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The whole world changed

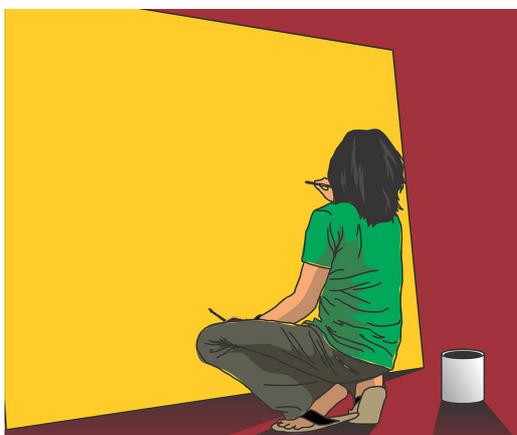
Mark 1.4-11

In which, Mark begins his 'good news' (Gospel) with John the baptizer, the prophet who heralds the coming of God. He calls people to be baptized as a sign of repentance and forgiveness – that is, turning their lives around. It is, he says, a preparation for receiving God's Holy Spirit. Many came to him, including Jesus. As Jesus comes up from the water, the Spirit of God descends upon him.

Now read **Mark 1.4-11** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

John's clothes and the place where he is preaching make him look and sound a bit like the Old Testament prophet, Elijah. But John says that he is not him; he is preparing the way for the one who is to come – Jesus. To most people watching, the action Mark describes probably looked like nothing much. But this was a hinge point in human history: Jesus was pledging himself to his life's calling, and it was as if the universe itself was responding to this deep-down change.



When have you experienced a fresh start?

WALK

Take a trip to some water near you. Most of the year, the river Jordan is not very impressive – just muddy water and reeds – so a stream, a pond, a storm drain, even a puddle could be your 'Jordan'. When you are at this place, ask God what your calling is. Be open to an unexpected answer.

WATCH

- In the story of Hercules, the fifth task that he had to complete was to clean the King Augeas' stables of massive amounts of dung. Hercules said he could do this in just one day. The king did not believe him, and – providing him with a small shovel – promised a great reward if he could. Hercules, however, did not use the shovel but the power of water. Learn more about this story here: <https://youtu.be/F3svQQJZ3C0>
- Think about the power of water to clean and give a 'fresh start'. You could wash something at home – e.g. the front step, the inside of a cupboard – and, as you do your own 'Herculean task' and see things refreshed, talk to God. Ask to understand the personal fresh start on offer to you at this moment. What could it be?

DAILY PRAYER

Imagine that you have started the week with a blank canvas, a chance for new beginnings with God. Each day, think of one new thing that God may be calling you to do and write it on a piece of paper, or make an entry in your diary, praying for God's help in doing it.

At the end of the week, revisit what you have written, comparing it with what you have actually done.

Prayer Activity

You will need: a shallow dish or bowl, some small clean stones or pebbles.

- Fill the bowl about two-thirds with water. Be still and look at the reflections in the water. Play some quiet music if this helps.
- Think about John the Baptist and Jesus in the river Jordan, each choosing to be engulfed in God's will. Carefully place a stone in the water and give thanks for each of them.
- Think of people you know who are facing challenges. Place a stone for each person and pray for them. If you are doing this in a household, you could take turns. Notice how the water changes the appearance of the stones.
- After a while, take the stones out, one by one, praying again for each person: 'May the Holy Spirit comfort you and give you strength.' When you remove the last two stones, give thanks again for John and Jesus.

MAKE

You will need: a piece of paper, a dinner plate, coloured pens/pencils.

- Happy or sad, content or restless, the ripples of our lives are constantly moving and God moves us towards new beginnings. Draw round the plate to make a large circle. Use the circle to make a picture of yourself –

but not who you are on the outside. Make a picture of your thoughts and feelings on the inside.

- Now look at your picture. Does it show you something about how you are feeling? Can you guess why some parts of the pattern are as they are? Pray about what you see.

Mark 1.4-11

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness.

He was a strange-looking man, clothed in a hairy camel skin, with a leather belt around his waist. And he ate strange things: locusts and wild honey.

John was announcing a message of forgiveness of sins if people repented and were baptized. People came from all over to be baptized by John in the River Jordan. They came from the city of Jerusalem and from the countryside all around.

John shouted loudly, 'Someone else is coming. Someone more powerful than me. I am not important enough even to untie his shoes!' John said that although he baptized people with water, the one who was coming would be different. He would baptize people with the Holy Spirit.

Then one day he came. Jesus came from Nazareth to the River Jordan, to be baptized by John. And as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were torn apart and a dove came down; the Holy Spirit descended onto Jesus. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son. I love you and I am pleased with you.'

Mark 1.4-11



Did you know?

- John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin.
- Repent means saying sorry to God for what you have done; having a change of heart.

Mark 1.4-11 (NRSV)

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to

stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'