

**The Way Maker**  
(for the week of November 29, 2020)

**Note to Group Leaders:** More than anyone else, you are aware of the size of your group, time constraints, the needs of your group, etc. Please read through the Scripture and material below and use whatever you believe will be most helpful to your group.

**This Week's Scripture:** Mark 1:1-8 and Isaiah 40:1-8

**Key Idea from Sermon**

Everyone needs a Savior. Everyone needs to be prepared for Jesus. Every Christian needs to help others be prepared for Jesus.

**For Starters**

1. Read Isaiah 40:1-8 and Mark 1:1-8 and answer the following questions.
  - How can you prepare for the coming Jesus?
  - How can you help others prepare for the coming of Jesus?
  - Share with your group how Jesus became your Savior.

**For Further Discussion**

2. What do Mark's first words tell us about his gospel (v. 1)? Explain.
3. Who was John the Baptist, according to verses 2-3?  
  
Why was John sent?
4. How was Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled (v. 4)?

What is your reaction to the fact that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled?

5. What two things did John focus on in his preaching?
6. How did the people respond in verse 5?
7. Who was John referring to in verse 7?

In what ways were the two men similar? In what ways were they different from one another? (vv. 7-8)

### **Applying the Scripture**

8. What does the message of Jesus offer to people?
9. What usually prevents us from being witnesses for Jesus?
10. How can a person's witness reflect humility and respect for Jesus?
11. How can we make sure that our lives focus on Jesus and not ourselves?
12. What step could you take this week toward becoming a better witness for Jesus?
13. How can you encourage other Christians to be witness for Jesus?

## Devotion on Mark 1:1-8

### God's Providential Hope

Mark 1:1-8

#### *Four Hundred Years*

Four hundred long years had passed since Israel last heard from a prophet – from God himself. Four hundred years of silence. But now, there was one who spoke from the wilderness. His purpose? To declare the arrival of God's promised one, the Messiah – the one who would rescue God's people.

How warmly welcomed that good news must have been, especially since Israel was under Roman rule. To finally be delivered from that oppression must have been the best news. The prophet John's calling was to prepare the way for this mighty Deliverer by announcing his arrival. It was Jesus himself, just a few verses later (Mark 1:15), who would declare that his new Kingdom was now at hand. But how would a person become a citizen of this Kingdom? By repenting and believing God's good news. God's gracious and providential hope was still available after such a long time had passed. God never forgot his promises.

#### *And Yet*

And yet the good news of God's Kingdom was not welcomed as good news. God's Deliverer was not embraced as such. We know from the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus, that he and the Kingdom he ushered in were not what the people of his day had in mind. Jesus didn't fit the expectations many had for the Messiah. He didn't seem to say and do what the people had hoped he would say and do.

Still, he was God's providential hope for his people. Their only hope. Israel needed to be rescued from something far greater than Rome. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was willing and able to save his people once-and-for-all. But not many of his people were willing to be saved on his terms. Their hopes and dreams took the shape of temporal desire – to understandably be out from under the thumb of Roman rule. They allowed the good to become the enemy of the best.

What are your expectations of Jesus? Are your hopes temporal only? Or, are your hopes filtered through an eternal perspective?

#### *In-Between Living*

Advent is the liturgical time of year in which we more fully and formally remember that we live between the two appearances of our Lord, Jesus Christ. His first arrival, which we celebrate during the season of Advent and Christmas, ushered in God's Kingdom – his rule and reign in our lives. Our focus during this time of year helps us better reflect upon who Jesus is and why he came. It also gives us space to think about how we ought to live in light of his appearance.

However, just as we are called to live responsively to his first advent, we must also live expectantly toward his second. That is the time, as C.S. Lewis put it, “when the author walks on to the stage [and] the play is over.” Lewis adds,

“That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not.”

Are you prepared for the coming of Jesus? How can you better prepare for that Day? Looking *at* and learning *from* his first advent informs how we are called and commanded to live in preparation for his second one. More than that, it is only as we repent of our sin and believe his gospel – the good news of his Kingdom – that we can enter the fullness of life he offers.