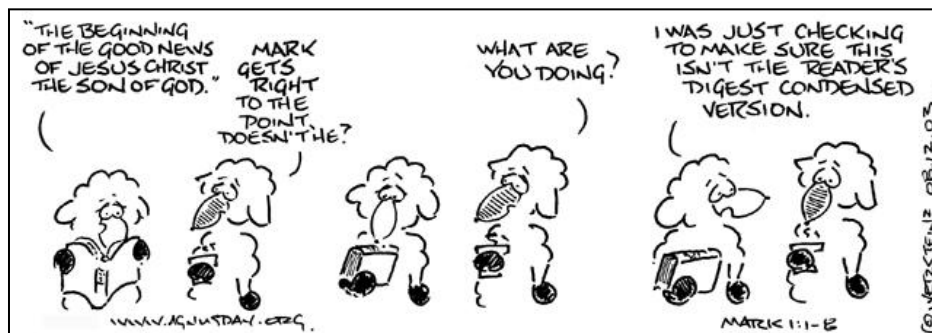


STEP ONE PRAY for the Holy Spirit to reveal God's Law and Gospel themes to you.

STEP TWO READ the Bible passage repeatedly until you can retell it in your own words.

Mark 1:1-8 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; ³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" ⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."



STEP THREE REVIEW a Bible Commentary to understand the passage's common meaning.

John the Baptist pointed to the true help coming in Jesus. "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit," John said. When God helps, he doesn't just explain the problem and tell us where to get further help if we need it. Nor does he command and then expect us to live up to the commandments under our own ability. He gives commands to show us how much we need, and then he himself helps us completely, withholding nothing, giving us all that we need and more. That is what happens in Baptism. Christ doesn't simply mark us out for a gift and wait to see how we'll respond. Nor does he withhold the gift for some future date. He gives everything in Baptism, declaring us his own and sending his Spirit into us to "call, gather, enlighten, sanctify and keep us" as his own, as the Small Catechism's explanation of the Third Article says. That is the comfort of the gospel. People go part way in dealing with others. They take the initiative, then wait for a response. But Christ goes all the way, not only taking the initiative but creating the response in us by giving us faith as a gift of the Holy Spirit. He both promises to be our Lord and gives us the faith to believe it, coming to us again and again in his Spirit, keeping us in the faith to which he restores us. The good news in the Gospel for this Sunday is heard when we recognize who acts. Ordinarily we assume that we have the action, at least some of it - that God goes part way and that we meet him and complete the task, working faith in ourselves, but "all flesh is grass," as Isaiah says. "The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever" (vv.6-8). God is the one who takes the action, and he takes it all. As he sent his word of comfort to Israel, he speaks his word to us. And as he speaks to us, he also goes to work in the sacraments to give us every gift.


STEP FOUR IDENTIFY GOD'S LAW

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How does God's Law in this passage point out what I am unable to do without Christ?* It may be helpful to underline those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Law. If God's Law is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Law: *Our sinful nature separates us from God.*

God's Law message for me is:

STEP FIVE IDENTIFY GOD'S GOSPEL

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How is God's Gospel (Christ crucified and risen) in this passage freely offering me a new life with God?* It may be helpful to circle  those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Gospel. If God's Gospel is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Gospel: *"He (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

God's Gospel message for me is:

STEP SIX PRAY

Pray that the Holy Spirit might:

- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's death to change what I am doing or not doing.
- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's resurrection for me to live a new life with God.

Meditation Words: "Son of God" "Holy Spirit" "Baptize" (cleanse)