

Westside Cumberland Presbyterian Church
Adult Sunday School – Winter/Spring 2026
The Gospel of Mark
Week 1 – January 11, 2026

INTRODUCTION: John the Baptist Prepares the Way - Mark 1:1-8

Part I: *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (1:1)*

1. How does Mark introduce us to Jesus right out of the gate? What do these titles tell us about what the early church believed about Jesus? (See “Terms” on back.)
2. What does the word “gospel” mean? (See “Terms” on the back.) In what ways does Jesus fulfill the ancient understanding of the “good news?”
3. How does the opening verse of Mark’s Gospel remind us of the opening verse of Genesis 1 and what does it suggest about the coming of Jesus?

Part II: READ Mark 1:2-8

4. John was sent to “prepare the way for the Lord,” in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3). How does he go about doing that?
5. Can a person come to faith in Christ apart from confession of sin and repentance?
6. How did John differentiate himself from Jesus, and his baptism from the baptism that Jesus will bring? Why are both necessary to salvation?
7. Based on what we have read so far, can the Christian faith be “unhitched” from its Old Testament roots? Why or why not?

The Gospel of Mark in a nutshell:

- *the shortest of the four gospels
- *the earliest written (around 60 AD)
- *attributed early on to John Mark, a companion of the apostle Peter
- *written primarily for a Gentile audience (probably from Rome)
- *fast-paced and action-packed
- *focuses more on Jesus' actions than His teachings
- *emphasizes the miracles, healings, and exorcisms
- *presents Jesus as the Suffering Servant and Son of God
- *highlights “the messianic secret” (Jesus seeks to keep his identity secret)
- *does not conceal the shortcomings and failures of Jesus' disciples
- *has an abrupt ending

Terms:

- **christos** is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Mashiach* (Messiah), meaning “anointed one.” The term was especially used of Israel’s king, who was anointed with oil at his coronation, symbolizing his legitimate rule as God’s vice-regent. Between the period of the OT and the NT, the term came to refer to God’s end-time king from the line of David who would establish God’s kingdom and would reign over it with justice and righteousness. **Mark announces that day has arrived.**
- **Son of God.** Jesus’ divine Sonship is an important theme throughout Mark (as we will see!). When used of Jesus, it has both divine and royal (messianic) connotations.
- **Jesus (Jeshua)** means “Yahweh is salvation.”
- **gospel** (*evangelion*) means “good news.” In the Greco-Roman world, the word referred to a joyful public announcement—such as victory in battle or the birth of a king. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, *evangelion* points forward to the promised arrival of God’s end-time salvation. For example in Isaiah 52:7:

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the herald who proclaims peace, who brings **good news** of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!*

“To discard the Old Testament would be to remove the very Scriptures Jesus used to explain Himself to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27).”