

Message Series: The Word

Message Title: The Word Proclaimed

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Scripture Text: Mark 1:14-15

How are you as a communicator? Are you direct—or subtle? Are you interesting—or dull? Are you gracious—or harsh?

One husband really lacked tact—he just couldn't say anything graciously. So while his wife was gone on a trip, leaving him at home alone with the dog she adored and his mother-in-law, she called and asked her husband, "How are things, Honey?" The first thing out of his mouth was, "The dog's dead!" She was devastated.

After collecting her emotions, she asked her man again, "Honey, why can't you be more tactful?" He humbly replied, "I'm sorry dear—how could I have said that differently?"

"Well," she said, "You could say when I called, 'The dog is on the roof.' Then the next time I called you could say, 'The dog fell off the roof and had to go to the vet.' Then when I called again you could say, 'The dog is not doing well.' Then finally, when I called again you could say, 'Honey, brace yourself—our wonderful dog has died.'" He responded with, "Oh, okay, Honey—I will try!"

So the wife then asked her husband, "By the way, how's my mother?" And the husband said, "She's on the roof."

Communication is a difficult task, but God excels at it! God communicates to us primarily through His Word, and He has communicated to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. In fact, that's what this whole series has been about, the fact that the Word was promised and we saw how those promises were fulfilled through the chronology of Jesus, the eternal Word was made flesh and moved into the neighborhood, and that the Word was a King like no other king in Matthew. Let's read our text for today from Mark 1:14-15:

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

One thing you will notice right away is that Mark completely skips the birth of Christ in his gospel. Mark's was the first Gospel written and he plunges very quickly into the ministry of Jesus and specifically in this passage into the message and method of Jesus. The reason for this could be that Christmas itself as important as it was and is historically, was not the revealing of the kingdom, but the revealing of the King. Obviously, you can't have a proper kingdom without a proper king and so we don't want to downplay the importance of Christmas, but we do want you to think through the reason for Christ's appearing. Why was he here?

The truth is that very few people in Israel knew of the birth that we celebrate until Jesus' ministry began.

Obviously, you have the key people in the drama: Joseph and Mary, Zechariah and Elizabeth (John the Baptist's parents), a few shepherds, some wise men, an angry king, and Simeon & Anna (an elderly man and woman in the temple). Jesus lived the first 30 years of His life in almost complete obscurity. The only time He pops onto the radar is for a moment as a 12 year old schooling the priests in the temple and scaring His parents to death (we've lost the son of God). All of this time, there has been a message building in Jesus' heart: A message of the kingdom of God; A message that would change the world forever; **This King came to deliver a message which was to be proclaimed throughout all of time!**

In the verses preceding our passage in Mark, he's been proving to us that Jesus is sent from God to provide the only way we can be right with God. Jesus brings us good news. *Christ's coming was planned before the foundation of the world, announced by the forerunner, affirmed by God the Father, empowered by the Spirit and victorious over sin and evil, defeating the devil in the wilderness.*

Now as Mark continues his description of Jesus, the Word made flesh, in verses 14 to 15, he tells us what Christ preached, what He taught, what Jesus was known for communicating to the crowds. What was the message of Jesus Christ?

He is about to share with you good news, but it's not, easy news. The good news doesn't say you are good, but the Gospel starts with, *you're bad*—far worse than you can imagine. The good news describes you as an evil rebel, sinful to the core. You don't merely do bad things, you are really, *really* bad.

Who is the worst person who has ever lived on the face of this earth? Hitler? Bin Laden? Yet, the Gospel says you and I are just as bad as either one. The way we talk to friends, make ourselves look like the victim, talk about others, the greed, jealousy, anger and lust in our hearts makes us just as sinful and just as guilty before a holy God. And what is equally sad about sin is we can't fix ourselves, we can't repair ourselves or take care of our evil motives at all.

Oh, we may be able to change our outward behavior, but just like a leopard can't change his spots, none of us can transform our hearts, fix our motives or clean up our thoughts. There are many who try through religion, but sadly religion is the story of what a sinful man tried to do for a holy God. But Jesus brings us the Gospel, which is the good news of what a holy God has done for sinful man.

The Gospel is not a human plan for reaching up to God, but a divine plan for reaching down to man. The Bible is blunt—because you are a sinner, you are dead, poor, blind, naked, condemned and so guilty, God is completely just to throw you into the eternal, conscious, burning torture of hell.

This is why we need God to rescue us. We need good news. And this is what Jesus is proclaiming in verses 14 to 15. As you read it with me aloud, notice which words are used twice. ***After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"***

The message of good news is the Messenger Himself—God is the good news. The Gospel is the message of the work of Christ for His own. And this message is the most important truth, you'll ever know. And this message is the most powerful truth you'll ever embrace. Think about it—J.C. Ryle said, "There are no incurable cases under the gospel. Any sinner may be healed, if he will only come to Christ."

But beware—there are many *attenders* who don't know Christ—they're churchgoers who have a "Christianity" without Jesus. There are people in many churches today who've prayed a prayer, walked an aisle, made a decision once, but still are not regenerate. To fully embrace the Gospel, you must understand it, be crushed by it, then transformed by it. So, to help the "lost", we must hear what Mark is saying in verses 14 and 15.

#1 The Timing of Christ's Proclaiming Good News

Read verse 14, "*After John was put in prison . . .*" John the Baptist was taken into custody for his scathing comment against Herod for taking His brother's wife. Nothing more is said at this point, though later in Mark 6, he will give us more clarification about John's arrest and beheading by Herod. Amazing, isn't it? The last Old Testament prophet, a mighty man of God is now in jail for speaking the truth. *The Gospel does not always result in comfort—life is not always easier when we follow Christ, but life is always better—not easier, but better, joyful, restful.*

#2 What does it mean to Proclaim Good News?

Verse 14, "*Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.*"

At the end of verse 14, Jesus was proclaiming the good news of God. **Proclaiming is preaching, to announce or publically proclaim. It is what a herald did**, and heralds were those in Greek culture that were the voice of their king, known for their strong voice. These men were the ancient microphones of rulers, who would cry out loud, shouting to make something known—like giving directions, presiding over competitions, announcing awards, and making kingly proclamations and edicts. In Luke 2, the angels heralded the good news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds as they said, "**Glory to God in the highest. Peace on earth. Good will towards men.**" And the Greek word "*proclaiming*" remained in use during New Testament times to give us the same sense, **to be the voice of the king—to proclaim His will and communicate the king's word.**

And now in Galilee, the verb "*proclaiming*" tells us Jesus is continually preaching—every place He goes and at every time, Jesus is announcing the message. The King's Word is being made known. And what is that message? Verse 14, "*the good news of God*". Gospel means **news that brings joy**. The word "*Gospel*" meant something when Mark used it, but it wasn't religious. It meant history-making, life-shaping news, as opposed to merely the daily news. A gospel was news of some event that changed things in a meaningful way. When the people of Greece were delivered from the cruel invading 1 million man Persian army, heralds or evangelists were sent to every Greek city with the message of freedom from slavery. Had the Greeks lost, every citizen would have lost his freedom, he'd have lost his family to slavery, and many would have lost their lives. But now they had been delivered by a victory—that was gospel.

A gospel is an announcement of something that happened in history—something that's been done for you that changes your status forever. That is a major difference between Christianity and all other religions, including no religion. The essence of religion is advice. But Christianity is essentially news. **Religion says, "This is what you do in order to connect to God—this is how you have to live in order to earn your way to God."** But

the gospel says, “This is what has been done in history—this is how Jesus lived and died to earn the way to God for you.”

Christianity is completely different—*it is joyful news*. Some of you do not feel the difference, but you should. How do you feel when you’re given good advice on how to live? Maybe you feel inspired, but you don’t feel the way the Greek listeners who heard those heralds felt when their victory was announced and they would no longer watch their wives be ravaged, or their children made into slaves. Can you imagine the relief of that news—the burden lifted?

The Gospel of Christ is that kind of news—your burdens fall away and you are not a slave anymore. The Gospel is the news that God connects to you, not on the basis of what you’ve done or haven’t done, but on the basis of what Jesus has done in history for you. And that makes it absolutely different from every religion or philosophy. So Jesus is in Galilee proclaiming the good news of God. **It literally is the good news FROM God, BY God, FOR God—ABOUT God.** This joyful news is so unique, instead of the normal religious message of accusation; *it’s a message of hope, mercy and grace*. Because the Gospel of God is the message from God to people, this message is declaring the work of God on your behalf. **On the basis of Christ’s life, death and resurrection for you, you can have full life now and life eternal with God.**

This good news is overwhelming for it is God Himself seeking to save. Our Lord continually preached this Gospel, as He was the Gospel—Jesus is both the subject and object of the good news. And the Gospel message of Jesus Christ was the same message as John the Baptist, and it’s the same message the apostles preached. The Gospel is the same message all healthy churches today live and proclaim. And it is this commitment to this Gospel that’s the dividing line between what a true church is and what is not. This is the good news of God— God has the authority to forgive sins, heal the sick and defeat demonic forces.

Jesus was not driven by tradition, personality, finances, family, programs, buildings, events, food or feeling good. Ask yourself, what good does it ultimately do if people support biblical marriage, believe in a godly morality, want small government, stop feeling entitled, have a desire to help the poor, and think Ronald Reagan was a great president? What good does it do if they spend eternity separated from God in hell forever? That is why Jesus was driven to proclaim the good news. In fact, Mark tells us Christ was determined to share this news.

#3 The Time Has Come

Look at verse 15, *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near”*. Notice the first two words of verse 15. **The time God had appointed for the Messiah’s arrival has now fully come.** And the Greek word *“time”* is actually favorable season, the appropriate time, the golden time, the door is open, it is the opportune moment for the world to meet God in the flesh, and for the establishment of His kingdom. This is the season—the time is right, and everything is set.

All the Old Testament prophecies and promises are going to begin to be fulfilled. What’s coming? The kingdom of God has come near. The Jews hearing this were very familiar with these terms, and were expecting a future messianic kingdom to be established.

...In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

Daniel 2:44

...In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Daniel 7:13-14

In Daniel 9, there is a specific prophecy about the number of years before the Messiah will come. If you do the math, it does not lead you to the birth of Christ, but to this moment in time. The moment of His proclamation. It's interesting that there is a New Testament passage that points to the fact that this Jesus is the one that Daniel was prophesying about. It was the time that Gabriel heralded God's message to Mary:

...And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Luke 1:31 - 33

What is the kingdom of God? **The kingdom of God is God's sovereign, kingly reign over a people and a realm. It is seen today in the hearts and lives of believers, and will one day be seen on this planet as God's realm.**

The kingdom of God has two facets to it:

First: The kingdom of God is a present reality—now

Jesus said in verse 15, "the kingdom of God has come near"—it's at hand. We know the kingdom is a present reality from what Jesus taught us in:

Luke 17:20 and 21, Jesus was asked . . . "when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; 21 nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.'"

Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

The kingdom is taught as a present reality in the Scripture, and it is seen as God's rule is manifested in the hearts of His children. Do you live as one who appears to live under the rule of Christ? Do you do what He says? But the Bible also promises Israel and all God's children that . . .

Second: The kingdom of God is a future promise—not yet

God is a God of His word. He does not lie. He promised He would physically come to rule this planet—He would rule in Israel, and God keeps His promises. Just as God promised Christ would come in His first

coming, and all the details of that promise were literally fulfilled. So Christ will come again and set up His physical, literal kingdom, and all those details will be fulfilled literally.

Daniel 7:27, “The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.”

The kingdom is now, and it’s not yet.

And this kingdom is verse 15, “*Of God*”—it belongs to Him, it’s His rule, it is the kingdom He establishes and rules over. It is a kingdom God gives, and not something men build. And this coming kingdom is perfect—glorified saints live forever, animals all get along again, and the land returns to an Eden-like state.

And Jesus is calling for an urgent response to this Gospel, since God’s rule is currently taking place in people’s hearts and will one day take place on this planet, beginning with only believers. Only those who have responded to the good news of Christ are now a part of God’s kingdom, and will later rule with Him in His literal, physical reign on earth.

So Jesus is continually saying, “The time is fulfilled,” and “The kingdom is at hand, the Kingdom has come near.” In other words, this anticipated kingdom is now so near that the King of God’s kingdom is now present among you. Therefore, the hearers of Christ’s preaching, then and now, are urged to enter into God’s kingdom by responding now with two crucial conditions.

#4 The required response to Christ’s good news

Verse 15 ends with two strong commands—“**repent**”, and “**believe in the good news.**” In today’s church there is a focus on an easy-believism and a shallow gospel, that results in phony self-deceived believers and a weak church.

Let me ask you again, one more time—what makes a great church? Not a building, not a great preacher, not a snappy program, not cool ministry leaders or happening worship music—what makes a great church is genuine Christians. And what’s killing the Church today—it’s loaded with make-believers. Friends, all *genuine* Christians have, as it says inverse 15: “repented and believed.”

Make-believers have bought into a cheap, easy gospel message—one that does not call for genuine faith and true repentance. Others alter the meaning of repentance to merely be a change of mind about who Christ is, making repentance only a mental affirmation.

But true, biblical repentance is totally different—what is it? When you have saving faith in Christ, it means you believe, trust, and obey Jesus. You can’t turn to Jesus unless you turn away from sin. Turning from sin is the negative aspect of repentance—faith and obedience are the positive aspects of repentance. But if there is no turning from sin, then there is no repentance and there is no saving faith.

Repentance and belief are two sides of the same coin. They go together. In fact, they are used together in Acts 20:21, “*Testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

The Bible teaches that **repentance is a sovereign gift of God**. Acts 11:18, *“God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.”* And 2 Timothy 2:25, *“Perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.”*

So repentance is a gift of God, but it is also **a command to obey**. Mark 6:12, *“They went out and preached that men should repent.”* Acts 17:30, *“God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent.”*

So what is repentance? Literally it means change of mind, in a decisive, life-changing manner. Repentance is not merely an idea change, it is a direction change. Repentance, always results in a change of lifestyle, a turning from sin to the pursuit of Christ-likeness.

Prove it. Okay, I will. Acts 26:20, *“kept declaring . . . even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”* Repentance results in a different lifestyle—deeds are changed. When you are truly repentant, you don’t keep sinning the same way.

Three elements of repentance

1 A change of mind

You recognize your own sin, and “own” your personal guilt, defilement and helplessness. You become aware of sin, grow sick of sin, and in your sickness, realize you need a physician. You’re undone in the presence of Christ. Like the prodigal, *“who came to himself”* and saw his own sin, or David who said, *“Against you, you alone I have sinned.”* You’re not merely sad for sin, but realize you’ve offended God.

2 A change of heart

You are emotionally broken over what you’ve done. Instead of the Pharisee who prayed, *“God, I think you that I am not like other people,”* you pray like the tax collector, *“God be merciful to me the sinner,”* in Luke 18. True repentance is much more than a fear of punishment, or sadness you were caught in sin. It is deep contrition, where you’d say with David, *“There is no health in my bones because of my sin,”* in Psalm 38. It is a *“sorrow according to the will of God which leads to salvation,”* in 2 Corinthians 7—it’s a sadness that always leads to obedience.

3 A change of life

There is a turning away from sin through a life-altering determination. Like Luke 19:8, *“Zaccheus said, ‘Lord, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.’”*

Or like the prodigal in Luke 15:18 to 21, *“I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.’ . . . 21 And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.’”*

Often in the New Testament, the Greek word repentance is linked with the Greek word which means to turn around, to return. Like in Acts 3:19, *“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order*

that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Or Acts 26:20, “Declaring . . . they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.” Repentance leads to lifestyle change—disobedience is terminated.

Kittle, in his dictionary, defined repentance as **a radical conversion, a transformation of nature, a definitive turning from evil, a resolute turning to God in total obedience.** Repentance affects the inner man, which leads to an observable change in thoughts, words and deeds, from sin toward obedience.

Foundational to your salvation and your Christian life now is genuine repentance. Are you genuinely saved? Have you repented? Do you live genuine repentance? Mark tells us, as Jesus preached, He urgently proclaimed repentance and belief. Verse 15,

Repent and believe in the good news.” Believe is to trust, to depend, to rely upon, have confidence in. Instead of depending on yourself, or relying on some religion, you totally depend on God’s Person to save you. You depend on God’s path as the only way. You trust your life to God’s provision. You commit your life and eternal future to the good news that God has made a way for you to be forgiven now and forever.

The reason that proclamation is at the heart of Christianity is because of the truth found in **Romans 10:17, *So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.***

Repentance is to change directions—you turn from sin to follow Christ alone. **Belief or trust or faith in the New Testament is a change of dependence—you stop trusting in yourself and others, and you depend on Christ alone.** Have you? Do you have a passion for God’s good news? To embrace good news, you first have to admit you’re really bad. Have you actually been given the gift of repentance? Are you a part of His kingdom now, and will you be in the future? Do you follow God’s Word alone?

Or are you following your own form of casual Christianity, which is a false religion, where you serve if you feel like it, love others only when it makes you feel good, attend church only if you can get up on time, and think preaching is good only when it warms your heart.

Or have you really surrendered your life to Jesus Christ in salvation, where He is your first love—you want to please Him in everything, you are willing to do anything He asks you to do, and your worship is as a living sacrifice to Christ, who sacrificed all for you. And you live repentantly, always seriously turning from sin, and trustingly always seeking to depend on God’s Word alone.

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