

Don't Put Off Repenting And Believing

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Robert. When you were saying about what it would have been like to be a shepherd and talking about scraping the car, it made me think, I wonder if back then or out in the fields they have to scrape the sheep in the morning.

I don't know. I do a lot of DIY, but that's a complete rookie error. That's why you don't reel it in from that far away, because the thing just breaks.

This morning we are in the book of Mark, Mark chapter 1. If you want to open a Bible, there's Bibles in the pews if you have one. I'm going to be reading from chapter 1, verses 14 and 15.

Just two verses. Mark chapter 1, verses 14 and 15.

Now, after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.

[1 : 3 5] Repent and believe in the gospel. Amen. God, we pray that you would teach us through your word.

As I was preparing and studying these passages, I said to Jen, Well, if Jesus' preaching was only a sentence or two, maybe we'll be quite short this morning.

The safest country in the world to live in, according to the Global Peace Index, was determined using data from 163 countries.

And the amazing thing is that the country that ranked first last year as the safest country to live in in the world is the same country that is ranked first for 16 years ever since the index was first introduced in 2008.

One country has been the safest country to live in ever since the index was introduced 16 years ago. It's not this country.

[2 : 5 1] So, if you're thinking about moving, speak to me afterwards. I might know a nice place. Do you want to know which country is the safest country in the world?

Do you know? I wonder if you've ever been there. Ian's been to Switzerland. In the words of Roy Walker, it's good, but it's not the one.

I'll give you a clue. Me and my family were in the safest country in the world at one point last year. Absolutely not.

But we were there. We were there. Where did we go on the way? Absolutely right. Iceland. Iceland.

For the past 16 years, using data from 163 countries, has ranked the safest country to live in in the world.

[3 : 5 0] And it has held that spot every year. Some of the commonalities among the safest countries, the one that topped the list, include high levels of wealth, a high standard of living, strong social attitudes, good social welfare, good education, and effective criminal justice system, and a government that has a healthy relationship with its citizens.

When Jesus came preaching that the kingdom of God was at hand, the people in Israel were aware that Israel was not the safest or the greatest country in the world.

But they hoped that when the Messiah came, it would be the safest and greatest country in the world because of Him. You see, the solution was always going to be the Messiah.

But in order to understand the solution, we must understand the problem. Despite Iceland being the world's safest country for 16 years in a row, Iceland is not problem-free.

Icelandic marketing director and lawyer who founded the Reykjavik Grapevine newspaper wrote that although Iceland was also ranked in the top three happiest countries in the world, it also had the highest consumption of antidepressants.

[5 : 15] And so this guy said, maybe we're not happy, maybe we're high. But then he goes on to say this, either Iceland is gradually heading into unhappier waters with the statistics yet to catch up, or the rest of the world is just going to hell in a handbasket even faster than we are.

You see, it's not just depression, but even in Iceland, the world's safest country to live in, serious crimes like stabbings and murders are on the rise.

And the Global Peace Index shows that the world is not improving. And so, what is the answer? Well, we need to know what the problem is.

In order to understand the solution, we must understand the problem. Yet, so even for the Jews, and they had always thought the solution is the Messiah, yet they did not understand the Messiah because they didn't properly understand the problem.

And this is, this also meant that they didn't understand many things about the kingdom of God. Now, John, John had been proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and they were going out and confessing their sins, but it would not solve the problem.

[6 : 40] Why? Because water cannot wash away sins. John's purpose was never to take away sins. He couldn't do that. He said, I'll only baptize with water.

His purpose was to prepare them to meet the King, the Messiah. Water only washes the outside, but the Messiah would baptize people in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit can transform the inside.

And so, even if their repenting when they came to John was genuine, it wouldn't last. Because without God's Spirit, you cannot, and you will not, keep the law. God needs to pour out His Spirit and write His law on our hearts.

He needs to give us a new heart. He needs to transform us by the Spirit so that we're no longer corrupt. And so, this is what was anticipated, even although they didn't understand it.

Ezekiel 36 says this, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put My Spirit within you, and I will cause you to walk in My ways and carefully obey My just decrees, and you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people, and I shall be your God.

[8 : 01] We must understand the problem if we're going to understand the solution. You see, although Iceland is the safest country in the world to live in, even Icelanders are sinners, which explains why there are still many serious crimes and problems, and it also explains why even in Iceland there is a hundred percent death rate.

The problem is sin, and it's no small problem, and so Jesus comes, verse 14, John's arrested, and Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God.

Jesus takes over, and Jesus says, the time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand, and the reason that He then says repent is because the kingdom of God will not tolerate even the smallest of sins.

because, think about this, look at where the smallest of sins led from the Garden of Eden to now. Look at where the smallest of sins leads.

And so, in God's kingdom, better than Iceland, there must be no trace of any sin in God's kingdom, otherwise it would not be God's kingdom. What place has darkness with light?

[9 : 27] what place has evil with good? Yet, how can we repent? How can we possibly turn our lives around in this direction? How can we change the course of our destiny when our sins are taking us away like the stormy winds that tore off roofs and tore down trees on Friday?

In fact, that's the very illustration that Isaiah uses in Isaiah 64. Listen to this. We remember from last week, oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down. And then it goes on to say, you came down.

The mountains quaked at your presence. You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry and we sinned.

And in our sins we have been a long time. And shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

We all fade like a leaf and our iniquities like the wind takes us away. So, how can we do it? How can we repent?

[10 : 41] How can we change the direction and turn our lives around? Can we give ourselves a new heart? Heart surgery is not performed by the person getting a new heart.

Jesus is the one who has the spirit. And so, he not only says repent, but he also says and believe in the good news. And John may be the voice crying in the wilderness in Isaiah 40, but Jesus is the one in Isaiah 61 who says, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news.

Good news to the poor, to bind up the broken hearted, proclaim freedom to the captives and the opening of the prisons to those who are bound. Jesus is the bringer of good news because he is the one who has the spirit to pour out.

He is the one who can bind up the broken and release the captive. Remember the term gospel or good news was used of a world changing event.

And Jesus is the world changing event. So, the call to repent is for us to understand the problem and understand that we are part of the problem.

[11 : 59] When Jesus called the Jews to repent for the kingdom is at hand, it was a message to Israel, you are part of the problem. you need to repent just like everyone else because in the kingdom of God, there can be no sin.

Repenting is understanding the problem and understanding that we are part of the problem and if we want to be in the kingdom of God, there are certain things that we cannot bring with us.

It's like that moment when you go to the airport and you've got all your stuff and you're about to go through security and then you see the sign, no, no bottles over 100 mls and no this and no that and you're frantically opening your suitcase and you're emptying out weight and you're pouring out bottles and you're leaving stuff behind.

That's what it's going to be like with the kingdom of God. There's things that we just cannot take into the kingdom and some of the things we don't want to take, some of the things we love or we want to hold on to or we flirt with, some of our sins, certain things that we cannot bring.

We cannot have our cake and eat it. Can you imagine if we dragged all of our baggage into the kingdom of God? You ever watch that border security?

[13 : 17] You think the angels would be like, nah, wait a minute, there's a wee sin there and a wee sin there and something terrible here and something evil there and something that's going to really ruin this place and you just can't bring it.

You can't bring it. It would be like when Aslan created Narnia. If you've ever read the Chronicles of Narnia and the Magician's Nephew, when Aslan created Narnia and Diggory brought the witch into Narnia, Aslan said, for though the world is not five hours old, an evil has already entered it.

Can you imagine a catastrophe to the kingdom if even the smallest seed of evil were to enter it? But it won't happen because it's God's kingdom. It will not happen.

It cannot happen because evil cannot find anything to stick to in the kingdom of God. There is no corner of the kingdom of light which darkness can reside.

We simply cannot take our sins with us. Even the sins that we do not call sin, we can't take it with us. If we want to hold on to them, then how can we enter?

[14 : 26] The call to repent is to let go of it all and turn toward the only person who can grant us entry. And the call to believe the gospel is good news because he's the one who can take it away and he's the one who can give us entry.

It's not just about statements of rules or views, it's about choosing whose side you're on. The gospel is an announcement of a world-changing event. The Messiah has come, the Son of God stepped into the world and because he is the true light and the radiance of the glory of God, then darkness is no longer the dominant force.

Ever since Jesus stepped into this world, even today, although it might not seem like it, darkness is no longer the dominant force. But whose side are you going to be on? Do you like the darkness?

Do you love the darkness like John 3? But Jesus didn't come to judge. Are you going to remain in the darkness under the rule of the tyrant devil and enslaved by sin?

Are you going to step into the light now that the light has come to release people from the kingdom of darkness? Now is the time. Now is the time. Don't put off repenting and believing.

[15 : 45] The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. The time is fulfilled because God's king has arrived. The kingdom is at hand because the king of the kingdom has come.

But will you come to him? You see, isn't it interesting that even before his death and resurrection, he calls people to repent and believe in the gospel. Jesus didn't come and say, hear ye, hear ye, I am the Messiah, but I've got some important things to do, so hang tight.

Once I do those things, then you can repent and believe, but carry on as you are. He didn't say that. He came and said, repent and believe in the good news. Don't put it off.

Now is the time to repent and believe. In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul quotes Isaiah 49 where God says, in a favorable time I listen to you, in a day of salvation I have helped you.

And then Paul says, behold, now is the favorable time. Behold, now is a day of salvation. Don't put it off.

[16 : 51] Life is too short and the king won't wait forever. And don't just try to do the first part, trying to repent your way into heaven. It will never be effective without the second part, coming to Jesus and believing him.

We cannot repent our way out of sin and we cannot repent our way into the kingdom. It's not going to work. We need to come to Jesus for that. He's the Messiah, the only solution to the great problem of humanity.

Think about this. For John the Baptist, all who came to him were baptized, but if you didn't come to him, how could you be baptized?

And yet he baptized with water and it couldn't save them. Yet in Isaiah 66, it says, this is the one whom I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

And as the word became flesh, humility is the only way to come to Jesus. How can you receive the spirit otherwise unless you come to the only one who can baptize with the Holy Spirit?

[18 : 05] See that he can do what we need, but we need to come to him like the people needed to come to John. We need to come to him for him to give us the spirit and take away our sin and give his entry into his kingdom.

Believing in the good news at this point, at this point before his death and resurrection, prior to that, simply meant just believing that Jesus was indeed the one who was promised and that he would in some way bring about the kingdom.

So the call was to follow him and to trust in him. regardless of if you don't know how it's going to work out. It's not all that different today, is it?

The call is to look to Jesus, to follow him, to trust him. The challenge is to keep doing that when we don't know how he's going to save us. We don't exactly know how it's going to happen.

We don't know how he's going to do all the things that he has promised. Even when it doesn't look like he's doing it, he will. Because even when it didn't look like he was saving them on the cross, he was.

[19 : 19] And so we can look back and see how his death was fulfilling Genesis 22, Exodus 12, Leviticus 16, Numbers 21, Deuteronomy 21, all the way through Psalm 22, and Isaiah 53, fulfilling all of this.

we can see that Jesus' death is a ransom to release us, and his spirit is able to transform us and make us fit for his kingdom.

Where has our allegiance elsewhere gotten us? Our allegiance elsewhere gets us nowhere. Yet this king, this king can get us there.

But this king is a good king. This king will not force us or enslave us. He came to set us free and to make a way into his glorious kingdom, but we must come to him, and we must be willing to come empty handed, with nothing but childlike trust.

And history has witnessed this great king that he first came not to judge us, not to judge us, not to take from us, but to lay down his life for us, so we know that we can trust him, even if we don't know what's ahead.

[20 : 43] So don't put off repenting and believing. It will be the greatest thing that you ever do on this earth, because the kingdom's at hand, and only the king can bring you in.

Let me pray. Lord, we can barely understand these things, but we know we really all know that sin is the problem.

We know that it leads only to destruction and death. We know that every one of us are trapped in this. And history has shown that you can be trusted, that you are the Messiah, you're the Son of God, and that you can take us there.

Help us to repent always, every day, and help us to come to you every day, and believe in you, and help us to know just how good that is. We pray in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Amen.