

Introduction

- When I say "God" what image is drawn up in your mind?
 - old man on a cloud?
 - for Jews in OT, image was of an all-powerful, holy, distant God
 - (Psalm 11:4) **The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them.**
- And similar throughout OT

I believe in Jesus Christ,
 God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary....

- **Incarnation** - into flesh - in carno

Way into Mark...

- Different ways of telling a story:
 - newspaper; novel; police incident report; personal recollection;
- **Mark - executive summary style!** Short, and to point!
 - sometimes misses out details we know from the other gospel accounts;
 - eg the nature of the temptations Jesus faced

Verse1

- (v.1) *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*
- Beginning, starting point
- Jesus is God's Son
 - yet he is also a human being!!
 - we don't have the birth narratives here - look in Luke or Matthew for those
- God has left the safety and security of heaven to come and live on our dirty, grimy, difficult, sin-strewn planet!

Verses 2-3

- (2) *It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" - (3) "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"*
- Implication here is that he is Messiah, one sent from God as promised on OT to save God's people

Verse9

- (v.9) *At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.*
- **Jesus:**
 - we know birth; carpenter; relationship with his parents; glimpse of self-understanding in Luke's account of visit to Temple...
 - but first readers might have known nothing!!
 - who is this person?
- **Nazareth/Galilee**
 - "can anything good come out of Nazareth?"; Galilee, back-country;
 - if it wasn't bad enough God becoming a human being, how on earth could he contemplate being known as from Nazareth!!
- **At what time?**
 - when ground has been prepared, following John's baptising.
 - responded to his call, not ignored it
- **Baptised:**
 - Water; plunge into Jordan; cross Jordan to enter promised land; **washing implying being a sinner.**
- So: **identification with lost humanity** - that which is not assumed cannot be saved

- This is key - **not just come and taken on form of humanity, but identified with us utterly and completely, in our need**
 - a need he did not share - **need for forgiveness**

Verse 10

- (v.10) *As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*
- Heaven opened when God acts - either in blessing, most commonly, or judgement (eg flood).
- Special anointing for mission? Or had Spirit not been with Jesus up till now?
 - even Jesus couldn't do without the Spirit.

Verse 11

- (v.11) *And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*
- **Who is Jesus?**
- God's relationship with his son - love; proud father illustration!
 - Robin's son / Colin's dad / who we are tied up with our parents;
 - should be able to tell something of who I am by looking at my dad, and vice versa.
- Why is he pleasing to God? In what ways?
 - performance? element of that
 - but also simple delight in relationship - I love the boys, even though they can drive me up the wall!
- Here in the Son God has poured out to us the very embodiment of himself, his greatest delight, the heart of himself!

Verse 12

- (v.12) *At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert,*
- Humble & obedient; followed Spirit's prompting - immediately;
 - even though clearly not going to be an easy path.

Verse 13

- (v.13) *and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.*
- Temptation - what is it like, how do we deal with it?
 - temptation to ease, to power, to identity
 - answer was always in God, and relationship to him.
- There are practical pointers in other accounts on meeting temptation (Scripture), but main point here is identification with all of humanity:
 - *"Father-like he tends and spares us; Well our feeble frame he knows;...*

Verses 14-20

- The gospel message, the news about the coming kingdom is intricately linked to Jesus **coming**

Summary

- **Who is Jesus?**
 - God's Son, in warm deep relationship with God - loving, pleasing
- **What did he do here?**
 - **identified with humanity**, taking sin onto himself.
- He came to us:
 - we too should be those who go from where we are to where those who are in need are

- Very bad at taking a come to us mentality:
 - old illustration of how uncomfortable many Christians would feel going into a bookies, not sure what to do, where to go, self-conscious...
 - often used to encourage us to adapt our services and events so that they are less threatening when folk **come to us!**
- Surely equally an illustration of **how uncomfortable we can be in going out to where people are**, meeting them at the point of their experience, understanding (even when do not condone) their world
 - implies genuinely getting to know non-Christian people
 - implies spending time with them
- I look back over my adult Christian life since I left home, and I've been conditioned to retreat into the ghetto of a Christian sub-culture
 - I'm probably particularly acutely aware of it, son of the manse and now a minister
 - but **what proportion of my time do I spend with not-yet-Christians, incarnating the gospel?**
 - and **what proportion of my time do I spend exclusively with Christians?**
- Not abandon church!! Far from it...
- But could it be said of us:
 - **The Christians are in their holy temple; ... the Christians observe (looks down on?) the sons of men; their eyes examine them**
- **If we say we believe in the Jesus, God come to us, lets follow in his footsteps and go with the gospel message to those who need it.**