

“Good News for a New Year”

Focus: The Gospel of Mark

Jan. 10 – Feb. 14, 2021 (six weeks)

Brainstorming: Monday, December 14, 2020 at the back of the sanctuary

2021 theme: Still Blessed

2021 theme connection/synopsis: Everyone needs good news. The Good News is needed more than anything. The Gospel of Mark wastes no time getting to the truth: We are blessed because God is here, God is our side in our shared humanity, God is passionate to save us, and the whole world is radically different because Jesus breaks down barriers between us and God and between us and others.

Key words: Reset, Resist (temptation)

Scripture: The Gospel of Mark (from the lectionary – Year B)

The Gospel According to Mark has no story of Jesus’s birth. Instead, Mark’s story begins by describing Jesus’s adult life, introducing it with the words, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God...” (1:1). As a result of its proximity to original sources, the Gospel of Mark has transformed from a book disregarded for its lowly prose to one of the most important books in the New Testament. Its historical importance has affected its evaluation by literary scholars as well. Though crude and terse, the Gospel of Mark is vivid and concrete. Action dominates. A dramatic sense of urgency is present, and Mark has a developed sense of irony that permeates the Gospel. (<https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/newtestament/section2/>)

Ideas related to 2021 theme:

- Are You Ready for 2021? Reset. Remember/Recall. Reflect. Renew. Refocus. Revival, Reinvent. Re-do. Reevaluate. Resilient. Rebirth. Regret. Respond. Reverse.
- What do we do after the “dumpster fire” year that was 2020? There have been so many layers of stuff – not seeing friends/family/congregation, COVID-19, job loss, weird school situation, social unrest, fires, election craziness, church hypocrisy, crisis fatigue, and more. Go back to basics. Make Lake Harbor a “safe harbor.” Realize that God still blesses everyone, even in messes. Recognize that sanctuary is an atmosphere, not a place. We need a Love-demic not a pandemic.
- Theme song: “The Blessing” – **use as an ending song for the series?** Sheet music and children’s resources (video with hand motions) available: <https://www.ignitermedia.com/collections/65222-the-blessing>.
- Hands-on item: What can we hand out to remind people of the 2021 theme?

Notes for series:

- Epiphany means “manifestation,” and we celebrate the coming of Christ for all people – and remember that the magi were the first Gentiles to worship Jesus.
- Epiphany is about seeing Christ, about the manifestation of Messiah in the person of Jesus.

- Christ’s ministry in Mark’s Gospel is one of word and action; preaching and healing; offering people health and salvation. This, too, is the ministry of the church.
- Jesus is constantly breaking down barriers that have put up by human sin – especially encountering people who were ostracized by society (those with evil spirits, etc.)

Additional resources:

- <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/gbod-assets/worship-series/Follow-Me-Series-PDF.pdf>
- <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/1910/mark-9-week-reading-plan-and-sermon-series>
- <https://Impc.org/series/the-gospel-of-mark-the-person-and-purpose-of-jesus/>
- <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/follow-me>
- “The Book of Mark: An Introduction.” Length: 3:22. Cost: \$19.98. The Gospel of Mark seeks to answer the question, "How can Jesus' death be good news?" In the aftermath of Jesus' crucifixion, people were wondering how Jesus could have been the promised Messiah if he died on a cross. Mark answers this question by showing how everything Jesus did in his life prepares us for and informs us about his death. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/86817/the-book-of-mark-an-introduction> Related still image: <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-slides/86831/the-book-of-mark--fence-2>

Ideas for the series:

- Create a reading plan for the Gospel of Mark that lasts for six weeks.
- Show a “Faith in Film” movie (or encourage people to watch it at home) during this series?
Possibilities: *Just Mercy*, *Selma*, or *All Saints*
 - **Just Mercy** (Jan. 10, 2020) PG-13. Just Mercy shadows world-renowned civil rights defense attorney Bryan Stevenson as he recounts his experiences and details the case of a condemned death row prisoner whom he fought to free. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVQbeG5yW78>
 - **Selma** (2014) PG-13. The film tracks a dangerous and terrifying three-month campaign led by Martin Luther King Jr. which culminated in the epic march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. The campaign galvanized American public opinion and persuaded President Johnson to introduce the Voting Rights Act, protecting African-Americans’ right to vote. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWKaq80cKSA>
 - **All Saints** (2017) PG. Based on a true story, a salesman-turned-pastor Michael Spurlock of a tiny Episcopal (Anglican) church in [Smyrna, Tennessee](#) is ordered to shut it down. He attempts to save the church, as well as a group of refugees from Karen State, Myanmar, in Southeast Asia. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laMflvCTY-o>

January 10, 2021: “Tearing Apart the Heavens”

Baptism of the Lord

Scripture: Mark 1: 4-11 (NIV)

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. **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.”

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

Synopsis: Worship is a celebration; this is the beginning of a new year. We survived 2020, and while there might still be lingering effects, it is time to embrace a new possibility and a new hope. The heavens have been torn open – not as a threat, but as a promise of something new and something better.

Felt need: To commit/re-commit ourselves to a closer walk with Christ and remember our baptism in order to renew us for mission and ministry as followers of Jesus.

Visuals: water, dove

Hands-on item:

Activity: Sacrament of Holy Baptism and/or Reaffirmation of Baptism

“We are now the visible evidence of the presence of Christ in the world. When we claim the new life that we embrace at our baptism, we live the light that we proclaim. We are the witness to the activity of the Lord in the midst of the present-day reality.”

Media possibilities:

- “Mark 1: 1-15.” Length: 3:07 (could be trimmed to 2:08). Cost: Free. Visual liturgy from Lumo Project. <https://www.bible.com/videos/25003-mark-1-1-15?collection=4>

Music: Spirit of the Living God (UMH 393)

Children’s Time: Use keys for weekly key word – BAPTIZE, BAPTISM – end with *Jesus Loves Me*

Worship Leader:

Discussion points: 1) Use story on pg. 30 of *Forbid Them Not*, Year B – girl smiling back at God.

2) Epiphany is about seeing Christ, about the manifestation of Messiah in the person of Jesus.

January 17, 2021: “Anything Good?”

MLK, Jr. Day weekend/Human Relations Day

Epiphany 2

Scripture: John 1: 43-51 (MSG) – also may ref. I Samuel 3 (Samuel and Eli)

⁴³⁻⁴⁴ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. When he got there, he ran across Philip and said, “Come, follow me.” (Philip’s hometown was Bethsaida, the same as Andrew and Peter.)

⁴⁵⁻⁴⁶ Philip went and found Nathanael and told him, “We’ve found the One Moses wrote of in the Law, the One preached by the prophets. It’s *Jesus*, Joseph’s son, the one from Nazareth!” Nathanael said, “Nazareth? You’ve got to be kidding.”

But Philip said, “Come, see for yourself.”

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw him coming he said, “There’s a real Israelite, not a false bone in his body.”

⁴⁸ Nathanael said, “Where did you get that idea? You don’t know me.”

Jesus answered, “One day, long before Philip called you here, I saw you under the fig tree.”

⁴⁹ Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi! You are the Son of God, the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹ Jesus said, “You’ve become a believer simply because I say I saw you one day sitting under the fig tree? You haven’t seen anything yet! Before this is over you’re going to see heaven open and God’s angels descending to the Son of Man and ascending again.”

NOTE: This reading could be done as a dramatic reading (using The VOICE translation) -

<https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John1:43-51&version=VOICE>

Synopsis: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” We hear the sarcasm – and perhaps even a hint of prejudice in Nathanael’s. Perhaps we even hear ourselves. Facing our personal prejudices and being honest about our struggles is vital to growing as disciples of Jesus who understand that every human being is created in God’s image and can be used as a channel for God’s work.

Felt need: To admit our tendency to prejudge others – and to claim that there is good in others and in ourselves.

Visuals: Mirror (can anything good come from the face I see in front of me?)

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities:

- “John 1: 29-51.” Length: 4:05 (could use 2:38 to 4:05). Cost: Free. Visual liturgy from Lumo Project. <https://www.bible.com/videos/25073-john-1-29-51?collection=9>

Music: Be Thou My Vision (UMH 451), The Summons (FWS 2130)

Children’s Time: Use keys for weekly key word – TRUTH – end with *Jesus Loves Me*

Worship Leader:

Discussion points: 1) Inauguration Day is Jan. 20. Related media: “A Prayer for America.”

Length: 2:02. Cost: Free with our subscription. There has never been a greater need in our nation than there is today, for prayer. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/minimovies/39280/a-prayer-for-america> 2) This might be a good week to reference one or all of the films on page 2.

Scripture: Mark 1: 14-20 (NIV)

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Synopsis: Following Jesus is not simply about a state of being, but a call to doing. We need Christian education and spiritual formation as we continue to grow in faith, but we maintain an outward focus – always looking for ways to connect with others and widen the net.

Felt need: To claim our call as "fishers of people" who offer connection, have influence, and give support in Jesus' name

Visuals: fishing pole, net. Comics from Ivan: 1. You have 12 followers. 2. Simon/Peter business cards.

Hands-on item:

Activity: Lift up connections with our community – education, civic leaders, first responders

Media possibilities:

- "Mark 1: 16-45." Length: 5:10 (Could be trimmed to 0:50). Cost: Free. Visual liturgy by Lumo Project. <https://www.bible.com/videos/25004-mark-1-16-45?collection=4>
- "Leave: Follow." Length: 1:46. Cost: Free with our subscription. Just as Jesus called Peter, John, and Matthew to leave what they knew to follow him, he calls us to the same challenge. What do you need to leave behind to follow Jesus? Topics include: calling, discipleship, salvation, idols, commitment. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/43715/leave-follow>
- "I Followed." Length: 1:29. Cost: Free with our subscription. Sometimes we don't know what we are looking for, but if we truly follow the teaching of Christ, we can find what we should have been looking for the whole time. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/26084/i-followed>

Music: I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (FWS 2129), Cry of My Heart (FWS 2165), Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore (UMH 344) – sing some verses in Spanish

Children's Time: Use keys for weekly key word – FOLLOW – end with *Jesus Loves Me*

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

January 31, 2021: “What’s Your Business?”

Epiphany 4

Scripture: Mark 1: 21-28 (MSG)

²¹⁻²² Then they entered Capernaum. When the Sabbath arrived, Jesus lost no time in getting to the meeting place. He spent the day there teaching. They were surprised at his teaching—so forthright, so confident—not quibbling and quoting like the religion scholars.

²³⁻²⁴ Suddenly, while still in the meeting place, he was interrupted by a man who was deeply disturbed and yelling out, “What business do you have here with us, Jesus? Nazarene! I know what you’re up to! You’re the Holy One of God, and you’ve come to destroy us!”

²⁵⁻²⁶ Jesus shut him up: “Quiet! Get out of him!” The afflicting spirit threw the man into spasms, protesting loudly—and got out.

²⁷⁻²⁸ Everyone there was incredulous, buzzing with curiosity. “What’s going on here? A new teaching that does what it says? He shuts up defiling, demonic spirits and sends them packing!” News of this traveled fast and was soon all over Galilee.

NOTE: This reading could be done as a dramatic reading (using The VOICE translation - <https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark+1%3A+21-28&version=VOICE>).

Synopsis: We know the presence of evil is real, and there are times when we feel helpless against it in our lives, for our loved ones, and in our world. But we can claim good news that we’re not left on our own to fight against it. We worship a power and a presence greater than all that is broken around us and within us.

Felt need: To celebrate the help and hope we have in Christ to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever form they present themselves.

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity: Lift up recovery ministry and all who work in mental health care

Media possibilities:

- “Mark 1:16-45.” Length: 5:10 (could use from 0:50 to 1:58). Cost: Free. Visual liturgy by Lumo Project. <https://www.bible.com/videos/25004-mark-1-16-45?collection=4>

Music: “God’s Not Done with You” by Tauren Wells

Resource:

Children’s Time: Use keys for weekly key word – PROMISE – end with *Jesus Loves Me*

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

February 7, 2021: “She Began to Serve”

Epiphany 5

Scripture: Mark 1: 29-39 (NIV)

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately

told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

³⁸ Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” ³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Synopsis: Service is a part of our faith life – and our faith commitment. We celebrate service – not as a call to take on more ourselves, but to be aware of and grateful for those who serve us every day.

Felt need: To cultivate a spirit of gratitude for those who serve us and to continue to serve others.

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity: Holy Communion, Souper Bowl of Caring, prayers/tangible blessing for “essential” workers

Media possibilities:

- “Mark 1:16-45.” Length: 5:10 (could use from 1:58 to 3:05). Cost: Free. Visual liturgy by Lumo Project. <https://www.bible.com/videos/25004-mark-1-16-45?collection=4>

Music: Lord of All Hopefulness (FWS 2197), Lord of the Dance (UMH 261)

Resource:

Children’s Time: Use keys for weekly key word – HEAL – end with *Jesus Loves Me*

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

February 14, 2021: “Only Jesus”

Transfiguration Sunday/ Valentine’s Day

Scripture: Mark 9: 2-9 (NIV)

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Synopsis: We stand with Peter, James, and John in open-mouthed wonder when Jesus is transfigured on the mountaintop. He is fully human and fully divine – and more than we can totally comprehend. So we stand in awe and praise and seek to stay close to him, listen to him, and follow his way of love and power.

Felt need: To keep our focus on Jesus and his call on our lives

Visuals: Color – white. Lights – candles, flashlights, cell phone lights.

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities:

- "Mark 9: 1-29." Length: 4:51 (could use from 0:26 to 1:53ish). Cost: Free. Visual liturgy by Lumo Project. <https://www.bible.com/videos/25017-mark-9-1-29?collection=4>

Music: How Great Thou Art (UMH 77), Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus (UMH 349), We Have Come at Christ's Own Bidding (FWS 2103), You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd (WS 3043); "Only Jesus" by Casting Crowns

Children's Time: Use keys for weekly key word – LOVE (Valentine's Day) – end with *Jesus Loves Me*

Worship Leader:

Discussion points: 1) Other key word possibilities – WONDER, AWE.

NOTE: Should we offer a reaffirmation of marriage vows?