



Presenting the Savior

*2008
Advent Devotional
New Hope CRC*

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark 1:1*

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is Saul's conversion on the Damascus road. I love the way Saul's life is turned completely around by meeting Jesus. One minute he is filled with anger and "*breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,*" (Acts 9:1) and just a few verses later we read "*and immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogue, saying he is the Son of God... proving that Jesus was the Christ,*" (Acts 9:20, 22). Seeing Jesus changed Paul's life. This year in preparation for Christmas, I would like to try to help us see Jesus in the hope that our lives will be continually changed to live for Him.

I have chosen to direct your attention to the Gospel of Mark, which many believe is the first Gospel written. According to Mark, Jesus is very busy. Just glance at chapter 1 and you will see what I mean. Mark tells us that Jesus immediately does this, then immediately does that, and immediately is off to something else. Mark clearly wants us to see the work of Jesus.

But Mark also wants his readers to know the person who is doing all the wonderful things that he is talking about. By putting the emphasis on the person as well as the work of Jesus, Mark has written down the first Christology (Doctrine of Christ) for the Church. Our readings this month help (re)introduce us to the person of Jesus this Advent season. Each reading will list one of the titles or names of Jesus that Mark uses in his Gospel so that we will see afresh the basic doctrine of who Christ is in preparation for the celebration of his birth on Christmas day.

Mark begins his gospel message with the exact words used by a Roman emperor to tell the world to celebrate his birth. By copying that birthday wish Mark seems to be saying, "You think your birth is good news (*gospel*), let me tell you about the birth and work of one who is really special – just look at who He is!" And so we shall.

*Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) © 2001, Crossway Bibles, Used by permission.

Daily Devotions

Identifying The Names Or Titles Given To Jesus In Mark

December 8:	Jesus	Mark 1:1, <i>et al</i>
December 9:	Christ	Mark 1:1, 8:29, (9:41), 14:61-62! 15:32
December 10:	Son of God	Mark 1:1, 3:11. 5:7, 13:32, 14:61, 15:39
December 11:	Beloved Son	Mark 1:11, 9:18
December 12:	Jesus of Nazareth	Mark 1:24, 10:47, 14:67, 16:6
December 13:	Holy One of God	Mark 1:24 The historic Jesus is the Holy Jesus!
December 15:	Son of Man	Mark 2:28, 8:31; 9:9, 12,31; 10:33,45; 13:26; 14:21,41, 62
December 16:	Lord of the Sabbath	Mark 2:28
December 17:	A Prophet	Mark 6:4
December 18:	Rabbi	Mark 9:5, 11:21, 14:45
December 19:	Teacher	Mark 9:17, 10:17, 20; 12:14, 19; 13:1; 14:14
December 20:	Son of David	Mark 10:47, (11:10)
December 22:	King of the Jews	Mark 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26
December 23:	King of Israel	Mark 15:32
December 25:	King of Creation	[OK, I cheated: We'll use Philippians 2]

Monday December 8: Jesus

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
(Mark 1:1, *et al*)

“*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, there’s just something about that name,*” begins a praise song that was popular some years ago. And we believe that don’t we? Our troubles are quieted for a moment at the name of Jesus. Listening ears are satisfied and souls are bolstered when we hear about Jesus in sermons and devotions. All of this is true because of the one person in history that we think about when we hear the name, “Jesus”.

Is there something special about Jesus that comes to your mind when you think about the name? We may have a variety of things that come to our minds and many of us would list separate thoughts. And yet, by God’s grace, each thought about Jesus connects us with the person from Nazareth some 2000 years ago. The name “Jesus” helps us identify the historic person of Jesus. We know that he is a real man and not some made up character in a story.

The name of Jesus also tells us something wonderful about him. We don’t put a great deal of emphasis on the meaning of our names, but the people in Jesus’ day did and the name, “Jesus” means, “Yahweh saves.” So, the name of Jesus does double duty. It points to the wonderful news that God does save and it does more; the name of Jesus points to the person who carries out God’s salvation. His name is Jesus. He is a known person of history and He is our savior.

There really is something about the name of Jesus isn’t there? The name connects us with the person and his work and that makes us look forward to celebrating his birth this Christmas.

Tuesday December 9: Christ

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

Mark 1:1, 8:29, (9:41), 14:61-62, 15:32

One of the most important confessions recorded in the Gospel of Mark is Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus asked the disciples, *"But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."* (Mark 8:29) Later, after Jesus had been arrested the high priest asked him, *"Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."* (Mark 14:61-62)

Why is this confession and acknowledgement so important? The short answer is that this means that the promises of the OT have been answered! The Old and New Testaments were written in different languages so they have different names for the promised one of God. The OT calls him "Messiah," while the NT refers to him as "Christ," but both think about him as the one who is specially anointed by God as the promise keeper.

We first started looking for the Christ in the Garden of Eden when God promised one person who would crush the head of the serpent/Satan. Later we learned to look for one child of Abraham who would bless all nations. King David was told that he would have a son born to his birth line who would be king forever. All these promises would come to fulfillment in the Christ! Through Peter and even Jesus Himself, Mark is telling us that the one specially anointed promise keeper of God has come and it is his birth that we celebrate this Christmas season.

Wednesday December 10: Son of God

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

Mark 1:1, 3:11, 5:7, 13:32, 14:61, 15:39

When we hear the term, “Son of God” we immediately think of the Son, however, when the ancients heard the term, they immediately thought of God. If a father was not visibly present the firstborn son was considered equal to the father in terms of person and status. We see evidence of this in Mark 14 where the high priest and leaders want to kill Jesus because he called Himself the Son of the Blessed. In their minds this was equal to saying that He was God! Therefore, Mark is telling us in the very first line of his Gospel that Jesus Christ is the (one) Son of God who is to be seen as God in terms of person and authority. The narrative of the Gospel gives further evidence of this relationship because Jesus does many things that only God can do.

But we are not incorrect in thinking about Jesus as the Son in distinction from the Father because the two, while being one in essence and status, are distinct in person. Therefore Mark can tell us about Jesus’ baptism and mentions a voice speaking from heaven as God while at the same time being heard on earth by the Son. They are one yet they are separate persons as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I know that makes our heads hurt in a way, but it is how God presents Himself in his Word and so this is the way that we must think about Him.

Tomorrow, we will look a little more at the relationship of Father and Son, but our focus today is to recognize that the title, “Son of God” is really the same as saying that Jesus is God. Therefore we should think about Him as “Immanuel – God with us.” This means that God came in human form in Jesus so that He could die in our place and satisfy his own anger against sin. We could never do that ourselves and we can be very thankful to celebrate the birth of the Son of God at Christmas.

Thursday December 11: Beloved Son

*And a voice came from heaven, "You are my **beloved Son**; with you I am well pleased."*

Mark 1:11, 9:18

Yesterday, we introduced the topic of the relationship of God the Father to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, today we carry that discussion a little farther. Isn't it interesting that God tells the world that He loves his Son and is pleased with Him? I can't imagine a harder task than a father sending his son into battle knowing that his son will die. Some might say that it is easy for God because He already knows that He will raise the Son from the dead, but that cheapens the emotion of God. It says that God only feels the good and doesn't feel sorrow or pain or anger and that simply is not true. God the Father felt the loss in sending his Son to earth to take on human flesh. God the Father was angry when He had to forsake Jesus for bearing our sin, and his Father's heart grieved when his Son died.

I think that it is helpful for us to think about the emotions of God and I am glad that Mark told us about his love and pleasure for his Son because that helps us realize the emotion that God has for us as his adopted children purchased with the blood of Christ. Because of the Father's love for Jesus, the Son, we can be sure of his love for us as sons and daughters in Christ. No one says it better than the Gospel of John in that very famous verse, *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16).

This Christmas season we can be confident of God's love for the Son in a way that helps us understand God's love for us. Wouldn't this also be a great time to respond to God's love with our love for Him? *"We love because He first loved us,"* John said (1 John 4:19). Knowledge of God's love yields a fruit of our love and this is a great gift to remember each Christmas.

Friday December 12: Jesus of Nazareth

"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God."

Mark 1:24, 10:47, 14:67, 16:6

By calling him Jesus of Nazareth, Mark reassures us about Jesus' physical history. The one that we have been talking about as the Son of God is also a man with a human history. Because Mark does not record the family history, the use of the title, "Jesus of Nazareth" is his way of keeping that history in front of his readers.

The writer to the Hebrews also keeps Jesus' humanity in front of his readers to point out the help that we receive in Christ. *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.* Hebrews 2:14-16

In the Gospel of Mark, we observe that "Jesus of Nazareth" is used as a title three times in relationship to a remarkable statement or event (Mark 1:24, 10:47 & 16:6). In the first case we are reminded that the physical Jesus of Nazareth is the Holy One of God (see tomorrow's reading). Second, blind Bartimaeus "sees" Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of David and the last time the title is used we are reassured that the one who has risen from the dead is indeed the same physical Jesus who grew up in Nazareth.

In this way, Mark very skillfully reminds us that the resurrected Jesus is not a ghost, nor did he rise from the dead in some spiritual fashion. Mark wants us to think about the resurrected Jesus as the physical person Jesus with a history of growing in Nazareth. The Apostle Paul builds on this idea in 1 Corinthians 15. He points out that the physical Jesus, a true human, was raised from the dead so that we like Him may have hope for the resurrection.

That is a great reason to anticipate Christmas. We look for the birth of the man who brings resurrection.

Saturday December 13: Holy One of God

*"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--
the Holy One of God."*

Mark 1:24

Normally, we don't give a lot of thought to the teaching of demons, but this is not a normal revelation. There were many times that Jesus cast out demons and had conversations with them in the process of freeing the people that they tormented and Mark just passes over those encounters. But not this one, what is so significant or interesting about this conversation? Maybe it is a sample representing all the others, or maybe Mark chose to pass this conversation along because of the truth proclaimed so clearly – by a demon!

First, the demon knows Jesus' name and physical history which makes the second observation even more profound; the demon also knows Jesus' divine history. By calling Him the "Holy One," the demon has just used one of the most common and powerful names for God in the Old Testament. The God of the OT is now present in the person of Jesus of Nazareth! Amazingly, it is a demon who points out that Jesus is a man with a physical history and the Almighty God with no beginning or end with a precise Biblical history.

There is a third item that the demon points out to us through Mark. Not only does the demon know the facts of who Jesus is in deeper complexity than the humans around him, he also knows the mission of Jesus in deeper complexity. This demon knows that Jesus has come both, *as God*, and *from God*, for the purpose of destroying demons! The God/Man Jesus is the son of the woman who is born to destroy sin, Satan and all the servants of Satan. This demon knows Jesus' name, history, complex identity and mission. Could it be that Mark tells us so much about the demon's knowledge as an implicit way of asking his readers if they really know who Jesus is and what He is up to?

Do you know the depth of his person? Do you know His mission? Who would have thought that we could learn from a demon, but he reminds us of the very person and purpose of the birth of the baby whom we celebrate at Christmas.

Sunday December 14

10:30 AM Worship Service Theme and Scripture:

"Recognizing Christ the Lord" Mark 8:34-9:1

Elder Henry Salzano

Monday December 15: Son of Man

*So the **Son of Man** is lord even of the Sabbath."*

Mark 2:28 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62

Except for the name "Jesus" there are more references for the "Son of Man" than any other title in the book of Mark. Bible experts tell us that this was Jesus' favorite way of talking about himself. What is it about this title that appealed to Him so?

Strange as it may seem, the crashing financial market may help us understand this particular title for Jesus. Whether we have small investments or big ones, everyone is losing money right now. We all want it to stop. Some think that our new President and a new team of advisors will help, but we don't know that for sure. What if we did know? What if we knew the very person who would put an end to the economic slide? Wouldn't we look for him or her? Wouldn't we be excited to know that he/she has come and was getting to work?

As limited as it is, that analogy is the story behind the "Son of Man" title. Israel didn't have economic collapse, they had national collapse! The nation had been invaded and most of the citizens had been taken to prisoner of war camps or made slaves to their invaders. As we can imagine, the people wanted the trouble to stop and they wanted to go home, and the prophet Daniel gave them hope that the day would indeed come, *I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed,* (Daniel 7:13-14). From this prophecy on, all of God's people looked for the Son of Man to set them free, and then Jesus came. He was presented before God Almighty, the Ancient of Days, and God said, "*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.*" (Mark 1:11).

The one of all hope has come, He is given dominion and a Kingdom that shall never end. He is the Son of Man and the fact of his birth makes Christmas a very exciting time and a day of celebration.

Tuesday December 16: Lord of the Sabbath

So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Mark 2:28

In the minds of the teachers of Jesus' day all of life in the Old Testament was about Sabbath. This was the day that stood on the shoulders of all the others. Sabbath was about remembering God in creation and resting in the God of creation. Nothing was more important than Sabbath. To make sure that life remained about Sabbath the Pharisees had created a long list of laws to help people prepare for the Sabbath and observe the day properly. This is the scene in which Jesus declared that the Son of Man (whom we read about yesterday) is lord, even of the Sabbath.

What a shock! How could anyone or anything be more important than Sabbath? And then to say that He is the master of the Sabbath would be placing Himself on the same status as God! Remember when Mark is writing and remember that "Lord" is the normal name for God in the Old Testament. To us the name, "Lord" as Lord, even of the Sabbath is a clear statement on Jesus' part to say that He is God and He is Lord over all things.

When we think about Jesus as Lord, we must also think about Him as King because the Son of David is coming. We will look at the Son of David title on Saturday, but today I want to point out that David knew his future son would also be his Lord. Mark 12:36 says, *David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet."* So David the Lord/King was told by the Lord/God that there would be a Lord at the right hand of God until all enemies of God were subjected to Him. David lived in faith expecting the day of the forever king who is Lord over all – even of the Sabbath!

When we consider the birth of Jesus this Christmas we are remembering the birth of the Lord who is Lord of the Sabbath and Lord at the right hand of God the Father. He is Lord now and He will be Lord when God brings his last enemy to His feet.

Wednesday December 17: A Prophet

And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household."

Mark 6:4

Too often we think of prophets as tellers of the future instead of tellers of the truth. In the Bible, however, the prophet's primary job description was to tell the people God's Word. Prophets were forth-tellers more than they were fore-tellers. Yes, they often told people what would happen in the future, but their message was never separated from the specific, contemporary point they were making to their original listeners, even as they were telling about a future event.

In the same way, Jesus is a messenger who declares the Word of God. The Apostle John goes further still and he calls Jesus *the Word of God*. So Jesus is both messenger and message. He is the preacher and the sermon all in one package. We believe that we live our lives as witnesses to God, but we should also notice that not even Jesus was permitted a separation between his teaching and Himself. He is his own message, as strange as that may seem. If that was true for Jesus, how much more so for us, shouldn't the message of our lives be about Jesus?

Second, Jesus refers to Himself as a prophet and speaks about the honor that is due to Him as a prophet of God. Our English word, "except," in Mark 6:4 is a little confusing. We tend to read it as if Jesus is saying that He is not honored anywhere except in Nazareth, but the word Mark originally used says, "*if not*." Jesus' point is that public honor is preceded by the personal honor showed by those who know Him and are closest to Him. The next thing we read in the Gospel is the sending out of the twelve on a mission trip. They carry the prophetic message of Jesus and the honor due to Him as a prophet of God to the world.

Since we know Jesus and his Word, shouldn't we be the first to honor Him? How will you show this Christmas that you honor Him in such a way that you invite others to honor Him too?

Thursday December 18: Rabbi

*And Peter said to Jesus, "**Rabbi**, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."*

Mark 9:5, 11:21, 14:45

Closely related to the title of "Prophet" are the titles of "Rabbi" and "Teacher". We will look at one of them today and the other one tomorrow. Modern day books like to link the title "Rabbi" with that of disciple-maker. Older writers from Jewish traditions suggest that this is too narrow a title for a Rabbi.

It is true that Rabbis hand picked their closest followers and they did make them disciples, like the modern writers say. But the point, according to Jewish sources, is that the Rabbis were picking and training judges, not merely disciples. This helps us understand why the Rabbis of Jesus' day had such authority. The country of Israel was ruled by outsiders or irreligious Jews and one could not expect to get a fair treatment or judgment according to the Word of God from one who did not know the Word! So it was essential for those who would settle the basic disputes of life to be the ones who were steeped in the Word of God and the most efficient way to train these judges was through the pattern of those with recognized authority in the word training new judges. Notice how Jesus makes the role of judges explicit to those he picked as his disciples, *Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* (Matthew 19:28)

This thinking of a rabbi as a judge helps us understand why Jesus was brought before the High Priest for trial too, doesn't it. He is the ranking rabbi and highest judge in the land. They only took Jesus to Pilate after they had judged him in the highest recognized court and wanted the death penalty imposed, which their courts couldn't do.

As important as it is to think about following Jesus this Christmas, it is also important to recognize the distinction that he has as a rabbi who distributes justice according to the Word of God. By following Him we learn to be people of justice and mercy so that we too can be a blessing in a troubled world.

Friday December 19: Teacher

*And someone from the crowd answered him, "**Teacher**, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute.*

Mark 9:17, 10:17, 20; 12:14, 19; 13:1; 14:14

There is no doubt that Jesus was a teacher. This is the role that the world most readily affirms about Him. Many do not recognize Him as a proclaimer of God's Word (a prophet) or as one a judge who decides on the basis of God's Word (a Rabbi), but they have no trouble recognizing Jesus the teacher. I can't help but wonder if this is a way to pick and choose what people like about Jesus without affirming the fullness of who He is.

In the wonder of God's Word, I believe that Mark was ahead of his time in affirming that Jesus was a teacher. When I look at the OT period it seems that the prophets were the main teachers of God's Word. During the time between the OT and the NT the Rabbis became the primary teachers and later, after the close of the NT it seems that the teachers of the Word become most significant and it is in this role that Jesus excels.

Do we all follow the teaching of Jesus though? Doesn't society tend to pick and choose from his teaching? How about the Church? Do we pick and choose too? Do we pick our own curriculum and make our own study program or do we submit to the lesson plan of the Teacher and heed his instruction as necessary for the balanced training that leads to a well ordered productive life?

This Advent, let us remember that we celebrate the birth of a Teacher whose lesson plan and material is to be followed so that we may be trained to bear fruit for his glory.

Saturday December 20: Son of David

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Mark 10:47, (11:10)

It is surprising that Mark has taken us so deep into his Gospel before revealing that Jesus is the Son of David and surprising still that the one who sees Him as such is the blind son of the disciple whom everyone knew as Timaeus. We don't know Timaeus, but we know David and we know the wonderful prophecies about the Son of David.

In particular we remember that there will be a Son of David who will rule over the kingdom of David forever. By definition, this ruler will be the Messiah or Christ because He is anointed for his office. This means, of course, that the Christ will be King! This isn't some idea that we have come up with on our own, this is the worldview articulated by the religious leaders of Jesus' day in Mark 15:32, *Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.* The Christ and the King of Israel are one in the same because the Christ is the last King in the line of David. There is no king after Him.

So we must think about Jesus as the king whose kingdom is greater than that of the greatest of Israel's kings, David. But the story of the son of Timaeus also teaches us something about this King. While on the way to the public affirmation of his office, King Jesus, Son of David, took time for a blind man forgotten by society and forced to beg for his existence.

Thus, we see not only the title of the king as Son of David, we also see the character of his reign. He will be a benevolent king who cares for the wholeness of all of his subjects. The birth of this king is a great event to celebrate.

Sunday December 21

10:30 AM Worship Service Theme and Scripture: "Recognizing Christ the King" Mark 1:15, 15:32

Pastor Perry

Monday December 22: King of the Jews

*And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so."
Mark 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26*

Who was the "King of the Jews" during the days of Jesus? Wasn't this the title that was given to Herod? So how is it that Pilate asks Jesus if He is the king of the Jews (v 2)? The answer comes in v 12 where we see that the religious leaders brought Jesus to Pilate as one claiming to be the King of Jews. Therefore, Jesus has been brought before Pilate on the charges of treason. The allegation behind the title is that Jesus is attempting a coup d'état so that he can rule in Herod's place. Pilate makes it very clear that all people know what happens to those who try to disrupt the government and he had a card printed that said, "King of the Jews", which he attached to the cross upon which Jesus died.

The irony of Pilate's action is that he was correct. While he thought he was putting an imposter to death, the miracle of God at work shows that he was telling the truth, this really is the King of the Jews. We must remember that Mark knows all of this, he is not writing an uninformed chronicle of Jesus. He writes as a veteran missionary who has seen lives transformed by the death of this king. Mark knows that the kingdom for the true people of God comes through the King of the Jews on the cross. When Mark recorded Pilate's actions, I wonder if he thought, "Pilate, you have no idea what you are writing."

All four Gospels talk about Jesus as the King of the Jews and they all do so in relationship to his suffering and death. Aren't they telling us that Jesus' announcement of kingdom is either over and done, or it is the kingdom that is known through the King on the cross? What king do you see when you look at Jesus on the cross of history? Is He the king of a failed attempt to overthrow the government or is He the King of the Kingdom that even transcends death?

Our view of the one we see on the cross shapes the view of the one we see as a baby in the manger. Whose birth do you celebrate this Christmas?

Tuesday December 23: King of Israel

*Let the Christ, the **King of Israel**, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.*

Mark 15:32

Here we see the worldview of the chief priests and Old Testament experts of the day. The Christ, by definition is the King of Israel. If Christ, then King! A few verses later in the chapter we see that same world view in connection with Joseph of Arimathea, *a respected member of the Council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.* (15:43)

This little comment by the chief priests also tells us that they understood the claims of Jesus to be the Christ and therefore the king. We have seen this month that they understood correctly. Jesus is the Son of David and He is that King of the coming kingdom. The difference however was the nature of the kingdom. They were looking for a political kingdom along the lines of father David where Romans would be destroyed, but Jesus represented a kingdom where Romans and people of all nations and tribes would be gathered as one. They wanted a kingdom for the Jews, but Jesus brought a kingdom for Jews and Gentiles united forever as the true Israel under his Kingship.

Once again, we see irony in the title that Mark records about Jesus. For the second time in two days Mark uses a title that is presented in a negative way to illumine the fact that the title actually fits. In the view of the priests, Jesus cannot save Himself (15:31) so they poke fun of Him as one who claimed falsely to be Christ and King. But they could not have been farther from the truth. Jesus could certainly have come down from the cross and saved Himself, but He would not have saved his kingdom. By going to his death He showed that He is the King who leads his Kingdom in to lasting peace. They needed Jesus to be selfish before they would see and believe. Mark, however, presents the story in such a way as to leave the question open, Who do you see on the cross? Do you believe in Him? To the ones who do not believe, He is an imposter, to those who see and believe, Jesus the true King of Israel. Tomorrow evening we celebrate the birth of the King!

Wednesday December 24: Christmas Eve

5:30 PM - Meet at the church to join others and go Christmas Caroling to New Hope friends.

7:00 PM - Christmas Eve Candle Light Worship Service. Please bring a plate of Christmas cookies to share.

Thursday December 25: King of Creation

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11

I know that it seems strange to read a passage like this on Christmas day, but this text describes the very purpose of the Christ: to be the forever King. The beauty of the Bible's message is that this long awaited and even longer ruling king is Jesus whose birth we celebrate each Christmas.

I began this collection of readings by pointing to the words of a song and I would like to end in the same way. The purpose of these readings was to use the gospel of Mark to help us see Jesus in the hope that we, like the Apostle Paul would be transformed because we have seen Jesus. We have seen Him each day in our readings, now, I invite you to *turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.*

Merry Christmas!
Pastor Perry