

Good News

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[0 : 00] Well let's read God's Word in the Gospel of Mark and chapter 1. We're going to read from verse 9. Let's hear God's Word. At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, You are my Son whom I love, with you I am well pleased.

At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert for forty days being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals and the angels attended him.

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 is near. Repent and believe the good news.

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Amen.

[1 : 15] Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men. At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John in a boat preparing their nets.

Without delay, he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with their hired men, and followed him. Amen. This is the Word of God.

It's true what they say. You never get a second chance at a first impression. Apparently, when you meet somebody for the first time, they make a judgment on you within four seconds, and they have completed their assessment of you within 30 seconds.

Each time a new Prime Minister is appointed over this country or any other, we wait with anticipation to listen to their first words, their opening speech.

Will he be calm and assured? Or will he be slow and nervous? Will he be strong and decisive?

[2 : 32] Or will he be rash and arrogant? The first impressions, the first words, are so important. And it's the same with Jesus Christ.

Here he comes in the first page of Mark's Gospel, stepping onto the stage of his public ministry. It's been much anticipated, it's been faithfully announced, and it has been perfectly timed.

It is his first words that are going to concern us this morning, and Mark gives us the bite-sized version, but it is the crux of it all.

You know, people have done and continue to make quick, rash judgments about Jesus. Maybe you have. But so many watching this service, and millions of people, past and present, have come to discover that their rash first impressions were wrong.

So let's encounter Jesus and hear what he says. The news and the need. Our two points are the news and the need.

[3 : 47] Well, we begin with the news. Watching the news at 6pm has been a regular occurrence in many of your homes anyway. But I think recently, all of our homes have been switching on to reporting Scotland so that we could be kept up to date.

But day after day, we have been receiving bad news. Schools closed. Your holidays, weddings, sports, parties, events, celebrations, all cancelled.

The country locked down. And most serious of all, thousands of people have contracted this virus, and many have died.

We have filtered a lot of news over these past few months, and much of it has been bad news. And we wonder, is there any good news?

Well, here comes Jesus, stepping up to begin his first sermon, and he comes proclaiming what?

Good news. But what is this good news?

[4 : 59] And will it even be good news for you? You know, is all this Jesus and Bible talk not old news? Or at least for when you are older. The good news is the gospel.

That is what gospel means. Good news. You tell me if this is good news. The whole world has sinned. It's messed up. It deserves nothing but hell forevermore.

But God has sent his son, his own son, Jesus, who personally takes and deals with our sin, who believe, offering us an alternative route, one that leads to the kingdom, where we can live with him forever.

Is that good news? Have a look at verse 15. Jesus says, The time has come. The kingdom is near. There is an urgency to Jesus' first sermon. He isn't going to waste time. He's not going to beat around the bush. He's not going to wait till you're older. This is the day.

[6 : 09] This is the time to repent and to believe. Let me just fill out our understanding of what we mean by kingdom, the kingdom of God.

Earlier on in the Lord's Prayer, we mentioned, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

We're praying for God's kingdom to come. The king, the king is in the kingdom. And the kingdom is where the king is. You know, a few months ago, I tried to explain this aspect of the kingdom to the children in their children's talk.

We've all heard of magic kingdom at Disney World. You know, even there, there are ruling characters. Mickey and Minnie, I guess, are the king and queen.

But to step into the realm of reality, we live in the United Kingdom. And we have a ruling and reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth.

[7 : 16] But the kingdom of God is greater than these man-made kingdoms. The kingdom of God has its own king too. And that king has come down to earth, Jesus Christ.

But you know what's interesting? Is that in these last three months, Disneyland, the supreme theme park throughout the whole world, closed.

But what about a country? United Kingdom. We who think we are unstoppable, locked down. What about the kingdom of God?

Open. The kingdom of God is open and Jesus is telling us it is now here and that you can be a part of it. Jesus came to this earth to invite us into his kingdom.

It is the place where God's people will be safe and secure. Last week, we spoke about hell, the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[8 : 26] God's kingdom is the complete opposite. There will be no tears or pain there. There will be no enemies or sin there. It shall be the location of the righteous, those who have accepted, tasted and believed the good news.

This kingdom is unshakable. No evil man, no cancerous cell, no unstoppable virus will be present to distract you from worshipping the king.

The air will be filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control.

Of course, while we remain on this earth, we don't experience the full extent of God's kingdom yet, but we do get a taste.

Jesus is saying the kingdom of God has come, so it is here. So right now, as a Christian, you experience something of what it means to be part of it.

[9 : 40] Let me give you an undoubtedly flawed example. Some of the other local ministers and I, we enjoy going for a curry before our monthly meetings.

And while we wait for the food that we've ordered off the menu, the waiter comes and brings us an appetizer, a starter. He brings out all the poppadoms and the sauces.

And I had to learn fast as the youngest minister at the table that poppadoms don't last long at a table of hungry ministers. But I love that part of the meal.

I love that, the starters. I love these poppadoms and the sauces. And yet, when the waiter comes again, he's not bringing more of the same. He's going to come and bring out the main meal, the main course.

Right now, the Christian enjoys a foretaste of what heaven is going to be like. We have fellowship with believers. We have peace with God.

[10 : 48] We have promises all throughout the Bible, promises of eternal security. But what awaits the Christian is even more.

The best is yet to come. Uninterrupted, eternal fellowship with the King. This is the news that Jesus is proclaiming.

The kingdom has come. But we must move on to the need. Secondly, the need. Because I, as the preacher, must not only tell you the news.

I must tell you what you need to do. It's not enough that I just paint the description of God's kingdom. I must also show you clearly how to enter into God's kingdom.

And Jesus tells us how to enter. He says in verse 15, repent and believe the good news, the gospel. [11:53] And this is not new theology. This isn't something weird and wonderful that Jesus has just come up with off the cuff to try and make an impression. This is the old, old story that has been proclaimed right throughout the Bible and today, once again, in your hearing.

two commands, repent and believe. Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and so on, all throughout the Old Testament have been proclaiming the same message, the same commands, repent and believe.

Now what is so striking as we read the offer being given throughout the Old and New Testaments is that some did, but some did not.

What about you? Will you be the some who did during the coronavirus pandemic, the lockdown, the online services?

Will you be the some who did repent and believe or the some who did not? repent. What does it mean though to repent?

[13:14] To repent literally means to change your mind, to turn, to do the full 180 away from evil and toward good.

We all must make this change because we are all by default set in the direction of evil and of sin. That is our course from the moment of our birth.

we are set on the broad road that leads to destruction and unless a change takes place in our life, unless we turn 180 degrees, then you will simply cruise control into a lost eternity.

Jesus calls us to turn away from our sin. You know, I don't know how much of the Bible you've read, how much you understand.

Maybe you know that you commit sin, but do you know that you are a sinner? Jesus spoke plainly about sin. He hated it.

[14:21] He hates sin. It made him angry. It's an offense against God. It was an attack on his kingship. It was a refusal of his grace.

Jesus says, if your eye or your arm or your foot cause you to sin, then cut it off. For it's better to have one eye or one arm or one foot and enter the kingdom of God than to have all of these members of your body and to be thrown into the fire of hell.

Shocking language. But mere emotion or feelings, they're not enough. Plenty people feel bad about their sin.

Plenty people come under a conviction of sin. Look at Judas. He handed Jesus over to be crucified. He shed tears over his sin, but he never truly repented.

True repentance begins with sorrow, sorrow, not about yourself, but sorrow about what you have done to God. You know, a church in our denomination released a video this past week and they were interviewing different people who came into the church and they were speaking with this lady who had started coming along and she was just loving it.

[15:44] And they asked her, are you a Christian yet? And very honestly, she replied, not yet, but I'm turning.

Friends, keep turning. May the Holy Spirit turn you away from your sin and turn you towards your sin bearer, the King of the kingdom, Jesus Christ.

These two commands, repent and believe, they are two sides of the same coin. Jesus is not just asking you to repent of all the bad that you've done in your life, but he also wants you to turn towards God.

It's not just a call to a moral and upright lifestyle, it's a call to service of God our King. Jesus commands and invites you to believe the good news.

This good news, in the midst of all the bad news that's around us. You know, Paul tells us in Romans 5, while we were yet sinners, that's when Christ died for us.

[16:57] That is good news. God sent his son, they called him Jesus. He came to love, heal and forgive. He lived and died to buy my pardon.

An empty grave is there to prove my Saviour lives. So many of you know all of this, it's all up here, but it is never transferred down here into your heart.

Knowledge is not enough. You will be barred from entering the kingdom of God. Emotion is not enough to feel bad about your sin, to feel affection for Jesus and his church and the traditions of your town or your village.

You will be barred from entering the kingdom of God. There must be action. You must see the endlessness of your sin. It goes on and on and it has grieved God.

It is hated by God. You must turn away from sin and accept Jesus Christ into your life. Again, to return to the Apostle Paul in Romans 10, if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved.

[18 : 18] You will be welcomed with open arms into the kingdom of God. Friends, will you today in your living rooms turn away from your sin and believe in the good news of the gospel, that is Jesus Christ, that he is your Lord.

J.C. Ryle wrote this, we may reach heaven without learning or riches or health or worldly greatness, but we will never reach heaven if we die unrepentant and unbelieving.

Throughout the Old Testament, it was promised that Jesus would come and he came and Jesus himself promises that he is coming again and that day is closer than ever before.

On that day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, but they'll either do it out of love or out of submission.

That will not be the day of one more opportunity, that will be the day that the door of opportunity is closed forever. The net will be hauled in for the last time.

[19 : 45] Your decision of Jesus today, throughout your life, will be the reason you are sent to the kingdom of God, to be with him forever in heaven, or sent to the kingdom of hell.

Jesus' good news should be words that you never forget, and I pray today words that you never ignore. Jesus sent, the time has come, the kingdom of God is near, repent and believe the good news.

Amen. Let's pray. O Lord our God, we come before you and we pray, thanking you for the message of the gospel, that it is clear, that it has been presented by Jesus himself to repent and believe the good news.

And we pray that all listening that they today would be welcomed into the kingdom of God. Father, may you do a work amongst us. May the Holy Spirit be moving in and out of these homes this day. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.