

Refrigerator Notes 10 December 2017
The Beginning: Of the Gospel and Repentance
Mark 1:1-8

1. Beginnings can be abrupt and this appears to be the framework we are faced with in the Gospel of Mark — a narrative with an abrupt beginning and an equally abrupt ending.
2. The Gospel of marks abrupt beginning “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”
3. Mark’s first sentence serves as a title to the Gospel and it serves to help us to nose-dive immediately into the earthly ministry of Jesus.
4. The title serves to announce that Jesus is truly human, that Jesus is truly divine, that Jesus is truly unique and Jesus is the source of the Good News.
5. In this Advent season, we celebrate the fact that Christ has come, that Christ died and has risen and that Christ will return (like a thief in the night because no one knows the day or hour) ultimately bring a peace that no man can describe.
6. Second, Mark's gospel also begins with a brief description of the ministry of John, the one who came baptizing in the desert and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
7. Mark indicates that John's ministry of preaching and baptism fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3 which says, “A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”
8. John’s voice crying in the wilderness involves preparation for those who have ears to hear
9. That preparedness - John is call to straighten the road to the earthly kingdom.
10. He was a preacher who came preaching a declarative message - despite the odds against people found in a dark day and time, yet God used him to touch a generation who had forgotten the Word of God.
11. My Brothers and sisters, we are living in similar times! Many churches have abandoned the great doctrines of the Bible to preach either a message rooted in humanism, prosperity, or legalism enfolded in false love; what I call a feel good message.
12. People are neither challenged regarding their sins nor are they beaten down with the Word of God anymore.
13. For those whom John baptized, it marked their confession that they were sinners. When we admit we are sinners, we are laying aside our human pride and confessing the truth of what we really are - filthy rags.
14. But we are not making that confession blindly but we are making it in the light of the revealed knowledge that God loves us immeasurably, and that he has made atonement for us in Jesus Christ.
15. People need to know that the only way to Heaven is through the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. People need to know that sin kills and separates them from God. People need to know that there is a real Hell to shun and a real Heaven to gain. People need to know that God still looks for repenting hearts and changed lives. People need to know the truth!
16. There are many people who will not hear the truth, even if it stirred them in the face.
17. The Bible tells us that this is way it will be in the end times according 2 Tim. 4:3-4: “For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.”

18. I asked, where are the forerunners who are preparing the way of the Lord and proclaiming His return?
19. We are to preach the Word, 2 Tim. 4:2 – “proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.”
20. Jesus' actions exemplify the two most important dimensions of His life of purpose. He knew what God the Father had called Him to do, and He was responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in His life.
21. We too have a purpose to fulfill and we should be led by the Spirit of God (Phil. 2:13; Rom. 8:14).
22. I say repent and follow the Holy Spirit! When we refuse to wait on God and allow Him to work according to His schedule, when we take matters into our own hands, the result is always disaster.