

John Baptizes Jesus

Mark 1:1-11

MEMORY VERSE

MARK 1:11

“Then a voice came from heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

As many pencils and sheets of paper as the number of children in your class.

As many small slips of paper as the number of children in your class, and two containers (boxes or baskets) marked "East" and "West."

A wilted, dead flower and a fresh, living flower or small potted plant.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

The "Good News" Puzzle

Before the beginning of class, put 2 Corinthians 5:21 on the board in code. Write a key to the puzzle code on the board indicating that A=B; B=C; C=D; etc. The verse will look like this:

Gps If nbef Ijn xip lofx op tjo up cf tjo gps vt, uibu xf njhiu
cfdpnf uif sjhiufpvtoftt pg Hpe jo Ijn.

2 Dpsjouijbot 5:21

Pass out a piece of paper and a pencil to each student and have them decode the puzzle.

Reward the child that gets the answer first with a small prize (bookmark, sticker, etc.).

LESSON TIME!

Today we will take a close up look at a very special event in the life of Jesus. If you listen closely, you will learn some very important and wonderful things that all happened the day He was baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. Mark tells this part of the story; he likes to jump right to the point of the story. Mark also has an amazing way of making this story alive. He makes you feel as though you have just been with Jesus, actually seen Him up close. Listen to Mark's account of the life of Jesus.

MARK 1:1

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark cuts right to the point. He's going to describe the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Mark starts his gospel account of Jesus' life at the beginning of His ministry.

What does the word "gospel" mean? Gospel simply means "good news." It is always great to get some "good news," and here is the best news of all. This gospel or "good news" is a message of good news to sinful man. The Bible tells us that all of us have sinned. The Gospel is a message of salvation, comfort, hope, and joy.

The Gospel is the glorious good news that someone has come to save us from death, hell, and sin! Wow! What good news! Not just anyone could do that; this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Only He could be the Savior of the world. Living a perfect life and loving us so much, He was willing to die for us. Only Jesus could bring such a gospel, because **Jesus is the Son of God.**

The good news is only good because the very center of it, the very core of it, is Jesus Christ Himself. **Jesus is the Son of God.** Jesus is the only name that is able to bring us into fellowship with God. If you take Jesus away from us, we are lost and cannot understand

who God is. Take Jesus away from us, and we can never understand God or all of His wonder and majesty. **Jesus is the Son of God**, and in His coming, God's good news is spelled out for us in a language we can understand.

The "Bad News/Good News" Game

Pass out to each child a small slip of paper. Instruct them to pretend that their fingers are pens with invisible ink, and have them write down a sin they have committed, been sorry for, and repented of.

When they are done, tell the class the Bad News is that, in and of themselves, they can do nothing to get rid of that sin. It is a permanent blotch on their lives and removing it by themselves is impossible.

Tell them the Good News is that Jesus came with great love and deep sacrifice. He tells us to take our sins, even the ones we did not write down, and put them on Him.

Have the children tear each slip in half, putting one piece in a box or basket marked "East" and the other in one marked "West." Explain that Jesus separates us from our sin as far as the East is from the West. Put the containers as far away from each other in the room as possible, and express to the children that this is Great News!

Jesus began to reveal His good news as He went out to meet John in the wilderness.

MARK 1:2-6

As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You."

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

Mark paints a vivid and wonderful picture of John for us. Remember that John was the forerunner of Jesus. He made "ready" the way of the Lord. John's ministry was to prepare the people for the gospel. He told people to repent, get their hearts in order; so when they heard the good news of Jesus, they would believe.

John was out in the wilderness, baptizing people who had repented. The people that confessed they were sinners went into the river, and John immersed them into the water. It was their way of admitting they were sinners and wanted to repent. Baptism did not take away their sin; it was an outward expression or symbol that their hearts had repented, turned from sin. It showed their desire to be washed clean from sin, which would later be made possible by Jesus' blood. Only Jesus can forgive sin because **Jesus is the Son of God**.

MARK 1:7-8

And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.

"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will

baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

John announced to the people that a savior, the Messiah, was coming. John was a great prophet, but he was just a man. He told them that there was someone coming after him who was much greater than he was. He said that he was not even worthy to tie the shoe of this One.

John told the people who came to be baptized that he only baptized with water, which was a symbol of washing, but "He," meaning Jesus, would baptize with the Holy Spirit. This baptism would be more than a symbol; it would be actual transformation and regeneration of a life. John's water baptism was just the preparation of hearts for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which would accomplish all that the repentant heart needed.

MARK 1:9

It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Here we read that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee. He had grown from a boy to a man in Nazareth. It was where scripture tells us He grew in wisdom and stature and in grace with God and men. Nazareth was where Jesus had faced ordinary human experiences and responsibilities. He had His ordinary human responsibilities there. He had passed busy days there as a carpenter, learned the use of tools, made yokes and plows, and built houses.

Now He leaves the ordinary to begin His extraordinary ministry. We are told that Jesus was baptized. That at first seems strange. Why was He baptized? We know that **Jesus is the Son of God**. Why would He be baptized? John's baptism was for repentance, for recognizing that there was sin in a life.

Baptism was an indication that a person wanted to turn from their sin. Jesus never sinned! He was the sinless Son of God. Why did He have John baptize Him? Jesus' baptism was for repentance and the confession of sin, but it was not for His sin. It was for ours.

In His baptism, Jesus was taking upon Himself the burden of human sin, counting it as if it were His own sin. In that hour we see a very solemn and wonderful sight. Jesus, the sinless, was identifying Himself with us, the sinful, in order that we might be identified with Him through the work of the cross. This beautiful act of baptism was pointing to the time when His righteousness would replace the sin of those who accept His death, burial, and resurrection, as their only means of salvation.

The "Exchange" Game

Bring with you to class two flowers, one that is wilted and dead and one that is fresh and alive. If you have something that is still potted in soil, it will be even more effective.

Take a volunteer from the class and give that child the wilted, dead flower and tell him that it is your gift to him to celebrate the beginning of springtime. Explain that you are keeping the other plant to remind yourself of the life and hope that springtime represents.

After a moment or two, offer to exchange your fresh, living plant for the wilted, dead one held by your student, if he is willing. Explain that this is what Jesus has done for us. He exchanged His perfect, sinless life for our sinful, dead lives.

MARK 1:10-11

And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.

Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

As Jesus rose out of the water, the Spirit came down on Him "like a dove." This was not the first time Jesus of Nazareth received the Spirit of God. The Spirit was always operating in Him. His very birth was a result of a mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, but this descending of the Holy Spirit marked the beginning of His public ministry, His public journey toward the cross.

Mark tells us that the Spirit was "like a dove." He came as a dove, a symbol of the infinite gentleness, harmlessness, and approachability of Jesus of Nazareth. The dove was also a symbol of sacrifice. The Holy Spirit came to strengthen Him to perform this service to which He had dedicated Himself.

Along with the Spirit came God's voice from heaven saying that He was pleased with Jesus. It was the Father's divine approval of all that was about to take place in Jesus' ministry, death, burial, and resurrection.

Jesus is the Son of God. Only He could come and be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. John 3:16 tells us that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Options for Younger Children

Make the "Wordless Book" with your class. Connect four pieces of colored construction paper together with a staple or a brad, explaining the significance of each color, in the following order:

Black: our hearts full of sin.

Red: the blood of Jesus, shed to save us from sin.

White: He makes our hearts white as snow.

Yellow: One day we will walk with Him in heaven on streets of gold.

Let the children practice turning the sheets as you tell the story. Give those children who would like to tell the story themselves a chance to try.

Bring a stuffed animal and show it to the class, patting and stroking it gently. Explain that you are being gentle with this toy. Let the children also pat and stroke the toy gently. Explain to the children that Jesus is gentle with us. Tell them that He is kind, and we can always come to Him because He loves us.

Children of God Game:

Use this action game to help the children realize they are children of God when they ask Jesus into their hearts. Have the children scatter around the room. Encourage children to follow the motions in this action game.

Children of God, wave your hands.
Children of God, jump up and down.
Children of God, turn around.
Children of God, reach for the sky.
Children of God, hop on one foot.
Children of God, hug a friend.
Children of God, sit on the ground.
Children of God, giggle and laugh.
Children of God, let's say "amen."

To play again, have the children suggest actions for the children of God to do.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for sending His Son to the Earth and for the great price that was paid for our sins. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them the opportunity to do so.