

Theme: The story celebrates the coming of Christ to fully restore us to God, bringing us home from exile and placing us under God's blessing again.

I. Intro - Returning Home

- A. The idea of returning home is a major literary motif
- B. When I was a kid - The Walton's Homecoming story
- C. Tolkien - The Hobbit or There And Back Again
- D. Lord of the Rings begins and ends in the Shire
- E. We have a built in desire to return home

II. The Story: A Voice In the Wilderness

- A. Mark begins with John the Baptist in the wilderness
The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God...⁴ And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Mark 1:1, 4
 - 1. No angels to Mary or Joseph; no infancy narrative
 - 2. He begins with the ministry of John in wilderness
 - 3. Why does he do this? Key motif building upon?
- B. The messenger who prepares the way
It is [written in Isaiah the prophet](#): "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"—³ ["a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"](#) Mark 1:2–3
 - 1. Mark introduces Gospel with OT quote - important
 - a. At beginning of Gospel - key place
 - b. Mark rarely directly quotes OT - pay attention!

- 2. Mark gives key quote from Isaiah
 - a. He says the quote is from Isaiah - and [most](#) of it is
 - b. Isaiah text is important - in all 4 Gospels about John
- 3. But Mark is actually linking three OT texts
 - a. Quoting Exodus 23:20; Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3
 - b. V2 - Exodus 23:20/Malachi 3:1; v3 - Isaiah 40:3
 - c. These texts linked by "prepare the way"
 - d. All 3 texts also deal with an exodus/exiles returning

III. The Story: Prepare the Way for An End of Exile

- A. The importance of exile in the OT
 - 1. As we saw in week 2, exile is a major theme in OT
 - a. Adam and Eve exiled from the Garden
 - b. Cain exiled from God's Presence of favor
 - c. Babel - people exiled across the earth for sin
 - d. The history of Israel - exile & return
 - 2. Mark uses three texts that powerfully develop this theme
 - a. Exodus 23:20 - exodus from Egypt to promised land
 - b. Isaiah 40:3 - exiles to Babylon returning to Land
 - c. Malachi 3:1 - in land, but still exiled, unfulfilled
- B. The original exodus - exiles returning to Promised Land
See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Exodus 23:20

1. Mark 1:2 almost verbatim of LXX of Exodus 23:20a
2. 'Angel' same as 'messenger' in Hebrew & Greek
3. Exodus from Egypt - God was preparing the way for the exiles to return to their Promised Land
4. No other OT event is more foundational for Israel

C. The second exodus - exiles returning from Babylon
 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. ³ A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." Isaiah 40:1-3

1. Israel had been exiled for her sin
2. God speaks tenderly to His exiled people
3. The exiles will return - a new exodus!
4. They will return through the wilderness/desert
5. The way is prepared for the Lord, Who will lead His people home from exile
6. This is a MAJOR theme for Isaiah - new exodus as exiles return

Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians!
 Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, "The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob." ²¹ **They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and water gushed out.** Isaiah 48:20-21

- a. Leave Babylon - like you left Egypt

- b. Going through the deserts - like when you left Egypt
 - c. Water from the rock - like when you left Egypt
 - d. The return of exiles from Babylon is a 2nd exodus!
7. But this Exodus will surpass the first!

- a. This return will bring increase and blessing
 I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. Jeremiah 23:3
 1. The Lord will bring them home from exile
 2. They will be fruitful and increase - original blessing of Genesis 1
- b. Gentiles will join with Israel in this return from exile!
 The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land. Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob. Isaiah 14:1
 1. New exodus will include Gentiles who will join Israel!
 2. This is indeed fruitful, increasing blessing
- c. Partially fulfilled as a type and shadow in 536 BC

IV. The Story: Jesus Ends Our Exile From God

- A. John is the messenger preparing the way for God
 It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"—
³ "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" ⁴ And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Mark 1:2-4

1. John is the fulfillment of these OT texts & motifs
2. He calls people who are not physically exiled to recognize they are still spiritual exiles
3. But the Lord whom you have sought is coming to His Temple to cleanse us of our sin

B. A real end to exile requires a new heart

Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. ⁵ He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. ⁶ **The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.**

Deuteronomy 30:4–6

1. Moses is predicting an end to exile, new blessing
2. But to do this we must have our hearts circumcised
3. To return to the land with same wicked heart is not an end to exile; it is merely exile in a new location

C. Jesus' new covenant: a new heart for true end to exile

1. Jesus is the mediator of a new, better covenant
But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. Hebrews 8:6

- a. Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant
 - b. This covenant is superior, with better promises
2. The old covenant did not change the heart

For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. ⁸ But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ⁹ It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. Hebrews 8:7–9

- a. Mosaic covenant ended physical exile in Egypt
- b. Heart was unchanged & spiritual exile remained
- c. New covenant needed to change our hearts

3. New covenant changes heart, ends spiritual exile

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ¹¹ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹² For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Hebrews 8:10–12

- a. In new covenant, law is in our minds & hearts
- b. All in new covenant are now the people of God
- c. We have been given new, circumcised hearts
- d. Ours sins & wickedness wiped away, forgotten

4. New covenant changes heart, ends spiritual exile

5. We are full recipients of God's Presence & blessing

V. The Story and Our Story

A. The story calls for us to see that Jesus ends our exile

1. Jesus is restoring all of God's original intent
2. As the Lamb He brought redemption & forgiveness
3. Jesus also ends our spiritual exile from God
4. We are restored to God's Presence of blessing
5. This is not for a select few - all of God's people
6. If you have never turned to Jesus - do so today!
7. Come home from your spiritual exile to the God for Whom you were created!
8. Believers - Do not believe voices that say you are still an exile

B. The Story calls us for us to live in light of our new status

1. We have been brought home from exile and restored to God
2. However, to be restored to God makes us an exile from this world - so we need each other!
3. We need to live as exiles in the world, but at home with God and His people
4. This means we do not need to hide from God or one another
5. We need to come out of the bushes and remove the fig leaves we use to hide from God & one another
6. As our culture strays further 'east of Eden' we need one another ever more

7. This is why gathering with God's people in worship, building community are so critical

8. Live as those restored to God and His blessing!

C. Closing prayer for exiles restored to God

Restoration and Return

Mark 1:1-5

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Prayer

Deuteronomy 1:11

Teaching keywords: Advent and Christmas, salvation and deliverance, blessing, community

May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised! Deuteronomy 1:11

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"— ³ "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" ⁴ And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. Mark 1:1–5