

THE GOSPEL

It is amazingly simple

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,

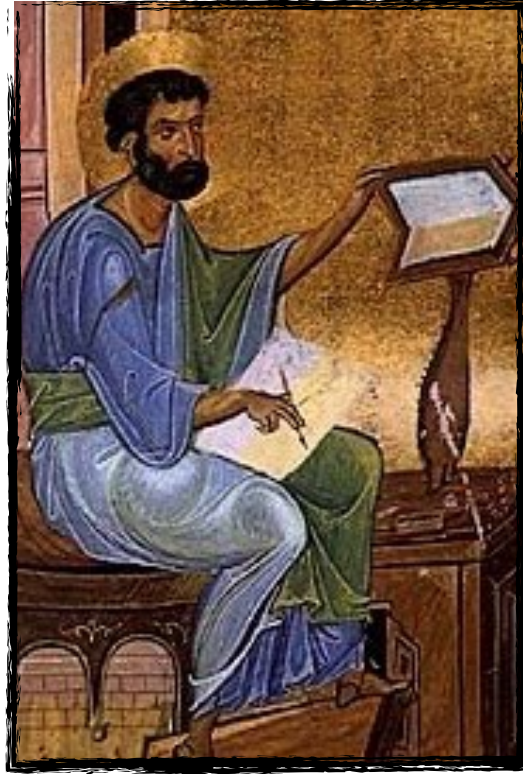
who will prepare your way,

the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”

John appeared, baptising in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit



Alexander Smith (1767 – 1829) was a criminal and illiterate man when he landed on Pitcairn Island in 1790. Few years later, he became a founder of the most utopian Christian community on the planet. “There was no jail because there was no crime. There was no hospital because there was no disease. There was no asylum because there was no insanity. There was no illiteracy; and nowhere in the world was human life and property so safe.” Smith claimed that it was the Bible that transformed him and the lives of the natives on Pitcairn Island.

Good News

“The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). My pocket-sized Gospel of Mark has 24 pages, divided into sixteen chapters. It is all about Jesus. It contains the account of his miracles and His teaching. It tells about His unjust trial and tragic death on the cross, and ends with the proclamation of His resurrection. One could finish reading at in one sitting. Many, after

scouring through up to the last page, wonder whether the whole story is authentic. So, how can such a tiny booklet be so important for so many?

The Gospel of God about His Son, Jesus Christ “is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). It has incredible narratives of men and women, whose lives took new direction. There was a suicidal man, a woman suffering from haemorrhages, a blind beggar, and many others in need. Jesus brought them freedom. He rescued their bodies, hearts and minds from sickness, insanity and hopelessness.

This “good news” about Jesus Christ, the Son of God is for everyone who puts faith in Jesus. A corrupted politician can act with honesty. A drunkard can live a sober life. A drug dealer can give up his criminal activity. A womaniser can find love. A coward can get courage, a liar is able to regain truth, and an unbeliever is capable of discovering God. The moment such individual allow God's Truth to invade their lives conversion occurs. The grace of God has the power to transform, to take us from sin and death and bring us to life in Christ.

The writing of the evangelist is straightforward. No college degree is necessary to grasp its meaning. It conveys a simple message: anyone can gain salvation in Jesus. Yet, its simplicity is a trap for many. The gospel is not to amuse, but to convert. It is for those who find themselves in a hopeless situation, chained to sin, yet dreaming to be free.

The scholars say that Mark wrote in Rome and for the Roman Christians. The majority of them belonged to the masses, trying to make both ends meet before the day would be over. In Rome, there were many so-called anointed men and women: fortune-tellers; magicians; astrologists. There was a cult of caesar who claimed to be lord and son of God. All those caesars and anointed people promised healing, a bright future and justice. Yet, the daily experience spoke about a harsh existence filled with injustice and a struggle for survival.

Jesus was different. He experienced cruelty of those self-proclaimed lords and sons of gods. Believers could relate their own experience of pain and injustice to the account of His crucifixion. Yet, God raised him from the grave. They experienced His living presence among them. He gave them hope for something extraordinary. His Spirit encouraged them to move beyond their own circumstances and limitations. Despite their daily struggle for survival, they stood undefeated.

Conclusion

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God” (Is 40:1). The Good News about Jesus is the same, as yesterday, so today and forever. There is limit to our ability, but nothing can curtail its might. Powerful of this world are like grass that withers and fades away but God's truth will stand for ever. So, let us embrace it. Our God is coming. He brings a fresh start to us. All is pardoned, all is healed. Truth shines and new life begins. Amen.

May God bless all who remember us in prayer and support our ministry.

New Life Asia Team