

# The Gospel of the Father's Absurd Love

## Introduction

**John Mark**, the son of *Mary of Jerusalem* [Acts 12:12; Rom. 16:6 - Dr. M. Unger], the “Jonah” of the New Testament. The man who grew up without a known father. Thus, when he is mentioned in Acts, he was referred as the “son of Mary”—Mary of Jerusalem, owner of the house with the Upper Room, where Jesus celebrated His last supper with the Twelve/Disciples and the place of Pentecost [Mark 14:15; Acts 1:13-15; 2:1-41; 12:12-17]. As a young man, *Mark failed greatly*—he abandoned Barnabas and Paul during the first missionary journey in Asia Minor/Turkey [Acts 13:5, 13] but by the grace or *hesed* of God, **John Mark** was given the privilege to pen the first Gospel narrative that proclaimed **the greatest Gospel** of life, hope, love and forgiveness—**Jesus Christ Himself**.

## Original Readers of the Markan Story

Most of the Roman and Jewish believers in Rome were slaves or former slaves [Rom. 16:1-16]. Out of 17 men mentioned by Paul, 11 carried names of slaves or former slaves [freedmen]. Ex.: **Aquila**, not a name but a nickname, “Eagle”; **Tertius** [in 16:22] - #3, the *amanuesis* or assistant writer of Paul and **Quartus** - #4 [in 16:23] — slaves bought by Gaius, a convert-friend and host of Paul in the city Corinth [1 Cor. 1:14; Rom. 16:23].

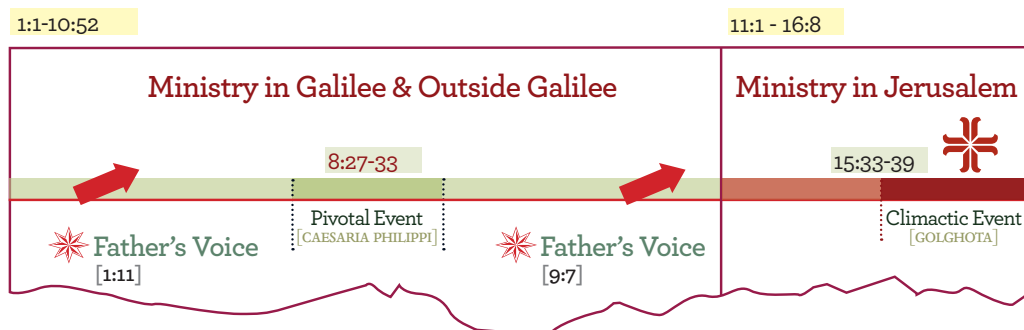
**Main Idea:** Because of God’s *hesed*, though we all “disqualified” ourselves, God the Father [*Abba*] declared that we are still invited to join Him in the circle of His family.

**How?** In a very unique, scandalous and *absurd* way—truly a “God-way!”

## Outline of the Book:

I. Mark 1:1 - 10:52 – Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee and Outside Galilee

II. Mark 11:1 - 16:8 – Jesus’ Ministry in Jerusalem



## Key foundations of Jesus’ Life in Mark’s story—the Love of God the Father [Voices of love and affirmation]

A. **Mark 1:11** “You are My Beloved Son, in You I am fully pleased.”

B. **Mark 9:7** “This is My Beloved Son. Listen to Him.”

In the New Testament, particularly in the Gospel stories and in the Book of Hebrews, whenever God the Father speaks, His focus is *the Lord Jesus*, the Son of God [Mark 1:11, 9:7; Heb. 1:8-12; 5:5-7; 7:17-21].

## Unique Informations in the Gospel according to Mark:

• **Mark 2:14** *The calling of Levi* [joined] **Matthew** [gift of Yahweh/God], the son of *Alphaeus* [chief], from the priestly tribe of Levites, yet he became a tax-collector for the hated Romans—a publican or *publicannus*. Hated and seen as a Roman “leech” to many Jews, Levi Matthew was most likely, expelled by his own synagogue and disowned by his own father and family.

• **Mark 3:16-19** *Selection of the Twelve* — Only Mark records that Jesus named Zebedees’ sons—James and John—*Sons of Boanerges* or *Sons of Rage/Thunder* [compare with Luke 6:12-16]

• **Mark 15: 21** *Simon of Cyrene*, father of **Alexander** and **Rufus** [compare with Matt. 27:32; see also Rom. 16:13]

• **Mark 10: 46-52** *A story of a forsaken son* named **Bartimaeus**, the blind beggar of Old Jericho [compare with Matt. 20:29-34 & Luke 18:35-43]. Bartimaeus is a mixture name: Aramaic (*bar* = son) and Greek [*Timaeus*, worthy of honor or highly respectable one]. Only Mark records the name of this beggar. When Jesus asked Bartimaeus, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He answered, “*Rabboni*, I want to regain my sight” or “I want to see again [*anablepo*].” NASB

What is the common thread of all these unique informations in Mark’s story? **Father and son relationships**

## Then —

• **Mark 14:36** *Usage of an intimate Aramaic word, Abba*, intimately known father [compare with Matt. 26:39 and Luke 22:42]. *Abba*, as a way of addressing God, is *ipsissima vox*—an authentic and original utterance of Jesus. It extends beyond the limits of Judaism and its practices. [Prof. Joachim Jeremias, Göttingen University, Germany]

• **Mark 15: 34** *A Quotation from Psalm 22:1* “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani?*” Of all the sayings of Jesus during His crucifixion, this line is the only one recorded in the Gospel according to Mark.

Why?

## The Markan Twist — Silence

How do we interpret God's silence in Mark 15:34?

The writer treats God's deafening silence as the Father's only response to Jesus' cry on the cross [Mark 15:34]. In a way, God's silence is God's cry for us to come **home** to Himself. Since our path to God can only be provided through the *satisfaction* of His holiness for man's sin [Psalm 22:1-3; *propitiation* in Hebrews 2:17], *Jesus had to die!* And die He did! God the Father, because of His love for us, had to give way, so to speak. Thus, *He remained silent and did not intervene!*

So remarkable that God the Father did that. It's *absurd*.

And so amazing that Jesus never quit [He could have when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, if He desired so]. BUT He did not! Just because of *His love for God the Father* and because of *you and me!* The song *Above All* captures the heart of this theology: "Like a rose trample on the ground, He took the fall and thought of me, above all."

**Above all**—and His eventual "separation" from the Father—Jesus took the fall because of *you* and *me!* Just for you and me to come *home* to **the relentless love of God the Father—our Abba**. This is **the buried gem**, the **pearl of the great price** in the parables of Jesus... and **the most treasured gift** we'll ever receive from Jesus, our Lord and Savior [cf. Matt. 11:27 & John 14:6]. [Brennan Manning, *A Glimpse of Jesus*, p. 45.]

## Closing Thoughts

**The Cappadocian Fathers** [4th century] used to describe the fellowship of the Triune God as the "*perichoresis*"—to "move about" or to "dance around." Thus, they called this the "Great Dance" of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—holding each Other's hand in perfect joy, unity and flow of divine love."

[Leonard Sweet & Frank Viola, *Jesus Manifesto*, p. 96.]

And the great mystery of this all—as revealed in the pages of the New Testament, we who have believed in the finished works of Christ and who belonged to Him are invited to add our moves to the **Dance of the Divine!**

## Clarification of Terms:

**1. God is One. But He is not alone.** The word for God in Hebrew, *Elohim*, is always in plural form, *not* singular [Gen. 1:1]. That's why in Gen. 1:26, God said: "Let US make man in OUR image, in OUR likeness..." God is the fellowship of 3 distinct Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Not 3 Gods, but 3 Persons in One Godhead—the **Triune God**. Thus, the reality of God is *relational* at its core [Isa. 6:8; John 14:23; Mark 1:9-11]. [Note: On "THEIR" function though, there is hierarchy or ranking. That's why Jesus said in John 14:28, "...for the Father is greater than I."

**2. God became Man in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth.** He is the Messiah/Christ, the *Anointed* Son of God, the God-Man, God's Final Word, the God who became flesh or the **only-born God** [*monogenus theos*]. John 1:14-18; Mark 1:1-11; 8:27-29; Heb. 1-2

**3. Son of God is a Messianic title of Jesus.** This does **not** mean that Jesus is the *biological* son of God the Father. "Son of God" is also a title of *exaltation of Jesus* which presupposes the original and essential communion of Jesus with God, and His pre-existent deity and eternal divinity. That the "Son of God" is unique and distinct, but co-equal with God the Father. Only through the "Son of God" we can know God the Father [John 14:6]. Jesus, being *the one and only* "Son of God" is the **human face** of the unseen Father [Psalm 2; John 1:18; 14:1-12].

**4. Hesed** [pronounced: *khed'-sed*], mentioned 250 times in the *Tanakh* [Hebrew Bible]. *Hesed* is often translated in the New Testament as God's love, grace, justice, lovingkindness, patience, faithfulness, favor, righteousness, mercy, truth and others. **Michael Card**, in his recent book, *Inexpressible: Hesed and the Mystery of God's Lovingkindness*, cited that *hesed* is the defining characteristic of God the Father or *Abba*. And he added an initial, ever-incomplete working definition of *Hesed*: "**Hesed is when the person from whom I have no right to expect anything gives me everything.**"

**5. Gospel** [*euangelion*, singular noun in Koine Greek]. Its referring to the one and only goodnews of God, **Jesus Christ Himself**, the Son of God [Mark 1:1; 15]. He is *the Power of God* [**Arm of the LORD**] to salvation [Rom. 1:16; Isa. 53:1]. The Gospel is *not* just a message, its about the **Messenger of God** [Mark 1:14]. Its *not* just the proclamation but its the **Person [and Works]** of **Jesus Christ Himself** [Mark 1:15].

# In Christ – in 2021 and in the ages to come

Amidst the chilly, dark night outside our house's garden, the bright moonlights are dancing on the surface of water like mirages of golden trees moving to the rhyme of Leonard Cohen's song "Hallelujah." Mysterious but beautiful and inviting.

In our journey we called life, our busyness are often loud noises that muffled our daily lives. In some mysterious way, we lost the child-like wonder to pause and ponder life's meaning. We forget to ask questions like: "What is Life?" "What are we?" "To whom do we belong?" "Where are we going?" or "What is our destiny?"

Truth to be told, I did not ask these questions until utter hopelessness gripped my heart at a young age. My earthly father had said that my life was useless. The father of lies roared that same lie.

Yet, in those dark and abysmal moments, on Dec. 13, 1977, another Voice reverberated on my dying and broken heart, whispering an invitation I could not resist: "**Come to Me.** All of you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest...for **I AM gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul**" [Matthew 11:28-30].

That's a bygone history of my life etched 43 years ago on the pages of my life's journey. And yet, the gospel truth of it all is the fact that I could not get over with it. Simply put, **the grace of Jesus the Messiah** which I received that day became the chorus of my life—my battle song—that in **Jesus Christ alone lies my true life.** Only in Him, I have true peace and rest [Ephesians 2:14]. He alone is worthy of my trust, obedience and allegiance.

Thus, regardless of life's situations, He commands my destiny. Biblically, **He is my journey and my destiny.** Thus, I don't have to fear or distrust His love for me. My acceptance before the Triune God is *not* a merit of my own works but on what He has done for me in the **Person of Jesus Christ.** **Jesus** is my redemption, sanctification and my righteousness, my hope and my eternal life [1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 John 5:20]. Year 2021 has come and 365 days from now, it will be gone. But our Lord Jesus will remain forever. He was, is and will be. He is my All in all [Ephesians. 1:23]. *Praise be to His wonderful Name!*

As I was rereading Apostle Paul's letter to the troubled church in Ephesus, I was spurred to notice

that on this brief book, he summed up where my true identity lies and to whom I belong.

In common Greek texts, **Ephesian 1:3-14** is actually just *one* long sentence, making it *the* longest verse in the New Testament. In English's NASB, this 12-verse line [with 216 words] has one main idea: **in Jesus Christ,** God the Father has lavished Christian believers with every spiritual blessing. If you observe carefully, the phrase "in Christ" or "in Him" and "in *the Beloved,*" is mentioned **11 times**—sounding off our true identity or our real I.D. as believers. From Ephesians 1:1-14, the **Person of Jesus** [and His works] is referred to **17 times**—declaring *Whom* we belong to—both on this life and in the ages yet to come. **Jesus Christ** is our life and we belong to Him. In His matchless grace, **who we are** now is due to **what He has done for us** especially at the Cross and in His resurrection and ascension.

Interestingly, the word "Christian" [meaning, *belonging to Christ*] appeared only three times in all of the New Testament [Acts 11:26, 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16]. Though, that's who we are named after, our real and true I.D. or identity is "**in Christ.**" Outside of Jesus Christ, our life has no meaning and purpose. Yet in Him, we have peace, forgiveness and eternal life. Now and in the world yet to come. *Blessed be His glorious Name!*

We pray that the **Jesus Christ** of Matthew 11:28-30 and Ephesians 1:3-14 will shine His grace and glory in **you** and in **your family** brighter than the dancing moonlight. Now and in the ages to come. *Hallelujah!*

in Christ's love and care,

*Joy & grace as all*

Our real and true I.D. or identity is "in Christ." Outside of Jesus Christ, our life has no meaning and purpose.



with my Cru's brothers and sisters from Central Asian countries in the ruins of ancient city of Ephesus, Western Turkey



# hesed of God

**W**hen there are no words, explanations or emotions to afford, there are only tears...

Preparing my heart for the Easter season, I based my readings and reflections on the inspired Songs of Israel—the *Book of Psalms*—and from one of the most colorful reports on the life and ministry of our **Lord Jesus Christ** from the Gospel according to **Luke** of Antioch of Syria.

From these readings, I encountered once again one of the most intriguing and *almost untranslatable* words from the Old Testament the word *hesed*, חֶסֶד. [pronounced: *kheh'-sed*], mentioned 250 times in the *Tanakh* [Hebrew Bible].<sup>1</sup> *Hesed* is often translated in the New Testament as God's love, grace, justice, lovingkindness, patience, faithfulness, favor, righteousness, mercy, truth and others. **Michael Card**, in his seminal study on this amazing word cited that *hesed* is *the* defining characteristic of the **Triune God**. And he added an initial, ever-incomplete working definition of *hesed*: "*Hesed is when the person from whom I have no right to expect anything gives me everything.*"<sup>2</sup>

From my heart of hearts, I truly love Michael Card's interpretation. On my short journey with the Master, I learned that if I have an iota of goodness in me and I make it as the basis of my acceptance before the holy God, I disqualify myself from receiving His grace and mercy, His *hesed*. Then, it follows that I don't need Jesus' vicarious death on the Cross for my behalf—thus, I become my own false savior and idol. This is *the* deadly "Pharisee" within my sinful heart. It was **Charles Spurgeon**, the Prince of Preachers who preached, "If you have anything of your own, you must leave it *all* before you come [to Jesus]. If there is anything good in you, you *cannot trust* in Christ."<sup>3</sup> The gospel of grace is *not* what I can do for God but what **God has done** for me in **Jesus Christ**. All I bring is my sinfulness. All I bring is my need of Jesus.

Truly, I'm grateful for Michael Card's study on *hesed*. I have a long way for me to *really* understand his initial definition of *hesed*. But I'm grateful for God's Word and the encouragement of God the Holy Spirit in shaping my life to see a little glimpse of *hesed* fleshed out in the **Person of Jesus Christ**, God the Son—the incarnate *hesed* of God.

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**S**ummer of 1980. The place was Magpet, South Cotabato in southern Philippines. **Willy**, my spiritual mentor and director of Campus Crusade for Christ's Summer Mission Project decided to make me the team leader of volunteers who led some trainings for local church leaders on the basics of Christian discipleship and witnessing.

Every night, along with our trainees, we showed the translated JESUS film [Tagalog version<sup>4</sup>] to hundreds of villagers using the 16mm Elmo projector. It was on this outreach in Magpet that I heard God's inner voice calling

✧  
"when the  
person  
from whom  
I have  
no right  
to expect  
anything,  
gives me  
everything"  
✧

1. Michael Card, *Inexpressible: Hesed and the Mystery of God's Lovingkindness*, p. 9.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

3. Charles Spurgeon, quoted in Dane Ortlund's book, *Defiant Grace*, p. 68.

4. The Tagalog [Filipino] version is the first among the 1,600 language translations of the JESUS film, now seen by over 6 billion people in 220 countries.

5. Michael Card, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

me to know Him and to trust Him for my life's vocation in proclaiming the Gospel of God, **Jesus Christ** to others. [**Note:** *Lord willing, I will share the details on our next month's update.*]

If you have already seen this documentary movie of **JESUS of Nazareth—the Man you thought you knew** which was based from the Gospel according to Luke, please give this DVD to others. This is a small token of our thanks to you for your *ministry* in our lives and your *partnerships* in the Lord's work around the globe. *Thank you so much.*

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**L**et me close this note from Michael Card's book, *Inexpressible: Hesed and the Mystery of God's Lovingkindness*: "The Bible reveals the God of *hesed*, who has opened the door of His life to you and to me...We have no right to expect anything from Him, the Holy One. Yet, He has extended Himself to us, has invited us to enter His world, has made our story a part of His story, has opened His life to the inevitable possibility of being hurt, disappointed, and wounded by you and me...Ultimately, in **Jesus of Nazareth** He extends Himself, personally and intimately, calls us friends, is vulnerable, only to be wounded, abandoned, and crucified...*Though we had no right to expect anything from Him, He freely gave us everything.* At the heart of this relentless and extravagant act of God Himself, central to the indescribable mystery of the opening of the door of His life, is the Hebrew word *hesed*. This small three-letter word, חֶסֶד, seems to always be there when the door is open from one life to another, when the unexpected and undeserved gift of one's life is offered with no strings attached, when inexpressible acts of adoption, forgiveness, and courage occur that leave us speechless."<sup>5</sup>

I'm in awe and in tears!

**Because Jesus is the Hesed of God,**



©1979 Photo: The Jesus Film Project, a ministry of Cru International



## Joel Dasalla's Profile

Joel Dasalla is a graduate from Ateneo de Davao Univ. [Philippines] with a BS in Teaching Math. After graduation in 1983, he joined the full-time staff of Campus Crusade for Christ and was assigned to work with *Here's Life* /Church Ministry and later as a missionary-trainer at the CCC's Great Commission Training Center-Asia in Manila.

In 1993, he completed his MA in Cross-Cultural Ministries from Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, TX. While in Dallas Seminary, he assisted in starting a Filipino-American church in Richardson, TX [this church is still active today in Garland, TX].

After Dallas Seminary, Joel served as traveling photographer and graphic designer for Josh McDowell Ministry [1993-1997] and for *History's Handful* /President's Communication Group and CCC-VP Office in Orlando, FL [1997-2014] Currently, he serves as the Media Coordinator for the CruCity's Momentum Europe Ministry.

Because of his ministry assignment, the Lord has allowed him to travel to 99 countries. Whenever he travels, he desires to equip CCC staff and students on how to study God's Word and tells the unique and radical story of the Lord Jesus Christ based from *The Gospel according to Mark*.

In 1989, he is married to **Ely Grace** [a *kaa'maina* from Pearl City, who graduated from UH-Manoa] who also had her MA in Christian Education from Dallas Seminary last May, 2014. They have two children: **Charissa Lei** [28, a graduate from Florida State University/ Hiroshima Univ.-Japan and a 2020 ThM graduate from Dallas Theological Seminary] and **J. Rillan** [25, a MS graduate from Florida State University and currently serves as a U.S. Navy Officer in Norfolk, VA]. They call Hawi'i as their home state but they reside in Orlando, FL since 1997.