



**A BETTER
WORD**

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

Make Way for the King

Mark 1:1–13

THE BIG IDEA

The only way to welcome the Son of God into your life is through repentance from sin.

SERMON SUMMARY

Mark's Gospel does not open with a manger. It opens in the wilderness, with a man dressed like Elijah calling an entire nation to repent. Hundreds of years earlier, Isaiah and Malachi had promised a messenger who would prepare the way — and John the Baptist was that voice. His clothing was a protest against opulence and self-absorption; his message was about sin. Tens of thousands walked out of Judea and Jerusalem to be baptized in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

Then the King arrived. Jesus, who had no sin to confess, stepped into the water anyway — a baptism of identification, the sinless one standing in the middle of sinful humanity, already pointing toward the cross where he would take our guilt as his own. The Father spoke, the Spirit descended, and the whole Trinity declared that this was no mere prophet. He is the Son of God. The call for repentance has not changed: acknowledge your sin, confess it, and turn from it.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Mark opens with a single sentence of introduction: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (v. 1). Before a single miracle or sermon, what claim has Mark already made? Why does he want that question settled first?
2. Verses 2–3 quote Isaiah 40:3, and Malachi 3:1 gives a similar prophecy. Both mention a messenger — but where does the focus of the prophecy actually land? What does that tell us about John's purpose and about our own?
3. John's camel's hair and leather belt deliberately echoed the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8), and he baptized in the wilderness rather than in Jerusalem, so people had to leave the city and come out to him. What do his appearance and his location preach about repentance?
4. Repentance is more than an apology. It has at least three parts: acknowledging sin, confessing it, and turning away from it. Walk through each one. Why does an apology without a change of direction fall short of what John was calling for?
5. Jesus had no sin to confess, yet he was baptized (v. 9). Read Matthew 3:14–15 alongside this account. What does Jesus's baptism reveal about who he is, why he came, and how does it point toward the cross?

LIVING IT OUT

So many people want the blessing of God without preparing the way for God. We want forgiveness without the turning, and the benefits of the King without bending the knee. But the invitation stands open, and the grace is unending, for anyone willing to name their sin honestly and walk the other direction.

Heart Check: Is there a sin you have apologized for but never actually turned from? Where has pride kept you from admitting that what you are doing is genuinely wrong?

This Week: Name one specific sin out loud to God this week — no softening language, no self-justification. Then take one concrete step that makes turning from it easier: a conversation, a removed temptation, or a person you ask to hold you accountable.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”

— **Mark 1:3**

Ask the Lord to convict you honestly of a sin you have been minimizing — then thank him that repentance does not leave you in the place of judgment, but opens the door to new life through his Son.

Your Prayer:

Find more sermon study guides, messages, and resources at **ABETTERWORD.ORG**