

# Scenario

Mark

C. Scott Ananian

Spring 1997

The play is based on the events in the first chapters of Mark.

A “radical” preacher takes it upon himself to reform the church by acting out Jesus’ deeds, starting from the beginning of Mark. Striding into church one day as the invited guest preacher, he astounds (and horrifies) the church by “preaching with authority” (Mark 1:27) — in many cases throwing out established doctrine taught by the accepted “authorities.”

A man screams out in the quiet church (a plant hired by the Preach, later to become Preach’s right-hand man). Preach commands him to be still and with great dramatic effect, the man is “relieved of his demon” — all clever acting. The church dissolves in chaos.

Subsequent scenes show Preach “calling disciples” (on a Sunday morning tele-evangelism show) and staging more healings (AIDS is the modern day leprosy, the paralytic suffers from a psycho-somatic disorder). Preach starts believing the act himself, relishing the chance to play God.

As Preach and his companions re-enact Mark 1:35-39, “Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place,” Preach draws away from the others to pray. But he is seized by visions and terror, nightmarish dream sequences, following some of the Bible’s described visions. Fire, clouds, a quiet voice warning the Preacher of his blasphemy.

The Preacher is next seen on the set of a tele-evangelism show, again. The host of the show complains about some of the liberties the Preacher is taking with Scripture, and the Preacher takes the opportunity to upstage the show with another “healing,” this time of a man with a shriveled hand. But the theatricality is a little too obvious, and some of Preach’s followers begin to doubt their mission. The TV audience, however, is enthralled.

Preach and his right-hand-man Mike (the guy with the “demon” in the

original stunt) have a confrontation. Mike thinks the Preacher has gone too far, thinks that the stories from Mark have another interpretation from the spin the Preacher is giving them, and thinks perhaps the conventional wisdom is better. The Preacher vehemently disagrees, and when Mike threatens to expose the healing scams, the Preacher threatens violence. Mike responds passively, putting faith in his newly found God, further angering the Preacher, who expects all trust to be in him alone. The Preacher builds to a frenzy and is seized by another vision fit. Things take on a surreal aspect, we enter a more mystic plane where the unseen is tangible. Preach is caught in the cycle of his delusion, is pushed towards the crucifixion. Mike is desperate, tries to stop the mad Preacher, bring him back to sanity.

Mike is unsuccessful. The Preacher's delusion destroys him. But his madness lives on, spawning a TV show and a new religion.

PREACH: *[From the pulpit of Reverend Lovejoy.]* Do you not know me? Is there someone in the congregation who has not heard my name? Perhaps there is. Perhaps someone out there just stumbled into church from the shower, and is wondering, “Who is this guy? Where’s Pastor Lovejoy?” Members of the congregation, please allow me to enlighten this clueless individual. Forgive me for repeating what you all know so well.

I am the Preacher, guest preacher for the day in the pulpit of Reverend Lovejoy. I am Markic authority, the word of God in revelation to you today. I speak the truth for modern people to hear. I am the Gospel, the True Word.

MIKE: *[From the congregation.]* What do you want with us?

PREACH: A voice! A voice from the crowd!

MIKE: Have you come to destroy us?

CONGREGATION: A demon!

CONGREGATION: What is this?

MIKE: I know who you are—the Holy One of God!

PREACH: *[Sternly.]* Be quiet! *[Mike convulses in silence, as if fighting to speak.]*  
Come out of him.

*[Mike is throw about violently, his pew empties in chaos. He beats himself against the pew, throwing himself around, and finally shrieks and is still. He slumps against the pew, in a small area cleared of worshippers.]*

*[The congregation reacts.]*

CONGREGATION: Who is this guy?

CONGREGATION: How dare you disrupt our service!

CONGREGATION: Look at him. He’s one of the skinhead nazi guys.

CONGREGATION: He’s from the mental asylum around the corner. I recognize him.

CONGREGATION: An ex-con, definitely.

PREACH: All authority is given to me. Demons must obey. This man was seized in your presence — beware! The Devil is strong amongst you. Be on your guard, and pray.

*[Stretching his arms out in blessing over the congregation.]* Go in Peace. Amen.

*[He leaves the pulpit.]*

CONGREGATION: Who is this guy?

CONGREGATION: He talks like he knows what he's doing?

CONGREGATION: Lovejoy never preaches like that.

CONGREGATION: Even the demons and wackos know who he is.

CONGREGATION: I never heard of him before.

*[The congregation dissolves in confusion. The organist begins to play a hymn in the background.]*