

((PREACHING *the* WORD))

MARK

JESUS,
SERVANT *and* SAVIOR



R. KENT HUGHES

MARK

PREACHING THE WORD

Edited by R. Kent Hughes

- Genesis* | R. Kent Hughes
Exodus | Philip Graham Ryken
Leviticus | Kenneth A. Mathews
Numbers | Iain M. Duguid
Deuteronomy | Ajith Fernando
Joshua | David Jackman
1 Samuel | John Woodhouse
Job | Christopher Ash
Psalms, vol. 1 | James Johnston
Proverbs | Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.
Ecclesiastes | Philip Graham Ryken
Song of Solomon | Douglas Sean O'Donnell
Isaiah | Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.
Jeremiah and Lamentations | Philip Graham Ryken
Daniel | Rodney D. Stortz
Matthew | Douglas Sean O'Donnell
Luke | R. Kent Hughes
John | R. Kent Hughes
Acts | R. Kent Hughes
Romans | R. Kent Hughes
2 Corinthians | R. Kent Hughes
Galatians | Todd Wilson
Ephesians | R. Kent Hughes
Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon | R. Kent Hughes
1–2 Thessalonians | James H. Grant Jr.
1–2 Timothy and Titus | R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell
Hebrews | R. Kent Hughes
James | R. Kent Hughes
1–2 Peter and Jude | David R. Helm
1–3 John | David L. Allen
Revelation | James M. Hamilton Jr.
The Sermon on the Mount | R. Kent Hughes

(((PREACHING *the* WORD)))

MARK

JESUS, SERVANT *and* SAVIOR



R. KENT HUGHES

CROSSWAY

WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Mark

Copyright © 2015 by R. Kent Hughes
Published by Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Originally published as two volumes copyright © 1989 by R. Kent Hughes

Cover design: Jon McGrath, Simplicated Studio
Cover image: Adam Greene, illustrator

First printing 2015

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway. 2011 Text Edition. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are from *The New American Standard Bible*®. Copyright © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977. Used by permission.

Scripture references marked TLB are from *The Living Bible* © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4335-3838-4
PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-3839-1
Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-3840-7
ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-3841-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hughes, R. Kent.

Mark : Jesus, servant and savior / R.Kent Hughes.
pages cm.— (Preaching the word)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4335-3838-4 (hc)

1. Bible. Mark—Commentaries. 2. Bible. Mark—

Meditations. I. Title.

BS2585.53.H84

2015

226.3'07—dc23

2013043784

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For my mother

*For even the Son of Man came not to
be served but to serve, and to give
his life as a ransom for many.*

MARK 10:45

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	9
<i>A Word to Those Who Preach the Word</i>	11
1 The Purpose of Life (10:45)	13
2 The Effective Witness: John the Baptist (1:1–11)	19
3 The Temptation of Christ (1:12, 13 and Matthew 4:1–11)	27
4 The Beginning of Christ’s Ministry (1:14–20)	33
5 The Authority of Christ (1:21–28)	39
6 The Heart of the Healer (1:29–39)	45
7 The Master’s Touch (1:40–45)	53
8 The Capernaum Caper (2:1–12)	61
9 Jesus, Friend of Sinners (2:13–17)	67
10 The New Wine of Christ (2:18—3:6)	73
11 Jesus, Pressured Jesus (3:7–19)	79
12 A Third Opinion (3:20–30)	87
13 Christ’s Kinsmen (3:31–35)	95
14 Authentic Hearing (4:1–20)	101
15 Jesus Calming the Storm (4:35–41)	109
16 Jesus: Lord of the Spirits (5:1–20)	115
17 Jesus’ Power over Illness and Death (5:21–43)	123
18 Ministering Midst Unbelief (6:1–13)	129
19 Death of a Conscience (6:14–29)	137
20 The Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:30–44)	143
21 The Storms of Life (6:45–52)	151
22 Truly Clean (7:1–23)	159
23 A Pleasing Faith (7:24–30 and Matthew 15:21–28)	167
24 Modeling Ministry (7:31–37)	173
25 Nurturing Spiritual Understanding (8:1–21)	181
26 Christ and Human Expectations (8:22–26)	189

27	What Confessing Christ Means (8:27–38)	195
28	The Midnight Son (9:2–13)	201
29	Unbelieving Faith (9:14–32)	209
30	Attitudes for Ministry (9:33–41)	217
31	The Demanding Requirements of Discipleship (9:42–50)	225
32	What Jesus Says about Divorce (10:1–12)	231
33	Like a Little Child (10:13–16)	243
34	The Rich Young Man (10:17–31)	249
35	Blind Sight (10:46–52)	255
36	Welcoming the King (11:1–11)	263
37	The Wrath of Jesus (11:12–26)	271
38	A Warning to the Unreceptive (11:27—12:12)	279
39	Christians’ Allegiances (12:13–17)	287
40	Resurrection? Yes! (12:18–27)	293
41	Not Far from the Kingdom (12:28–34)	299
42	Whose Son Is the Christ? (12:35–40)	307
43	Money Speaks (12:41–44)	315
44	Jesus’ Farewell Prophecy (13:1–37)	321
45	Love’s Extravagance (14:1–11)	331
46	The Master’s Mastery (14:12–21)	339
47	The Institution of the Lord’s Supper (14:22–26)	345
48	Steeling the Church (14:27–40)	351
49	The Betrayal of Jesus (14:41–52)	359
50	The Two Rocks (14:53–72)	365
51	Pilate before Christ (15:1–20)	373
52	Revelations of the Cross, Part 1 (15:21–32)	381
53	Revelations of the Cross, Part 2 (15:33–41)	391
54	Sunday’s Children (15:42—16:8)	399
	<i>Notes</i>	407
	<i>Scripture Index</i>	435
	<i>General Index</i>	445
	<i>Index of Sermon Illustrations</i>	455

Acknowledgments

I must express appreciation to my secretary, Mrs. Sharon Fritz, for her patience and care in typing the manuscripts of these studies; also to Mr. Herb Carlburg for his cheerful, weekly proofreading, and Rev. Jeff Buikema, pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, LaCrosse, Wisconsin, for his reading of the manuscript and helpful suggestions. Lastly, special thanks to Dr. Lane Dennis, president of Crossway Books, for his vision for this undertaking and consistent encouragement.

A Word to Those Who Preach the Word

There are times when I am preaching that I have especially sensed the pleasure of God. I usually become aware of it through the unnatural silence. The ever-present coughing ceases and the pews stop creaking, bringing an almost physical quiet to the sanctuary—through which my words sail like arrows. I experience a heightened eloquence, so that the cadence and volume of my voice intensify the truth I am preaching.

There is nothing quite like it—the Holy Spirit filling one’s sails, the sense of his pleasure, and the awareness that something is happening among one’s hearers. This experience is, of course, not unique, for thousands of preachers have similar experiences, even greater ones.

What has happened when this takes place? How do we account for this sense of his smile? The answer for me has come from the ancient rhetorical categories of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.

The first reason for his smile is the *logos*—in terms of preaching, God’s Word. This means that as we stand before God’s people to proclaim his Word, we have done our homework. We have exegeted the passage, mined the significance of its words in their context, and applied sound hermeneutical principles in interpreting the text so that we understand what its words meant to its hearers. And it means that we have labored long until we can express in a sentence what the theme of the text is—so that our outline springs from the text. Then our preparation will be such that as we preach, we will not be preaching our own thoughts about God’s Word, but God’s actual Word, his *logos*. This is fundamental to pleasing him in preaching.

The second element in knowing God’s smile in preaching is *ethos*—what you are as a person. There is a danger endemic to preaching, which is having your hands and heart cauterized by holy things. Phillips Brooks illustrated it by the analogy of a train conductor who comes to believe that he has been to the places he announces because of his long and loud heralding of them. And that is why Brooks insisted that preaching must be “the bringing of truth through personality.” Though we can never *perfectly* embody the truth we preach, we must be subject to it, long for it, and make it as much a part of our ethos as possible. As the Puritan William Ames said: “Next to the Scriptures, nothing makes a sermon more to pierce, than when it comes

12 A Word to Those Who Preach the Word

out of the inward affection of the heart without any affectation.” When a preacher’s *ethos* backs up his *logos*, there will be the pleasure of God.

Last, there is *pathos*—personal passion and conviction. David Hume, the Scottish philosopher and skeptic, was once challenged as he was seen going to hear George Whitefield preach: “I thought you do not believe in the gospel.” Hume replied, “I don’t, but *he does*.” Just so! When a preacher believes what he preaches, there will be passion. And this belief and requisite passion will know the smile of God.

The pleasure of God is a matter of *logos* (the Word), *ethos* (what you are), and *pathos* (your passion). As you *preach the Word* may you experience his smile—the Holy Spirit in your sails!

R. Kent Hughes
Wheaton, Illinois

1

The Purpose of Life

MARK 10:45



SOME YEARS AGO one of the world's renowned scholars of the classics, Dr. E. V. Rieu, completed a great translation of Homer into modern English for the Penguin Classics series. He was sixty years old, and he had been an agnostic all his life. The publisher soon approached him again and asked him to translate the Gospels. When Rieu's son heard this he said, "It will be interesting to see what Father will make of the four Gospels. It will be even more interesting to see what the four Gospels make of Father."¹ He did not have to wonder very long. Within a year's time E. V. Rieu, the lifelong agnostic, responded to the Gospels he was translating and became a committed Christian. His story is a marvelous testimony to the transforming power of God's Word. Experiences like this have been repeated time and time again.

Whenever I begin a fresh study of one of the Bible's books, I keep this story in mind, and especially the inviting questions: What will it make of me? What will it make of the people I influence? My own personal experience has been (and I think for many it has been the same) that when I have finished studies of sections in the Scriptures (for example, the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, or the book of Colossians), I was not the same person as when I began. Positive changes have taken place in my theology and my prayer life. The Sermon on the Mount has enhanced my understanding as no other Scripture as to what the Christian life is all about. The Lord's Prayer with its three upward petitions, three downward requests, and immense emphasis on God's Fatherhood has greatly enriched my prayer life. The towering Christology of Colossians has made me see, as never before, God in all his fullness. What is this in-depth study of the Gospel of Mark going to make of you and me?

14 MARK

Mark is the *oldest* of the Gospels. Matthew and Luke made such great use of it in writing their own Gospel accounts that between them they reproduced all but a few verses of Mark's! So in this Gospel we have for the very first time in history a systematic account of the life and words of Jesus. Mark was the beginning of a distinct and original literary form that we refer to as "Gospel."

Also intriguing is the background of this Gospel. Virtually everyone agrees that the author was John Mark, a young man who had a shaky beginning in the ministry when he abandoned Paul on the apostle's first missionary trip and decided to return home (Acts 13:13). Paul was so unhappy with Mark that he refused to take him on the second journey, thus beginning a bitter quarrel between Paul and Barnabas that ended with Paul and Silas going one way and Barnabas and Mark another (Acts 15:36–41). Although intimate details are lacking, Paul and John Mark later reconciled when Paul was in prison in Rome. Mark served as his aide and then as a delegate on an important mission to Asia Minor (see Philemon 24 and Colossians 4:10). Later Paul would ask Timothy to bring John Mark back with him to Rome because he was useful in service (2 Timothy 4:11). When the Apostle Peter was writing 1 Peter in Rome, he affectionately called Mark his son (1 Peter 5:13). It was Mark's close relationship with Peter that motivated and enabled him to write an intimate portrait of Christ.

The very earliest statement about the Gospel of Mark was written by Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, about AD 140:

Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, he followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.²

What a recovery Mark made! He rose from failed follower of Christ, to devoted disciple, to premier biographer and honored martyr.

They on the heights are not the souls
Who never erred or went astray,
Or reached those high rewarding goals
Along a smooth, flower-bordered way.
Nay, they who stand where first comes dawn
Are those who stumbled but went on.³

After a promising start, some of us too have stumbled, and now our confidence is gone. For us, John Mark's triumph is an immense encouragement.

The context in which John Mark wrote was, to say the least, dramatic: Rome right after the death of Peter and the Neronian persecution, sometime between AD 60 and 70. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, Nero made the Christians scapegoats for his burning of Rome and butchered them wholesale, so that the Church was driven into the Catacombs.⁴ It was during this time of misery that Mark wrote the Gospel.

The purpose of John Mark's writing was to encourage the Gentile church in Rome. He wanted them to see Christ as the Suffering Servant-Savior, and so arranged his material to show Christ as One who speaks and acts and delivers in the midst of crisis.⁵ Mark has no long genealogy, no birth narrative, and only two of Jesus' long discussions.

Christ is all action in Mark! Mark used the historical present tense 150 times. Jesus *comes*, Jesus *says*, and Jesus *heals*—all in the present tense. There are more miracles recorded in Mark than in the other Gospels, despite its being far shorter. Everything is in vivid “Eyewitness Newsbriefs,” brilliantly vivid and fast-moving. Mark uses the Greek word for “immediately” some forty-two times (there are only seven occurrences in Matthew and one in Luke). The conjunction “and” is unusually frequent (beginning twelve of Mark's sixteen chapters) and adds to the rush of action. Christ's life is portrayed as super-busy (he even had trouble finding time to eat—see 3:20 and 6:31).

It takes a slow reader about two hours to read Mark through at a single sitting; and if you take the time, you feel surrounded by crowds, wearied by demands, and besieged by the attacks of demons. You are also repeatedly brought face-to-face with the human emotions of Jesus and the astonishment of the multitudes. Mark is the “Go Gospel”—the Gospel of the Servant-Savior.

The acknowledged key verse, the one that summarizes the Gospel of Mark, is 10:45—“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” This verse is part of the answer to the question, what will the gospel make of us? It will make us servants like the Master, effective servants who do not run on theory but on *action*. He was (and is) Christ for the crises! Power attended his every action. This same Christ brings power to life now, and a serious study of Mark will bring that power further to our lives.

The Disciples' Failure to Learn Jesus' Servant Approach (vv. 36–41)

The irony is this: though Jesus had been with the disciples for three years as the ideal Servant, though the end was near and he had just given them a

16 MARK

detailed forecast of his death (10:32–34), though he had taught them that his way was to be the model for their lives, the disciples (represented by James and John) now made a request that revealed that their way of thinking was virtually the opposite of Christ the Servant.

The request was outrageous: “And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, ‘Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.’ And he said to them, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ And they said to him, ‘Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory’” (10:35–37). They dimly saw that the end was near and that it involved the possibility of thrones for the disciples. As part of the inner circle (Peter, James, and John), these two hoped to get the best thrones. Perhaps they wanted to ace Peter out, because he no doubt would try for the top. So they approached Jesus privately. Matthew tells us they even had their mother do the talking (Matthew 20:20, 21).

This all sounds pretty contemporary to me. “The Lord takes care of those who take care of themselves,” some say.

“Name it and claim it,” that’s what faith’s about!
You can have what you want if you just have no doubt.
So make out your “wish list” and keep on believin’
And you find yourself perpetually receivin’.⁶

Despite their association with Jesus and despite their piety, these disciples saw greatness according to the world’s definition. A bit later (v. 42), Jesus described the world’s viewpoint: “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.” James and John had fallen to the world’s idea that seeking the place of authority and personal power was right for them.

It is so easy to succumb to such thinking, as Robert Raines mused:

I am like James and John.
Lord, I size up other people
in terms of what they can do for me;
how they can further my program,
feed my ego,
satisfy my needs,
give me strategic advantage.
I exploit people,
ostensibly for your sake,
but really for my own.
Lord, I turn to you
to get the inside track

and obtain special favors,
 your direction for my schemes,
 your power for my projects,
 your sanction for my ambitions,
 your blank check for whatever I want.
 I am like James and John.⁷

The Lord, of course, was not going to leave James and John, or the rest of the disciples for that matter, in their delusion. So he began to dialogue with them, probing the shallowness and naivete of their thinking. Shortly the remaining ten got wind of what James and John had tried, and a major blowup ensued.

The Lord's Rebuke of His Disciples (vv. 42–45)

The Lord called all Twelve together and in a few brilliant moments set the record straight for all time and eternity: “But whoever would be great among you must be your servant” (v. 43). Then (v. 44) he told them that preeminence among God’s people would go not to rulers but to slaves: “and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.”

Why is this so? Here he gave the ultimate rationale and the key verse of the Gospel: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (v. 45).

Here we will do well to pay close attention to Christ’s words. He called himself “the Son of Man.” This was a self-proclaimed title that did not exist before he came. It means that he is human, but even more. By saying he was “*the* Son of Man,” he meant that he was (and is) the unique representation of the human race. He is not merely a human being. He is *the* human being—the true man.

Now consider the second phrase: “came not to be served but to serve.” Here “serve” and “served” refer to the most common service, as seen in the parallel section in Luke 22:27—“For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.” Which is greater, the host and his guests, or the waiter? Jesus said, “I am among you as the waiter.” These startling words were meant to shake up the disciples. The meaning is this: the Son of Man, the man who lived the truest human life, waited upon others instead of seeking others to wait on him.⁸ The ultimate extension of this was “to give his life as a ransom for many,” which he shortly did. The logic is: if the One who created both the supernova and the firefly and holds them together by

the word of his power (Colossians 1:15–17) became our servant, our waiter, how can we do less?

In 1878 when William Booth's Salvation Army had just been so named, men from all over the world began to enlist. One man, who had once dreamed of himself as a bishop, crossed the Atlantic from America to England to enlist. He was a Methodist minister, Samuel Logan Brengle. And now he turned from a fine pastorate to join Booth's Salvation Army. Brengle later became the Army's first American-born commissioner. But at first Booth accepted his services reluctantly and grudgingly. Booth said to Brengle, "You've been your own boss too long." And in order to instill humility into Brengle, he set him to work cleaning the boots of the other trainees. And Brengle said to himself: "Have I followed my own fancy across the Atlantic in order to black boots?" And then as in a vision he saw Jesus bending over the feet of rough, unlettered fishermen. "Lord," he whispered, "you washed their feet; I will black their boots."⁹

The "Son of Man," the Man for all of us, came not to be waited on, but to wait on us, and to give his life as a ransom. Therefore, how can we seek our own?

Jesus has thrown open for all of us a competition that has no charms for most. But the rewards are beyond imagination. We ought to go for it! The Gospel of Mark can bring profound servanthood and active power to our lives. It is the Gospel of miracles, the Gospel of power, the Gospel of service. May it rub off on us!

May the gospel of our Lord make something out of us. All of us have tremendous opportunities. If you are ruling in the community, your opportunities for service are infinite. If you are a student laboring through your books, or teaching a Bible class, or pastoring, or whatever you are doing, your opportunities to serve are more than you can possibly imagine.

The Ideal Man, the Man for all men, did not come to be waited on, but to wait tables and to live a life of sacrifice. May this sink into our minds so we can be used of God.