

Kickoff Gospel

While many are excited to tune in for today's big kickoff, here at Monte Vista we're having a kickoff of our own! Starting tomorrow, we begin our [Jesus Through the Scriptures](#) Bible reading plan, beginning with one of the most action-packed gospels: Mark.

Unlike today's big sporting event where sometimes the most exciting part is the commercials, Mark comes out of the gate swinging and doesn't let up on the gas the whole way through. Just look at how many times he uses the word "*immediately*" — 21 times in these first five chapters alone! Hang on to your hats; we're in for a wild ride just after kickoff.

So, let's take a few minutes for a little pre-game show, previewing the events in this week's reading.

Starting Lineup

Who's on Jesus' team?

- John the Baptist (Mark 1:1-8) — John was God's promised messenger sent to prepare the way for Jesus. He was a "wild man," living in the wilderness eating locust and honey — not someone you'd expect to speak such powerful words of repentance!
- The Twelve (Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-14; 3:13-19) — As Jesus begins his ministry, he meets a few fishermen, a tax collector, and their friends. Saying simply, "*Follow me*," they leave behind their old lives to follow the Savior. And on a mountain in Galilee, he appoints them as his apostles (ἀπόστολος | apostolos) — delegates on his behalf.
- The Crowd (Mark 2:4; 3:7-10; 4:1; 5:27-31) — And the crowd plays a big part in Jesus' early ministry. Mark mentions them 15 times in this reading, often how they're feverishly chasing him down and pressing around him as he travels.

The Running Game

Jesus covers plenty of ground.

- Capernaum (Mark 1:21; 2:1) — Coming from the wilderness where John baptized, Jesus heads to the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath, teaching as someone with authority.
- Galilee (Mark 1:14, 16, 39) — We see Jesus traveling throughout Galilee in these chapters, often by the sea.
- Gergesa (Mark 5:1) — The last chapter records Jesus' journey across the sea to the land of the Gergasenes. After calming the storms, he casts out a powerful demon named Legion before being asked to leave by the frightened people.

Offensive Playbook

The Savior has plenty of plays in his arsenal.

- Miracles (Mark 1:23-28, 29-34, 40-42; 2:1-12; 3:1-5; 4:35-41; 5:1-13, 21-24, 35-43) — Mark documents at least nine named miracles here, and plenty of other generic accounts of Jesus' power. In just five chapters, we see Jesus performing more signs than all of John — who only shared seven. Casting out demons, healing a variety of diseases, and even calming the storm, Jesus unquestionably shows us his power.
- Parables (Mark 4:1-8, 21-25, 26-29, 30-32) — We also see some of his most famous parables in these verses. The sower, the lamp under a basket, and a mustard seed help us understand how faith should take root in our hearts. While he had plenty of people scratching their heads, he always explained their meaning to his disciples (Mark 4:33-34).
- Huddle-Up! (Mark 1:34, 44; 5:43) — It's hard to imagine with the public nature of Jesus' work, but there were a few times where he instructed people to keep quiet about his miracles. Like a team huddled up, some events needed to be kept under wraps.

Connected Receptions

Jesus reaches out and connects with those receptive to him.

- The Sick & Possessed (Mark 1:21-28, 29-34, 40-42; 2:1-12; 3:1-6; 5:1-43) — Physical touch is something we see Jesus doing a lot of in these verses. He touches the leper to heal him, a woman touches him in the crowd to be healed, and he takes a little girl by the hand to bring her back to life.
- Tax Collectors & Sinners (Mark 2:15-17) — Contrary to the arrogance of the religious leaders, Jesus connects with the lowly. He eats with tax collectors and sinners, as a doctor connects with those who are sick.
- A Hail from Mary? (Mark 3:31-35) — Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark doesn't talk much about Jesus' early life or his mother. We do see her pop up here though, asking to see her Son in the midst of a large crowd. But Jesus uses that moment to tell his disciples, "*For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother*" (Mark 3:35).

Defensive Coverage

With any contest, we have to know our opponent.

- The Devil (Mark 1:13) — While just a brief mention, we see Jesus' temptation by the Devil immediately after his baptism. And Jesus doesn't succumb to his temptation, as the other gospel accounts explain.
- The Scribes & Pharisees (Mark 2:6-7, 23-24; 3:6, 22) — The religious leaders of Jesus' day were constantly battling with him over his words and actions. They called him a blasphemer,

a Sabbath-breaker, and a worker of Beelzebul. Early on, they sought to accuse and destroy him, but he always answered their complaints from the Scripture.

- The Frightened Gerasenes (Mark 5:16-17) — And when Jesus healed a demon-possessed man, sending the demons into a bunch of pigs, the herdsmen and people of the Gerasenes pushed him out of town. Apparently, his power was too much for them to handle!

Conclusion

Can you believe all of this action in only the first *quarter* of the gospel of Mark? Guaranteed, you won't find this much excitement from any sporting event on TV. So are you ready to kick off our reading plan with Mark 1-5 this week? Mark's gospel is power-packed, fast-paced, and sure to keep you on the edge of your seat!