

Introducing ... *the Son of God*

Mark 1:1-11

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Ladies and gentlemen, "He's a man who needs no introduction!" Ever heard an introduction like that? If you say that someone needs no introduction, what are you saying? You're saying that they're so well known, that everyone already knows who they are. And so, they need no introduction.

How about Jesus? Does He need an introduction? You'd think if anybody in the world needs no introduction, it would be Jesus, right? But that's not at all the case. There was a time when nobody knew who Jesus was and He had to be introduced. How was Jesus introduced to the world? By angels - to Joseph and Mary and the shepherds. Through Zachariah and Anna in the temple. By way of star and scripture to the wisemen. To the parents of 12-year-old Jesus, who is found "in His Father's house."

But even though Jesus is introduced in all these ways, still He isn't very well known. Today, we hear of another introduction. A very public introduction. How was Jesus introduced? In the most curious of places. Way out in the middle of the wilderness at the waters of the Jordan. Why there, out in the Jordan, instead of in the capital city Jerusalem? What was happening at the Jordan?

A few weeks ago, we heard from the prophet Isaiah about what to do when God's coming over; when God's coming to see you. How do you prepare to meet the Lord? In Isaiah 40, Isaiah uses road construction language. Clearing a path. Getting obstacles out of the way. And what's in the way between us and the Lord? Our *curved in upon ourselves and away from the Lord* heart.

And so, to make way for the Lord, to prepare the way for the Lord to come to us, what can we do? What's the only thing we can do? What opens the way to restoration between us and the Lord?

Mark 1 - *The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" - And so John the Baptist appears in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

What opens the way to forgiveness, and restoration between us and God? Confession. Repentance. Being honest with ourselves. Being honest with the Lord. Coming clean. Humbling ourselves before Him. Like the tax collector in the temple, standing far off, who would not even lift his eyes to heaven, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Luke 18)

Ladies and gentlemen, "He's a man who needs no introduction!" Actually, He does. Why? Because we've never met anyone like Him before. We're unfamiliar with His ways. For what does Jesus say about this confessing sinner in the temple; this repenting one, not able to look God in the eye?

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

In the midst of the dark days we face today in our nation, might we need such a reminder? Humbling ourselves, instead of exalting ourselves. Forgiveness, instead of retribution and vengeance. Instead of hating our enemies, loving them. Instead of striking back, turning the other cheek. Forgiving, as we've been forgiven, the far greater debt.

Romans 12 *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ... Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry,*

feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good - following the One who humbled Himself, to the point of death - even death on a cross.
(Phil 2)

Yes, at the Jordan that day stands One who people don't know. One who needs an introduction. Reintroduced, to ourselves. Introduced to the world, through us.

Jesus is introduced to us at the waters of the Jordan. Why the Jordan? What was happening at the Jordan? Mark, quoting Isaiah 40, "*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, baptizing 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 baptized by him in the river Jordan, **confessing their sins**.*

Like that tax-collector who wouldn't look up to heaven, the people came to John in the same way. Confessing their sins. Preparing the way for their Lord to come. It's the only way for you to come to the Lord today; to have the Lord come to you. And for the confessing one, what is there, but Good News! Forgiveness and life in Jesus!

Why is Jesus introduced to us at the waters of the Jordan? Why is He too baptized? John, himself, wonders that very same thing, as he says to Jesus, "*I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"*

How does Jesus answer him? But Jesus answered him, "*Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*" Luke says that *when all the people were baptized, or after all the people had been baptized - then Jesus is baptized*. Picture it. Once the water of the Jordan got good and dirty, with all the sins, of all those people, *then Jesus steps in - not to get clean, but to get dirty.* (James Douthwaite)

To stand, in *your* place. To confess, on *your* behalf. To confess, *your* sin, as *His*. To take *your* sin on Himself, taking it away from you, and unto Himself. As John the Baptist himself declares, "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." (John 1:31) That He might be *introduced* to Israel. And eventually, to the whole world. Introduced to you today.

And not only *John* introduces Jesus to us. Something *else* happens. Something that's *never* happened before, or since. *And when he [Jesus] came up out of the water, immediately he saw the **heavens** being torn open and the **Spirit** descending on him like a dove. And **a voice** came from heaven ...*

How's that, for an introduction! The heavens open up. The Spirit of God comes down. And a voice from heaven speaks! And what does this voice from heaven have to say? How does God introduce Jesus to the world; introduce Jesus to us? "***This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased.***"

Yes, *here* is the One greater than John. A man, who is also God's Son. And God couldn't be more pleased with him! One, at whose baptism, heaven is opened, so that the angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven may attend, and see this wonder! The wonder of God as man, taking man's place. To save us. Of what other god could this ever be said? All other gods *demand* from their creatures. The *true* God comes, and *serves* His creatures. (Douthwaite)

And so, Mark begins his account of Jesus, his introduction of Jesus, with these words. "*The beginning of the **gospel** [the "Good News"] about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*"

With Jesus, there's *always* good news, isn't there? The best news a sinner, unable to look God in the eye, crying to Him for mercy, can ever hear! "Go home. You're forgiven! You're justified before God; made right with God. With *you*, I am well-pleased!

The Gospel ("Good News" about Jesus) starts, with what? It starts with confession. It starts with repentance. Why? Because without it, without acknowledging our sin, what good news is there? There's no good news, without there first being bad news.

If we don't acknowledge our sin, why is a Savior good news to us? Like the pharisee in the temple that day, if we don't have any sin, what do we need to be saved from? And if we're not sinners, then why the great introduction of Jesus? Why the opening of heaven? Why the descent of the Spirit? Why the voice from heaven?

To show us how to live better? To show us how to love better? To be an example to us? Don't we already have that? Don't we already have Moses, the great law-giver? Don't we already have enough laws already, that we don't keep? Do we really need more ways to *fail* to love God; more ways to *fail* to love our neighbor?

The Gospel, the Good News about Jesus, is only good, if, without it, you can't look God in the eye. Jesus is only Good News, if without Him, you dare not look to heaven, for fear of what you've got coming. But if you know what you've got coming from God, if you know your guilt before God, if you confess your sin; if you repent of your sin - Jesus is good news! The best news ever! What better news could there be, than the Lamb of God taking away your sin!

And you can look God in the eye, grinning, from ear to ear! And He can look on you, as His son, as His daughter, in which He is well-pleased!

Ladies and gentlemen. Boys and girls. "He's One, who needs no introduction!" And yet, maybe. Just maybe - it would be good for you to meet Him again, today. *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*

And when the day of final judgment comes, when the heavens are again torn open, and Jesus comes in glory, with all His angels, to judge the living and the dead, those words from the prophet Isaiah will be true for you *then*, even as they are true for you *now*.

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ... For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. (Isaiah 43)