

I Just Want Jesus
The Gospel of Mark: Introduction
Mark 1:1

And Jesus spoke to his disciples, saying “not so with you. For whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. Whoever wants to be first must be the last of the servants. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Have you ever noticed that we, as human beings, are quite skilled at saying things that we know we probably shouldn't say at the exact moment we probably shouldn't say them? We don't know why the words and phrases managed to leave the lexicons of our minds and work their way to the tips of our tongues either, do we? They just sort of arrived unannounced like a mother-in-law on your doorstep with three suitcases. I know you may find this hard to believe but this happens to me quite often. One of the most memorable occurred the very first time I was in the Promised Land. Israel is home to a lot of good things. But a cheeseburger is not one of them. And that's the precise reason I would advise you to never tell the waiter in a licensed kosher restaurant in Jerusalem that you “just want a cheeseburger.” You'll find yourself in the Garden of Gethsemane alone waiting on your group to finish their falafel before you can say: “where's the beef?” The truth is words and phrases that manage to work their way from the lexicons of our minds to the tips of our tongues in the spur of the moment and at inopportune times have a lot to teach us about our greatest longings, our greatest frustrations, and our greatest needs. “I just want a cheeseburger.” “I just want some peace and quiet.” “I just want something to believe in.” All of them voice what lacks in our soul in those moments.

Well church, I have got one of those “I just want” phrases for you today. Unfortunately, unlike “I just want a cheeseburger,” this phrase often stays locked in the vault of our minds and rarely gets to travel out of our mouths as often as it should. It is an “I just want” phrase that reveals much about our great longings, frustrations, and needs. It's not “I just want some peace and quiet,” nor is it “I just want something to believe in.” Instead, it is this phrase: “I just want Jesus.” You see, friend, when the phrase “I just want Jesus,” makes it way from the lexicon of your mind to the tip of your tongue, you imply that there are two distinct realities at work in your life, in your church, and in your world that you are aware of. The first reality is that there is a lot of things about your life, your church, and your world that are not all about Jesus and should be. And the second reality is that the frustrations you have about the things in your life, in your church, and in your world that are not about Jesus and should be, can only be resolved by voicing “I just want Jesus” to be central to everything in my life once again.

There is a book in the New Testament so central to the story of Jesus that it became the source for 3 of the 4 Gospels in your Bible. It was the first book written in the New Testament and it starts with an “M.” It isn't Gospel of Matthew. It's the Gospel of Mark. Mark has one central theme, and that central theme is this: “I just want Jesus.” You see Mark wrote his gospel during a time of political upheaval, cultural toxicity and religious apostasy. And his solution to the frustrations and longings that had made their way from the lexicons of his audience's minds to the tips of their tongues in his day was one simple “I just want phrase.” It was this: “I just want Jesus.” That was Mark's solution in his day. It's equally the solution in our day. Over the course of the next half of the year, I want to take you verse by verse through the book of the Bible that started it all. Literally. And the reason why I plan to do that is very straight forward: it's all about just wanting Jesus. He is the answer not only to political upheaval, cultural toxicity, and religious apostasy in our world, but also the solution to the greatest “I just want” longings our hearts.

So today I want to tell you what you are confessing to God and others when you utter the phrase: I just want Jesus. To do that, please turn with me to Mark 1:1. We will go all the way from Mark 1:1 to the end of Mark 1:1 in our text this morning.

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God

What You Are Confessing to God and Others When You Say: “I Just Want Jesus.”

1. I Have a Second Chance

- **I'm Not Qualified** – (1) It's the most common expression I hear when it comes to people's concept of who God uses. (2) But if you think that you are somehow not qualified, consider this: NOAH was a drunk. ABRAHAM was too old. ISAAC was a daydreamer. JACOB was a liar. JOSEPH was abused. MOSES had a stuttering problem. GIDEON was afraid. SAMSON had long hair and was a womanizer! RAHAB was a prostitute! JEREMIAH and TIMOTHY were too young. DAVID had an affair and was a murderer. ELIJAH was suicidal. ISAIAH preached naked. JONAH ran from God. NAOMI was a widow. JOB went bankrupt. JOHN the Baptist ate bugs. PETER denied Christ. The Disciples fell asleep while praying. MARTHA worried about everything. MARY MAGDALENE was a harlot. The SAMARITAN WOMAN was divorced, more than once! ZACCHEUS was too small. PAUL was too religious. TIMOTHY had an ulcer. And LAZARUS was dead!
- **Main Idea of the Point:** God used Mark to write about new beginnings because he was aware of the importance of new beginnings in his life personally.
- **Textual Emphasis: “The Beginning” (1a):** (1) Mark begins the first book in the New Testament ever recorded with the phrase “the beginning.” (2) And Mark is someone who knew all about first beginnings and second ones. (3) The first time we are introduced to him in the New

Testament because he was a deserter on Paul's 1st Missionary Journey. (4) When the time for Paul's second missionary journey came around, specifically doesn't want Mark because he was a quitter. (5) So, Peter, the apostle of 2nd chances, takes Mark, who needs a 2nd chance under his wing.

- **App** – When you say, “I just want Jesus,” that’s what you are saying: God, I believe you can make all things new. I believe you can rewrite my script.

2. I Have a Sacred Story

- **Good News, Bad News** – (1) Once upon a time, there was a man who got a telephone call from his doctor. The doctor says: “about this medical test I did on you, I have some good news and some bad news.” (2) The man asked for the good news first. (3) “The good news is that you have 24 hours to live,” says the doctor. (4) The man, incredulously, said: “if that’s the good news, then what is the bad?” (5) The bad news is I couldn’t reach you on the phone yesterday.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Before the NT, people heard the word “gospel” and thought: a decree from the Roman Emperor. But because of Jesus, we hear the word “gospel” and understand it as “good news.”
- **Textual Emphasis: “The beginning of the good news”:** (1) There was a word synonymous in Ancient Roman World synonymous with an announcement and decree from the Roman Emperor; (2) It was the word *uangelleion*. It means good news or gospel; (3) We see that now and say, “praise the Lord.” (4) But before the NT, when the Roman people heard it, they said: “we better do what Caesar says.” (5) We see this most clearly in Luke’s Christmas story when Caesar Augustus issued a *uangelleion* that the whole world should be taxed. To him it was good news. To him it was Gospel. (6) But to the Romans and the rest of the conquered world, it was bad news. (7) Mark takes this one word: *uangelleion* and applies not to an Emperor’s words, but to Jesus. He is the Gospel. He is the good news.
- **App** – When you say, “I just want Jesus,” it means you want the Jesus according to the Gospels themselves, not the one the world wants him to be. For your salvation demonstrates your participation in his sacred story.

3. I Have a Sure Hope

- **Hopeless Situation** – (1) Have you ever found yourself in what you thought was a hopeless situation. (2) I sure have, and I never want to experience it again. (3) I agreed to go to a vegan restaurant with a certain person because I operated under a false assumption. (3) When you go to a normal restaurant, they usually have non-meat options for vegans. (4) But unfortunately, and I hate to be the one to tell you, there are no meat options on the menu for non-vegans at a vegan restaurant.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** As a Roman, Mark lived as a Roman citizen. As a Jew, Mark lived with the hope the Messiah would come. As a Christian, Mark lived with the hope the Messiah has come.
- **Textual Emphasis: “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah.”** (1) Two names here are important: Jesus = “God is my salvation”; Messiah = Anointed One. (2) What’s interesting is that Mark doesn’t refer to Jesus as “Yeshua,” the traditional way his disciples would have referred to him. Instead, he uses Jesus, which is essentially Yeshua in Western Gentile Greek. (3) Then, he throws in the term “the Messiah.” The Romans didn’t care about a Messiah. They didn’t even look for one. But the Jews did. They hoped. (4) So, with just two words Mark has just answered the quest of the human heart. Jesus, the hope of the Gentiles. The Jesus that offers “salvation” just like his name. And “the Messiah,” the Anointed One. The Hope of the Jews.
- **App** – As long as Jesus, the Messiah is living and active in the world, there are no truly hopeless situations. There are only those who choose to remain hopeless.

4. I Have a Sovereign Authority

- **Roman Gods** – (1) the Romans had a pantheon of “gods. (2) In fact, they had so many, they developed a calendar from them. (3) They worshipped Janus and came up with the word January. They worshipped Februa and came up with the word February. They worshipped Juno and came up with the word June. And they worshipped Caesar Augustus and came up with the word August. (4) But Mark begged to differ. There was only one son worthy of worship. Only one who starts and stops the calendar. Only one son of God. And his name is Jesus.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Mark risked his life by referring to Jesus as the “Son of God” because Roman Emperors declared themselves to be “sons” of the “gods.”
- **Textual Emphasis: The Beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah: Son of God.** (1) Throughout their history, the Roman Emperors were thought to be sons of the gods. (2) Julius Divius Caesar means Julius “the Divine”. (3) Caesar Augustus means Caesar the “majestic, great, or venerable.” (4) Nero means “the powerful almighty.” (6) Mark defies Roman apostasy with one of the most politically in your face phrases of all time: “Son of God.” (7) As if to say, contrary to popular opinion, Jesus is the Son of God. And if you slay me for saying that, then glory to God because it is true.
- **App:** Kings and kingdoms will all pass away. But there’s something about that name.