*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

January 4 - 9

Mark’s Gospel

**Monday, January 4 Mark 1:1-8**

*“It is written”*

While John and Jesus may seem to appear out of the blue, the citation of Scripture in verses 2 and 3 makes it clear that they appear out of the blueprint of God’s plan. Long before the promise-filled preaching of John the Baptizer, there was the promise-filled preaching of Isaiah, which shows that God had planned things out long before John appeared on the scene. God was the One who initiated the action. The prophet’s hope was not a pipe dream; his prophecy still rings forth, and it will be fulfilled by God.

In Mark’s Gospel we get no information about John’s origin, parents, marvelous birth, or the contents of his ethical teaching – all details that the reader can find in Luke. In Mark, he is simply John the Baptizer, who comes preaching and whose baptizing reflects the forgiveness of sins. His preaching has to do with the promise of a more powerful One, who will soon immerse them in the Holy Spirit. John can only announce his coming and try to prepare the hearts of the people so that they will be responsive when he arrives.

*Before you created the world, Lord, you were preparing our salvation. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 5 Mark 1:9-15**

*“Baptism, Temptation, and Preaching”*

In Jesus’ baptism, we glimpse the mysterious balance between the human and the more-than-human Jesus. The thundering approval from heaven discloses Jesus’ divine identity as the Son of God, but it is linked to his humble human condition. Jesus does not come as a powerful, conquering Messiah, but as a submissive Messiah, who yields in obedience to the baptism of John.

The Spirit’s descent on Jesus at his baptism does not induce a state of spiritual tranquility. He drives him deeper into the desolate desert and into the clutches of Satan and the wild beasts for forty days. Mark does not present the testing as a succession of temptations, as do Matthew and Luke, but as one major clash.

Jesus returns triumphantly from the combat in the desert to Galilee and joyously preaches the good news of God. This good news is not the proclamation of spiritual principles. Rather, it is a word that announces an event, the coming of God’s new world, which is even now breaking into the present.

*Your kingdom come, Lord, your will be done in me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, January 6 Mark 1:16-20**

*“Come, follow me”*

Jesus cannot accomplish his mission of spreading the good news alone. He needs friends whom he can trust, disciples whom he can teach, and co-workers who will share his task. So, after publicly announcing the good news, he starts selecting those who will follow him. “Come, follow me” is a call to trust Jesus. Ironically, he calls Peter first, and it is Peter who will break Jesus’ trust when he denies his Lord. In that tragic moment, Jesus will look at him as if to say, “Peter, I trusted you.” Peter goes out and weeps bitterly, for he knows he has been disloyal.

Jesus also chooses teachable followers. When he calls them and tells them that he will show them how to fish for people, he promises a lifelong learning and growth process. Not by accident, he chooses unschooled and unsophisticated fishermen. What a strange start for world evangelization. We must never forget that Jesus knows what he is doing. He wants teachable men and women without intellectual preconceptions or cultural mindsets that will be insurmountable barriers to being taught Truth.

*You can trust me, Lord, to be loyal and teachable. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

January 4 - 9

Mark’s Gospel

**Thursday, January 7 Mark 1:21-28**

*“Teaching with authority”*

Mark invites us into a day with Jesus. Having chosen Capernaum as his home base for his ministry in Galilee, Jesus goes to the synagogue as the logical starting place for his teaching ministry. The congregation listens to Jesus and responds with astonishment, acknowledging his superior authority. Their insight that his authority is different from that of the teachers of religious law does not mean that those teachers have little or no authority. Instead, what is being declared is that while their authority comes from the law that they teach, Jesus’ authority comes from within himself. Referring to no source of authority beyond himself, who he is becomes the source of authority for his teaching.

The demons within a man who interrupts the synagogue service with cries of confrontation acknowledge that Jesus has the authority to destroy them, naming him as the Holy One of God. What an amazing demonstration! It provides proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, as Mark declared in the opening of his gospel.

*I have no greater authority in this world than you, Lord. Amen.*

**Friday, January 8 Mark 1:29-39**

*“Healing and Preaching”*

Leaving the synagogue, Jesus goes to the home of Simon and Andrew where he learns that Simon’s mother-in-law is sick with a fever. Jesus goes to her and raises her up by taking her hand, and the fever leaves her. Proving her full and immediate recovery, she is able to prepare a meal. The next scene pictures the whole city coming to the home, bringing the ill and demon-possessed to Jesus, and he heals many.

The next morning finds Jesus venturing out to a solitary place to pray. Simon and his other followers interrupt his moments of private meditation to inform him that everyone in Capernaum is looking for him and to urge him to return to the scene of so many personal triumphs and to where he has such a tremendous following. But, Jesus is not interested in the fleeting admiration of crowds. He does not go back to Capernaum to settle into a comfortable and popular ministry. Rather, he travels throughout Galilee preaching the kingdom of God.

*As did Jesus, may I know and pursue your call on my life, Lord. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 9 Mark 1:40-45**

*“The command to keep silent”*

A leper comes to Jesus begging to be made clean. This is a request for healing, but also for the ability to reenter society. For, a person with leprosy was excluded from the community so as to prevent him or her from spreading both disease and ritual impurity. Jesus heals his disease, but in order to be restored to full functioning in Jewish society he must be declared clean by a priest and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God.

Jesus regularly commands both demons and those whom he healed to keep silent, making it clear that Jesus wants his miracles to remain hidden. Jesus does not work miracles to dazzle people but as evidence of the power of the kingdom of God. Neither does Jesus trust a faith based on spectacles, and he knows that the clamor of the moment will not last. Lastly, by keeping the news of his miracles quiet, it will give him more time to put off his inevitable destruction by the religious leaders and to preach the word. But, they do not keep quiet and the news spreads like wild fire, bringing unwanted publicity and the crush of ministry inhibiting crowds.

*We are called to service, Lord, not to popular acclaim. Amen.*