: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” —Mark 10:43b-45
- What Jesus *says*, He later backs up, on a Roman cross, sacrificing His life for all humanity—driven by love for you and for me.
- Ever wonder why *servicing others* often gives us such a good feeling?
- *Servicing* is wired into humanity—and our Saviour leads the way.
- Author Mark, full name John Mark, is a “second-chance kid.”

- We don't know all the circumstances, but Acts 15 tells us Mark had at one point "deserted" the mission team, drawing the ire of the Apostle Paul, who refused to take him on his next mission.
- Interesting, more gracious Barnabas was willing to offer Mark a *second chance*, including him on *his* team, which created a "sharp disagreement" between Paul and Barnabas. —Acts 15:36-41
- **<Slide>** Mark's main source for his book is the Apostle Peter—the man who infamously denied Jesus three times. Drawing on Peter's stories and sermons, Mark pens his book primarily for a Roman audience.
- Ironic that ... ***Mark and Peter, two notable failures team up to write this amazing book!***
- Have *you* ever felt like a *failure*, gotten cut from a team, lost a job, made a huge mistake (or 3), let your loved one, mentor, or supervisor down?
- Existence of the Book of Mark is proof God *never* gives up on *anyone!*
- We don't know whether Mark ever met Jesus.
- A generation or two younger, he may have been a preteen or youth during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry.
- **<Slide>** Scholars are divided on whether Mark is the first Gospel written. Nevertheless, all but 31 of its verses are covered in the other 3 gospels: Matthew, Luke, & John.
- The book of Mark has long been a favourite of missionaries introducing the gospel into new languages and people-groups. And, did you know ***Mark is the most translated book in the entire world?***
- Most likely because it's simple and to the point, or, short and sweet (just like me!) You see why I like it! Little fluff, there's a straight-forward earthiness to Mark I've long appreciated.

II. Scripture Reading: Mark 1:1-8

<Slide> 1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, 2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"—3 "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'" 4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole

Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

<**Slide**> 6 John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: “After me comes the One more powerful than I, the straps of Whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

<Pray> “*Lord, thank You for Your Word. Please move me out of the way. Come speak to us by Your Spirit. We’re hungry to hear from you.*”

III. **Biblical Teaching: Mark 1:1-8**

1. <**Slide**> **The coming of Jesus is such good news. (V1)**

- Writing in 1st Century Rome, a culture that featured wide-scale belief in *many* gods, John Mark begins his book with a revolutionary announcement: ‘Jesus is Messiah—the One True God.’
- ILL—The Greek word *evangel*, translated as “gospel” or “good news” was a feature word in the Roman cult of power.
- When a leader or emperor attained a majority, manipulated, or, fought his way to power, typically that leader would call for a celebration.
- Often it would amount to something like this: ‘I announce to you, my subjects, a special day off for all of you across the empire ... to celebrate *me* as your new supreme ruler!’ How kind. Good news of sorts, I guess.
- Here, in a very Roman way, Mark announces an absolutely vital historical event that introduces a new situation for the world: ‘God the Son Jesus has come to earth’—it’s History’s Game-Changer!

2. <**Slide**> **A herald is sent ahead to announce. (V2-3)**

- But Jesus does not arrive unexpected.
- Old Testament prophets, like Malachi and Isaiah, of whom the Israelites were very familiar, had prophesied about the coming of Messiah, sent by God Himself, Who would offer salvation to the entire world.
- Still many *missed* it; or *dismissed* Jesus, because He wasn’t Who *they* thought or wanted Him to be, or, didn’t *do* what *they* wanted Him to do.
- ILL—Many (many) years ago, I was volunteering the summer at Green Bay Bible Camp in West Kelowna. At 14 or so, it was hard work washing dishes, cleaning toilets, leading kids’ programs.

- On a rare morning off, I was sleeping in—like only teenagers can.
- Tired I was in a deep sleep in my bunk in a cabin near the beach.
- When, all of a sudden, I was shocked into consciousness by a 10 gallon bucketful of cold lake water poured on my face and body—a waterfall!
- And, as you can imagine, I awoke in a state of utter *shock*. “We’re going to town!” My friends announced excitedly. Boy, was I ever awake!?!
- With his opening verses, ***Mark intends to shock his readers—to wake them up to the new thing God had done in Jesus.***
- After 300+ years of apparent silence from God, foretold by the prophets, forerunner John the Baptist bursts onto the scene, as *herald* to announce and “prepare the way” for Jesus.

3. <Slide> John the Baptist leads a powerful ministry. (V4-5)

- Getting down to business, Mark omits the birth of Jesus and jumps right into the prophetic *ministry* of Jesus’ cousin, John the Baptist.
- His work? “Baptizing ... and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (4)
- For centuries Jews had baptized non-Jews who wished to convert to Judaism. But John the Baptist gives new meaning to water baptism.
- John’s is a baptism of ***repentance*** that symbolizes a life change of direction—a ***‘spiritual U-Turn’***: a person is repentant when they ***confess*** and ***turn from living for self and sin, and, turn to living for God.*** Still today, this act of repentance is part of the Christian call.
- Soon the early church would also practice water baptism, adding to its meaning *association* with the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Evidently, John’s *ministry* was highly successful: “The whole Judean countryside and all of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.” (5)
- For a Jew to be baptized in John’s day was big. Like one scholar suggests: “It was to say: ‘I confess that I am as far away from God as a Gentile and I need to get right with God.’” —Guzik, p13
- This was a *powerful* work of the Holy Spirit.

4. <Slide> John the Baptist exhibits eccentric behaviour. (V6)

- *Eccentric*, John is a 1st century version of an Old Testament prophet.

- Cut from the same spartan cloth as the desert prophet Elijah, John relies on God to provide food for him through the things he's able to forage in the wilderness: “[grasshoppers] and wild honey.” (6b)
- Dressed in his signature “camel hair with a belt around his waist” (6a), this strange-*behaving* Baptizer conducts his ministry, not in a city where the masses are, but in the rugged hills, east of Jerusalem—an extremely hot and dry location (I was sweating profusely when I snapped this photo there in October 2013).
- This is not a cool place. And John is not a cool guy. That people were drawn to a man like *that* in a place like *this* is simply remarkable.

5. <Slide> John the Baptist proclaims a humble message. (V7-8)

- Because John the Baptist was the first prophet to emerge in centuries, it's likely people were *fawning* over him, clamouring to attach themselves to his ministry—which he may have found, tempting.
- But, John remains keenly aware of his own *insignificance*.
- ILL—Though maybe I secretly long to be some celebrity pastor, I know those gigs are short-lived, and, terribly destructive—for everybody.
- No pastor or missionary or Christian leader or any person should ever set themselves up as **greater**, or, more important than Jesus or His *message*. We're all subservient to the gospel; it's bigger than all of us!
- And John's *humble message* convicts me: ‘Don't look at me,’ John says, ‘The Great One is coming. I'm simply His messenger. Be sure to look to Jesus.’ (7) John *proclaims* he is not worthy of performing even the most menial of tasks for Jesus: ‘untying His sandals.’ (8b)

IV. Life Applications

- Let's “land the plane” on the sermon today with *some* life applications ...

A. <Slide> *Christ-followers are invited to make way for Jesus in our world.*

- A primary way God reveals Himself to humanity is through His people.
- Funny how one writer puts it: “John [the Baptist] was God's *bulldozer* to build that highway [for God to move in peoples' lives].” —Guzik, p12
- The Book of Mark concludes with this call: “[Jesus] said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” —Mark 16:15
- Today God longs to use *us* too as His messengers.

- So, in our *post*, or, increasingly *anti-Christian* West Coast culture, how might we appropriately and effectively, *make way for Jesus* to move ... in our schools, in our workplaces, on our sports teams, in our social circles?
- **<Slide>** APP—In his recent book, “*How To Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy)*,” Australian Sam Chan encourages Christ-followers to become what he terms “***The Unofficial, De Facto Chaplain***” of our ***neighbourhoods and friend-groups***.
- “Our goal in being a chaplain to those around us is to *be Jesus* to them,” Chan says. “Like Jesus, we are [to be] the calm, non-anxious presence. We are patient, gentle, gracious, generous, forgiving, and loving. We have wisdom.” —Chan, p113
- Chan suggests part of becoming ‘chaplain’ is asking good “second questions” beyond simple pleasantries. Not just, ‘*How are you?*’ But, ‘*How’re things at home?*’ ‘*How’s your health?*’
- Then lock in and listen intently.
- Deeper questions can give your friends permission to talk about *real* things in their lives—which is increasingly rare in our day.
- And, when something deeper is shared, be sure to follow up on it the next time you see them. You may offer to pray, or, even invite them to church, if it feels like God is opening a door.
- ILL—Lately, on my way to soccer, I’ve been praying, “God, help me to know what to ask. Help me to listen well, be an encouragement, care for, connect more deeply with my teammates. Jesus, shine through me.”
- **<Slide>** APP—Like John the Baptist, we too are called to herald Jesus to family, friends, and neighbours. Still, ***we must remember it’s not all up to us. We can’t convert people.*** That’s God’s job.
- Our job is to prepare the way for Jesus by being present, building loving relationships, listening well, sharing the message when the opportunity arises, and waiting for (and praying for) the Spirit to move.
- People of NSAC, I am with you. Vancouver, the North Shore is a hard place to live for Jesus. Being Christian here is not a very cool thing.
- And it feels so *dark* some days.
- ILL—Yet, recent studies suggest our friends may be more open to the Christian Story than we think.

- The 2024 “Next-Gen Barna” Study suggests *spiritual curiosity* has increased significantly in Canada since 2020, and, *church attendance* amongst Canadians under-30 has shot up 5% to 18% in 4 years.
—Alpha Canada Next-Gen Study (2024)
- Says Alpha Canada National Director, Shaila Visser: “*When the world gets darker, the light of Jesus shines brighter.*”
- Our current cultural narratives are *not* comforting people in crisis, mental health is spiking, people are more stressed out, and, lonelier than ever.
- The wisdom, the comfort, the presence Jesus, and His people can offer, cannot be found in other places. May we *humbly (and faithfully) point people to Jesus* and then *trust Jesus* to make Himself known to family, friends, and neighbours—in His time and His way.

B. <Slide> God longs to transform us by His indwelling Holy Spirit.

- A key question pops up in the text. When, in v8, John says, “I baptize you with water, but [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit,” what does he mean? What’s John driving at?
- John’s baptism only *prepared* people to receive the message of Jesus.
- Soon Jesus would baptize repentant followers as a symbol of the even deeper *baptism of the Holy Spirit* (or, sanctification as it’s called) that too is offered to those who put their faith in Jesus for salvation.
- In his commentary, N.T. Wright says: “In the original Exodus story God’s presence lived *with* Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire. This time it was to be similar but different. God’s [S]pirit would live *with* people, *in* people, becoming the *air* they breathe, the *fire* in their hearts. This is the promise they had lived on. John says it’s now going to come true. But are you ready for it?” —Wright, p.2
- <Slide> APP—More good news: If you are a follower of Jesus today, life *transformation* is possible through God’s indwelling Holy Spirit!
- Are you up for it?! ***Are you tapping into that fire in your heart, that Divine Resource—the Holy Spirit Who lives in you?***
- Reality is: When we wish to better ourselves, grow in a certain area, or, fix a part of us we don’t like, our primary tactics are: Educate ourselves through incessant research, listening to podcasts, taking a class.

- Or, we hire a professional, consult a mentor, or join a group. Or, we train hard in the new behaviour in hopes of making it a habit in our lives.
- Now, all of this is well and good. Yet, no matter how hard we try, or, work at it, none of us can ever actually *transform ourselves*—especially in things that matter most—issues of deep character, or, core behaviour.
- Anyone who’s ever been in recovery, knows it’s impossible to ‘white-knuckle’ it out of our addictions.
- Why God the Holy Spirit offers to do the ‘heavy-lifting’ for us. However, the onus to submit to His transforming work is on us.
- **<Slide>** Paul talks about this deep work of transformation the indwelling Holy Spirit longs to make happen in God’s people.
 - 2 Corinthians 3:17b-18 says, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are *being transformed* into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, Who is the Spirit.”
- APP—So, what are stumbling blocks for you? What are the things that hold *you* back from cooperating with the work God longs to do in your life? Is it pride? Is it fear? Is it your wounded-ness? Is it your desire for control? Is it doubt God can actually do it?
- ILL—Recently (this week even), the Spirit has been poking me to surrender some stuff I have been holding onto tightly—to walk in new freedom.
- Friends of NSAC, together may we have soft hearts, surrendering more and more to the Holy Spirit’s transforming work in us, and in our church.
- *This* is our pathway to freedom.

C. <Slide> *The God of the Christian Story leads as a humble servant.*

- That Jesus, the most powerful leader the world has ever seen did not flaunt His power, or, lord His authority over others, but chose instead to step down, to lead as a humble servant, is nothing short of mind-blowing—and, sets the path for us, His followers.
- Sure, servant leadership has featured now for decades in business schools and publications.

- That leaders might lead better by serving those under them is not strictly a Christian thought anymore.
- To serve others is generally viewed today as “good leadership.”
- So, is *Christian* Servant Leadership any different?
- I believe it is. Yes, in and of ourselves, there is some good in every human. We all reflect the image of God in some way.
- However, strictly human-driven servant leadership, for the most part, always defaults to an ulterior motive: I may serve to *impress* people to bring them closer, I may serve to *get what I want* out of my subjects, or I may serve to *make a name* for myself.
- **<Slide>** APP—Truth is: it’s impossible to drum up the strength to be a humble servant on our own.
- When we try to serve others solely on our own strength, we eventually burn out—become easily annoyed with people—or worse, we get bitter, angry, resentful, or jaded. Believe me, I know.
- The only way to truly serve others is to draw on the relentless well of strength and love our Saviour Jesus offers, receive it for ourselves, then allow it to flow through us to others. ***Truly serving others means allowing God’s love to flow through us.***
- For those of us who find ourselves in positions of power, how might we lay aside our lofty titles and truly sacrifice for the well-being of others?
- For those who are married, how can we rely on Jesus to equip us to rise to the call to better serve our spouse?
- For us who rub shoulders with people far away from Jesus, how can we draw deeper into Jesus to better serve family, friends, and neighbours as an avenue for pointing them to Jesus?
- *On the move with Jesus*, His followers are invited into His sweet world of serving others. And, do you know we *grow* as we serve? God has designed it this way: We grow in our faith as we learn to rely on Jesus more deeply to fill us with His love for others.
- So, if you’re not currently serving, I encourage you to find a place to serve Jesus—here at NSAC (talk to a staff member), or, elsewhere.
- **<Slide>** The Christian Story is all about God the Son Jesus coming down into this world to rescue humanity.

- ***Expecting nothing in return, Jesus, the Consummate Servant, came to pay the “ransom” for sin we all deserved to pay, but never could.***
- Why Mark builds the gospel around these wildly compelling words:
 - “For even the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to ***give His life*** as a ransom for many.”
—Mark 10:45
- Through Jesus’ humble act of servanthood, relationship between holy God and sinful us can be restored.

V. <Slide> **Communion**

- I invite the worship team to come now, along with the communion servers. During and after communion, prayer is available: <9am: *Brenda & Cathy / Daniel & Leah*//11am: *Ali & Sam / George & Lyric*>
- If something’s on your heart this morning, don’t be afraid to step out of your seat and see our Prayer Ministers who can take it to Jesus with you.
- You and I are welcomed by God to eat at this table, where Jesus serves us: *giving His body*, and, *shedding His blood* for us.
- Representing the Body of Christ, you will receive a piece of bread to dip in the cup, which represents the blood of Jesus poured out for you, and, signifies the tremendous love Jesus has for you.
- Gluten-free communion options are available, here, in the middle aisle.
- Through faith in Jesus and His gift of service poured out for us on the cross, our sins are forgiven! Amen. Thanks for listening. Please come.