

“New Beginnings”

01-11-15

Getting a new start refreshes us and gives us hope! Being able to have new beginnings in life is important for our well-being and especially our spiritual growth. The Gospel of Mark is about new beginnings. In Jesus' Baptism and ours, we're given a new beginning, a renewed and fresh life in Jesus as we embrace His death and resurrection. Every morning as we wake up, we need to be reminded that our sins are washed away and we can rise to new life in Jesus. Each day is a new beginning!

Open to Mark 1. Mark begins his Gospel with the words, *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”* In this title, Mark's saying God's doing something different here. The story, or Good News of Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection, is the first chapter of this new work. The ministry of John the Baptist signals what's new.

As John was preaching to the people who came out to the wilderness, he was talking about a **New Baptism**. It was a Baptism of Repentance and Forgiveness. Verses 4-5, *“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.”*

This Baptism wasn't like any other baptism that had occurred. It's whole focus was on the repenting of sin and the changing of life. Previous baptisms were focused on the fulfillment of God's Law, but this Baptism focused on the person's desire to see their wrongs and ask for God's forgiveness and favor. Baptism is the affirmation of God that we are forgiven.

Verses 10-11, *“And when he 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, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”* As we go to the waters of Baptism He also tells us the same thing, *“I have called you by name, you are Mine!”*

After Jesus was baptized, He was led out by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. As you and I live in the world, the devil is constantly by our side trying to have us trip up and fall into sin. Unfortunately, that happens often! But thanks be to God that as we turn to Him and ask for His forgiveness, He shelters us and forgives our sin.

After Jesus was tempted and succeeded, He was ready for a **New Ministry**. Verses 14-15, *“Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”* Jesus' focus was going to be on the Gospel He came to proclaim. It was a ministry of sharing the message of God's love and grace. He was always pointing us to the end and reigning with Him in heaven forever!

Open to Romans 6. Through Jesus Christ, we receive a **New Self**. We used to be connected to our sin, but now we're connected to the cross! Verses 6-8, *“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”*

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus give us another dimension of the miracle of the new. We have a **New Life** because we are forgiven. The miracle of the new is available to us each and every day of our lives. We no longer need to live in the old. Confessing our sin, and

turning away from our sinful words and behaviors, the Old Self is gone and the New Self has come!

Verses 10-11, *“For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”* Each day dawns brightly with the new; not clouded with the past. The New Life offered to us by Jesus Christ allows us to experience the steadfast and overwhelming love of God in new ways. Just as Jesus lives forever, so will you!

All this leads you to a **New Purpose!** You and I have been so blessed by Jesus Christ! He came down to earth that first Christmas to not just be a babe in the manger, but to be our Savior and Lord. His whole life on earth was leading to the cross and the empty tomb.

That’s why Jesus came. Jesus came to be what we couldn’t be. He had nothing to do with sin. He led a perfect life! He led that perfect life for you, as your substitute. And then Jesus did something even more amazing, He took your sins and mine, and made them His own. All of our sins, Jesus took upon Himself. He died on the cross, suffering the punishments you deserve. When He died, your sinful nature died with Him.

And that’s the message we need to share with everyone we meet! The world has a Savior Who loves the world so much He gave Himself that all might live! Jesus is a God of new beginnings!

From 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, *“Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.”*

Make this New Year a time to dare to be filled with hopeful expectations and be bold to nurture, grow, and share those expectations with the world around you. Jesus is ready and waiting wanting to make a new beginning in your life each and every day!