

Life Group Notes
Sunday 24th July 2011

It would be helpful to read ahead each week as we will be covering a lot of ground:

Sun 31 July: Mark 1v14-3v6

Sun 07 Aug: Mark 4-6v6

Sun 14 Aug: Mark 9v33-10v52

Sun 21 Aug: Mark 11-15

Sun 28 Aug: Mark 16

Read: Mark 1v1-13

Who was Mark? He is most likely to be the John Mark of the NT whose mother's house was in Jerusalem and served as a meeting place for believers. He was a helper to Paul & Barnabas on their first missionary journey but he deserted them to return to Jerusalem and created a 'super awkward' apostolic moment (Acts 15v36-41). But in God's purposes he wasn't finished or abandoned, or disqualified from being used again (1Timothy 4v11) – we are studying the book he wrote! God's grace is sufficient for ALL our mistakes – we can still be mightily used by God despite our failings.

The Root - To gain a better, richer understanding of who Jesus is, you need to find out what happened before. Just as 'the Phantom Menace', 'Attack of the Clones' & 'Revenge of the Sith' add context and richness to the original Star Wars trilogy; so the Old Testament roots Jesus in a historical and theological context. Mark wants us to see God unfolding His plan of salvation (creation, fall, flood, promises, exodus, law, conquest, monarchy, prophetic hope, silence and then the Christ).

The Herald – Everything about John connected him with the prophets of the OT; he was an authentic 'Prophet of the living God'. 400 years of political turmoil & change wrought devastation to Jewish life, and God had not spoken through His prophets. And then John came preaching & baptising; preparing the way for the Christ.

The Son – 400 years and now God was manifestly amongst his people. The sinless Son of God foreshadows the cross by standing in the place of sinners. Mark records the three persons of the trinity working in perfect harmony; Jesus is obedient, the Father affirms and the Spirit anoints. And then the Holy Spirit sent him, immediately drove him, out into the wilderness! There is great cost to faithful obedience to God. God's ways are not like our ways – incredible highs of obedience & affirmation can lead to wilderness & testing. This is the journey of faith. And yet even in the wilderness there is grace.

Questions:

- 1) In what way can you relate to Mark's failure & restoration?
- 2) How would you contextualise Jesus / describe God's unfolding plan?
- 3) When have you known seasons of silence / wilderness? What about now?
- 4) Do you have any sense of a new season in God's plan for your life?