

The Gospel of God and the Call to Discipleship

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that your word is living and is active. And although we're reading a narrative account of your son's early ministry, it is for us today, even though it is centuries and even millennia old.

Lord, we thank you that your word can shape our hearts. We ask that you open our eyes to see and our ears to hear and our hearts to embrace the truth of your word.

In Jesus' name, amen. We will observe Remembrance Day in less than two weeks. And it's based on Armistice Day.

I mean, we see it as remembering not just the end of the Great War, but the end of World War II, of Korea, of the war in Afghanistan.

We see it, we call it Remembrance Day, but really it's based on Armistice Day. It marked the end of the Great War some 100 plus years ago. And it was in papers plastered across the world.

[1 : 05] War is over. War is over. This declaration that war is done. It was good news. It still is good news. But it wasn't good news that was kind of mentioned in some backwater paper, in some obscure place.

It was declared across the world. Because good news is something that ought to be proclaimed. If it is good news, and I mean good news, something to celebrate, we need to hear about it and celebrate it.

It's the same when, on a lesser scale, when a child graduates high school or goes off to university, I don't know if it's still done, but in the smaller town where I grew up, parents would take out little ads in the paper, congratulating.

They're graduates. It was actually quite wonderful. Not so long ago, a girl that I went to high school with, who, I mean, we weren't really friends.

She was awfully quiet. In our paper from back home, her parents took out a thing. She graduated from med school. I had no idea. But it was this proclamation of good news, of the hard work that she did.

[2 : 27] And her parents didn't want to be quiet about it. It was lovely. They blasted it all over this tiny town's newspaper.

It's not so tiny, but I still think of it as a tiny town. Good news needs to be proclaimed. It can't be hidden. It can't be... It shouldn't be quickly forgotten.

It has to be shared and declared and proclaimed. So we pick up the story after Jesus is baptized and driven into the wilderness, or he is tempted.

He's driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. And between verses 13, which was the last verse of last week, and verse 14, it's very clear that some time has passed.

Jesus has come out of the wilderness. John the Baptist has been arrested. And Jesus returns from the Judean wilderness back up to Galilee. So that's... It's a bit of a distance.

[3 : 24] So there's a lot of time that elapsed between verses 13 and 14. It's interesting. John the Baptist, in verse 14, it says that he's arrested.

But really, it's... The idea is that he was handed over. This is... If you guys are grammar geeks, or you are interested in the original language, the term that John...

We have it in the English Standard Version as arrested. He was handed over. And this is a bit of an aside, but this will be a term that Mark uses to describe kind of the fate of the faithful people in the Gospel.

Jesus himself will eventually be handed over. If we continue on into the Acts of the Apostles, although Mark doesn't write it, there's a lot of handing over of the righteous people to the authorities. So, a lot of time has elapsed.

Jesus is back in the Galilee, which is the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, in this area. And he begins his ministry. Jesus begins his ministry. And it's interesting, if you look with me, again, in verse 14, he doesn't begin his ministry with an exorcism, or a healing miracle, or some sort of nature miracle, all of which we will see in, like, an incredible way in the rest of chapter 1, chapter 2, and into chapter 3.

[4 : 49] But how does he start his ministry? Well, look with me. Verse 14. It says, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God.

Verse 15, and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel. Jesus begins his ministry with a proclamation of good news.

Of good news. He proclaims something that is worth hearing and worth proclaiming. So, here's the question.

The good news, or the Gospel, that Jesus is calling people to repent and believe in. Um, what is it? What is the Gospel? For the longest time, and I think, I'm not poo-pooing this at all, I'm not trying to be controversial, but for the longest time, the Gospel was, believe in Jesus, that he takes your sins away so you can go to heaven.

And, end. Full stop. But hold on a second. If it's, believe in Jesus for dying on the cross for our sins so that we can go to heaven, Jesus is proclaiming this Gospel before he heads to the cross.

[6 : 05] So, what's going on? What's the Gospel message here? What is the Gospel? It's also connected to the Kingdom of God. Jesus says the Kingdom of God is at hand.

He also says that the time is fulfilled. Why? What kind of time are we talking about? Also, um, what is this idea of repentance and what are we to believe in the Gospel?

Like, first we need to figure out what this Gospel is before we can repent and believe in it. So, there's a lot of questions if we just scratch a little bit. If we kind of park our, um, the, our stereotypical understandings of the Gospel.

And by the way, the Gospel most certainly is God taking away our sins through Jesus on the cross. It definitely includes us going to Heaven. Okay?

But here we have to ask the question, what is Jesus declaring as the Gospel? So the question is, what is the Gospel? And simply put, the Gospel is the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 10] It's His life. And, and we will see that His life is, is, is divine and full of authority and full of power and it is on full display.

especially in the first eight chapters of Mark. It's also His death which will be an atoning sacrifice. We will get to this and we will spend some time understanding what it means for Jesus to be the atoning sacrifice for all people.

And it's also His resurrection from the dead which means that sin and death are conquered forever and that those who believe into Him will share in His victory. but it means the good news of God is a person.

It's not just about a person but most certainly the Gospel is about a person. It's about Jesus. But it's also a person. The Gospel is a person. And I don't know how that really makes sense because Gospel is news and Gospel is a declaration that war is over.

Right? My son or my daughter has graduated. I'm getting married. It's a declaration of an event. It can't be about a person. And yet that's exactly what the Gospel is about and this is what we'll see.

[8 : 28] The Gospel is the good news of God in Jesus. It is Jesus Himself. The Gospel personified Jesus Christ. So how can good news that is proclaimed to be a person?

How is this even possible? And I think that the key in understanding this is what Jesus says right off the bat in verse 15 the time is fulfilled.

So what kind of time? And why is it fulfilled? So simply put the time being fulfilled is that the entire history of the Bible leading up to Mark chapter 1 verse 15 is the all of history culminates into this point.

All of history up until this point is eagerly pointing and eagerly awaiting for Jesus Christ to come onto the scene. The time is fulfilled.

So from the very beginning Adam and Eve are in the garden. God makes everything and what does He say about everything that He's created? Does anybody know? Remember? It's good. Everything that He makes is good.

[9 : 39] Adam and Eve choose to rebel against God's goodness and they sin against Almighty God and from then sin and death and calamity overtakes the human condition.

Overtakes the human heart. And this is the song that is sung by humanity ever since that moment and you can read about it in Genesis chapter 3.

But right on the heels of their rebellion God makes a promise that He'd send a Savior. That the bent ways would be made straight.

That the wrongs would be made right. That the brokenness would be restored. That hearts that used to be hearts of flesh that were now hearts of stone would be made hearts of flesh once again. It's a remarkable remarkable promise. And He doesn't just promise it to Adam and Eve. He promises it to Abraham and He promises it to Moses and He promises it to His prophets and to the entire nation of Israel but not just for Israel but for everybody that God would send a Savior to make things right again.

[10:49] And isn't this something we all feel? That when there's something that isn't right it it shouldn't be this way?

that it shouldn't be this way to have families break apart and to have children estranged from their parents or husbands estranged from their wives families breaking up people making bad life decisions that snowball and snowball and inability to rectify the bad things.

on a grand scheme we see war and war is not the way it's supposed to be. We see that there's this brokenness this unrest and we somehow know in our bones that something isn't right and it needs to be fixed.

It just needs to be. Doesn't this doesn't just this is a part of what it means to be human to see something that's broken and wish that it weren't so? It seems as though from the very beginning God created us in such a way to long after wholeness and because of sin entering in and because of death entering in we have been grasping at that idea not even really sure what that idea is but knowing most certainly what it's not grasping at it.

So doesn't this promise of God restoring and fixing and mending and replacing seem exactly what hope is? So God always another part of this is that what was also lost in the garden is that God no longer dwelt with his people.

[12:45] The garden sure it is this beautiful picture of God creating and man naming the animals and it seems like everything is fantastic and beautiful and wonderful but the most beautiful thing about the garden is that God is dwelling with his people.

There's this bit where it says that God was walking in the garden in the cool of the day but Adam wasn't with him and he calls out to find Adam. what's implied there is that Adam would be walking with God in the garden.

That he would know that relational intimacy and connectedness and vulnerability without the fear of getting trampled on this complete wholeness of God dwelling with his people and yet that was lost. And ever since then what happens is that we get little pictures of God wanting to dwell with his people again. We see it in the tabernacle.

God rescues Israel from Egypt but then he makes a tabernacle, this big tent where his presence dwells. And then in the temple he tells King David to make the temple. Eventually his son makes it but it's the idea that's where God dwells among his people.

[14:00] And then the time is fulfilled. And why is it fulfilled? Because when Jesus comes it is God himself entering into this world into the human experience dwelling with his people.

The gospel of John John will say not to be confused with John the Baptist the gospel of John John will say in chapter 1 verse 14 that God he became flesh and dwelt among us.

And this is exactly what we're seeing here. So when Jesus says the time is fulfilled it is all of the hopes and all of the desires of wholeness and of sin being eradicated and us returning to this relationship with God himself him dwelling with us and us dwelling with him this is what it leads to.

The time is fulfilled and all of a sudden Jesus appears proclaiming the gospel. The gospel is a person. The good news is a person.

The time is fulfilled in verse 15 and it is a marvelous marvelous it's just four words and yet it is so heavy and weighted and the anticipation is just it's exploding because God is now among his people.

[15:33] God has arrived. Good news incarnate has arrived. God himself would be the savior and he would destroy sin and he would destroy death on the cross forever. It's interesting that in the garden God makes the garden he dwells with mankind in the garden.

The garden is set upon a hill it is this kind of image of a temple the tabernacle is kind of this image of a temple where man meets God and then the temple obviously is a temple so imagery of a temple but we will see that what ends up happening is that we become the very temple of God we do the church but also individuals we become the very temple of God he lives within us the separation between God and man is no longer in the person of Jesus Christ but it also is no longer because God now dwells in his church and it is called the house of God the church is but also the imagery and this kind of speaks to the closeness of this redemption is that we the church are called the body of Christ the very body of Christ he is our head we're not trying to say we are now divine like God but the scriptures describe it as the body of

Christ we are that united with God so now it's not that we're trying to get back to Eden because what we have in Christ and our hope for what is to come is better than the garden it it's crazy to think it's a scandal that God would dwell among us again but in a way that far exceeds any other way he's dwelt with us in the history of mankind this is the good news it is the good news of God in Christ Jesus himself is the good news it is wonderful this you know verses 14 and 15 we're reading 16 to 20 and 16 to 20 are very helpful for us to understand to know how we are then to live the first thing is Jesus says to repent and believe so what does it mean to repent and believe in the gospel it simply is to not trust false saviors the repentance part it's to not trust false saviors anymore self help is a good thing but when destroy you because you can't help yourself in the way to bring complete wholeness if you're trying to justify yourself as though that you know your sin is you're proving the reason why you've lived a life of brokenness and sin it's this pride that is welling up if that becomes your savior you will push people away and brokenness will be your calling card because you can't justify yourself you just can't we trick ourselves all the time in thinking that we are really finding the true savior and we are living in a fiction it's not real reality and it's hard it's not like

I'm saying this I mean technically I'm raised but I am in the midst of you guys too because I trust in many things apart from Christ if I'm going to be honest and it's not easy but the Christian life is to what repent and believe in and this idea of repenting and believing in verse 15 it is not just a one time only thing but it is to keep on repenting and keep on believing not as though we were going to get saved afresh every single time we repent and believe because we are trusting in God but our flesh is feeble so the call is to keep on repenting keep on believing keep on trusting God that is the call of the Christian life and interestingly we open up our service here I mean we'll because we're doing holy communion we'll enter into a time of repentance in a bit after the sermon but the entirety of this service is built upon repent and believe repent and believe repent and believe again we will come to the table

I am not worthy as to gather the crumbs under your table but I'm trusting in your mercies oh God it's beautiful so we are friends with God the call is to repent and believe and continue on repenting and believing and the wonderful thing about this is that we will have our citizenship transferred from the earth to heaven so Jesus says this he says the kingdom of God is at hand and just to be clear that the kingdom of God being at hand is an implication of the gospel it's not the gospel itself the gospel isn't the kingdom the gospel is Jesus but the implication is Jesus is king and we come under his we submit ourselves to his lordship and we become citizens of heaven we talked about this in our bible study last week Philippians chapter 3 our citizenship is in heaven so we get to participate in the kingdom of

[21 : 20] God and what is the kingdom of God well Jesus will show us what the kingdom of God is in the chapters to come but the kingdom of God is where there is wholeness and where sin is not counted against us anymore where sickness isn't a thing in the kingdom of God where oppression isn't a thing in the kingdom of God where there's no higher authority than the king in the kingdom of God our priorities change and we pledge allegiance to a new crown and unlike the crowns and governments here on earth this king doesn't change and his crown is eternal and it's only for his head his victory and rule is forever and he embodies the very kingdom the very kingdom that he establishes this is why when we come to church we will we will partake at the table as a renewal of our covenant with the king we will say the creed and we will pray the lord's prayer as almost like a pledge of allegiance so to speak that here we are in

God's church in his kingdom and we get to experience what life is like in part in heaven you get little tastes of it little pieces of it little whispers of it and then we go out and we bring this message to everybody that we see because again verses 16 to 20 Jesus is calling us like he is calling his disciples his apostles this is what it says passing alongside the sea of Galilee Jesus saw Simon and

Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen and Jesus said to them follow me and I will make you fishers of men fishers of men Jesus is calling us to follow him calling the disciples to follow him it wasn't like regular rabbis at the time for a couple reasons number one you don't follow the rabbi you follow the Torah you follow the teachings the rabbi the teacher follow the law follow me as

I exposit the ten commandments or something he says follow me pattern your life after me he is communicating his authority his divine authority and also he is inviting the disciples into his own ministry this is what it says I will make you become fishers of men and these were fishermen Jesus went right to them they didn't clean up their act after two three years of devotion to the Bible or to whatever Jesus went to them straight to where they were and called them right where they were from and that's what he does for us we don't come to God because we have cleaned up lives we come to him because we recognize our desperate need for him and he doesn't say come and and you'll be rock stars overnight what does he say to his disciples he says I will make you become fishers of men and we know that maybe you don't but the story of the gospels are his disciples not getting it failing tripping over their feet we will see later on where

Peter in chapter 8 will declare who Jesus is and then in the same moment rebuke Jesus for going to the cross but then we'll see in Acts where the Holy Spirit fills them and they grow and they mature and they become fishers of men the call for you is to follow Jesus and he will teach you he will disciple you this is what church does this is why we need the body because people are going to be able to teach each other and point each other to the Lord we come here to pledge our allegiance and our love and our fidelity to Christ every week and we partake with him in the great commission and just if it seems overwhelming it is overwhelming but listen let's be overwhelmed together it is not easy I was I was I need a break every now and then when

I when I'm working at home we have three young kids whom I love but they're busy and they're loud so every now and then I'll go to a coffee shop and I was at a coffee shop and this guy behind me he's on a spiritual quest because he's talking about his business stuff and then he phones up his friend and he's like hey listen man do you believe in psychics because I talked to the psychic and like he totally read my journal like it give me strength I'm going to do this right because and you know the guy got up and left before I mustered courage it is not easy being fishers of men I'm supposed to be a pastor like listen that doesn't mean that I'm supposed to be some world class evangelist but it's hard and maybe you guys have stories as well where you want to bear witness to Jesus but you're afraid God's honest truth that happened to me

[26 : 59] I'm not making it up it was Friday it happened but what will he do we follow him we repent and believe we continue to repent and believe we trust in the gospel and what will he do he will make us fishers of men the apostles are unique they are okay they God used them in an unbelievably mighty way but the principle still exists the call to follow Jesus still exists it's our our call it is our call and it is hard but I think we can do this together by God's strength Jesus also calls the sons of Zebedee and the interesting thing is they immediately drop their nets and they follow Jesus he is asking you to follow him and that's why when we share about the good news of the gospel it is important to have these apologetics and these answers ready but at the very core of it we are introducing people to

Jesus he's the gospel we are introducing him to our friend and I don't mean friend in a kind of a kitschy way like a deep deep friend that's what we're inviting people to and it's hard but listen we pray we we get encouraged we encourage one another we can do this we can and we just trust that in the end when we introduce people to Jesus we're not saying hey listen you need to drop everything you have and follow me as I'm following Jesus we just trust that God is the one who's going to draw and John his brother James the other disciples the countless Christians so you and me if you have put your faith and trust in Jesus is not because somebody had a fantastic little sermon going on or you saw like a wonderful slideshow or saw this video and that's what was the thing it was

God using means but God who is drawing you to himself friends the call is to to to repent and believe in the gospel the kingdom is at hand the kingdom is here I'd encourage you encourage you that if you have not put your faith and trust in Christ do so and if you have continue a life of repentance and belief in him please stand let us pray heavenly father we thank you so much for your word that it is I mean number one that we have a copy of it that we can read it that we don't have to be afraid that secret police are going to bust in and shut us down Lord we thank you for the

freedom we have here in Canada to read and study to mark and inwardly digest your word and Lord I pray that we would do just that that we would believe repent and believe in your son that your desire is to make your home with us and among us and you have done just that in Jesus and Lord I pray that just like the call to Andrew and Simon James and John was to follow your son that we would do that Lord and that in mountaintop experiences with Jesus but in especially valley type of experiences with Jesus that we would continue to follow him Lord help us to believe help our unbelief we pray in Christ's name Amen