

Scripture: Mark 1:14-15

Text: Mark 1:15

Hear the Messiah Preach!

Beloved in Christ, We met John. Then, last Sunday we met Jesus the Messiah. Now, today, we hear the Messiah preach!

Last Sunday, we met the Messiah baptized for us, approved for us and also tempted for us [1:9-13]. Now Mark chapter 1:14-15 marks the official beginning of Christ's public ministry. He has been inducted, anointed, and tested for us and now He is ready to begin His service. Like a president, after his inauguration, who gives his inaugural address, so here Christ, the King of the world, gives His inaugural address, preaching the good news of the kingdom for all to hear.

We do not hear His entire sermon, but we do hear His summary of the gospel, the good news, of what He has come to do for us and how He wants us to respond to Him. This message is the heart of who He is, says and does. It is very clear, succinct and to the point. From Mark 1:15, hear the Messiah preach

1. Declaring His gracious reign among us
2. Calling for a genuine response from us.

Declaring His gracious reign among us

Verse 14 comes like a formal announcement. Today we might say 'a press conference', of sorts, announcing the beginning of the Messiah's public service. John called the people to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. God's task for John is now over. We see this with John being handed over and put into prison for his preaching [see Mark 6:14-29]. Now the Messiah Himself appears "preaching the good news of the kingdom of God."

God's timing is always perfect. The Messiah begins His preaching by saying, "***The time is fulfilled***" or as another translation says, "The time has come..." This is a special moment, a great moment in history, in God's calendar. In other words, the hour of God has come! Think of the times of your life. Not all times are the same. Yet there are moments that are very special. Marriage or a graduation is one of them, a time of joy and feasting.

This is one of those moments in the plan of God's salvation for us! "The time has come" declares the Messiah Jesus. Everything in the Old Testament points forward to this fullness of time, the great salvation, in Jesus! This critical hour has arrived. God is faithful to His Word. All His promises are fulfilled in Christ. It marks a turning point in history. It marks the beginning of the final phase in God's plan of salvation: God's reign on earth in Christ!

The time has come – for all of us. This hour of our salvation, of our deliverance! Hear the Messiah preaching to us. It all begins in Galilee, the north. Isaiah speaks about this turning point in time -- beginning in Galilee in 9:1-2, "***Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past He humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future He will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan -- the people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.***"

There is so much hope for us here – maybe you are walking in darkness. You have made the wrong choices. Now you are lying in it. You feel it's too late. Gloom has taken over. You can't erase the past. God has humbled you. Yet the Messiah declares, "The time has come . . . that special moment has come in your life! There is salvation for you; new beginnings, a new start.

The Messiah explains why the time has come. Why is it so? This is because, "***the kingdom of God is at hand.***" Do you hear Him? The kingdom of God has come near. Yes, its timing is near. But 'near' also means the kingdom has come so close to us in His Son.

So what is kingdom? What kingdom is the Messiah preaching here?

Kingdom means 'reign' or 'rule.' A kingdom always has a king. Who is the King here? The Messiah! The kingdom of God has come in God's Son, Jesus. The kingdom of God manifests itself in His kingly reign, His authority. He's not talking about an area with geographical borders. He is talking first of all about our hearts. God has come to reign in our hearts and lives. That's how close He comes to us --- to save us and reign over us, sharing in the joy of salvation. His kingdom is among us, in us. In Luke's gospel, Jesus says, "***The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.***" [17:21].

There is more hope for us here. He has come to break the reign of Satan in our hearts. He has come to break the power of darkness in our lives and bring light. He has come to break the power of greed, hatred, jealousy, uncleanness and fear in our lives and cultivate the fruit of His Spirit. He has come to break the power of death and bring life. He has come to bring us the joy of forgiveness and new life. We read the well-known prophecy of salvation in Isaiah, "***The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...***" [Isaiah 61:1]. This is the power of the kingdom in Jesus. Ultimately He came to break the power of Satan through His death and resurrection. In that dying and rising from the dead, He conquered Satan and sin.

He confirms this for us in every miracle and in every parable He teaches in the gospel of Mark. Almost every parable begins with the words, '***the kingdom is like...***' In every miracle, He confirms that He has come to break the power of Satan, undo the damage sin brings, and make all things new.

In His signs and wonders, He gives us a small glimpse of the fullness of the kingdom to come when He shall return in His power and glory! When John was still in prison, he sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, "***Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?***" Jesus says to them, '***Go and tell John the things which you hear and see. The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised to life . . .***' [Matthew 11:3-5]. There is no other Messiah. He is the One from heaven. Every spiritual blessing of the kingdom of God on this sin-cursed earth is in Him. The door is open to God's kingdom in Him! Hear the Messiah preach: 'the kingdom of God has come near.'

The kingdom comes. It's still coming today. It keeps on coming and growing throughout the world.

How? Through preaching God's Word. By His Spirit, He delivers us from pride, reasoning against God, and idol-worship. He changes hearts and lives. He brings gladness – like no other king can do. You may remember the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in Daniel 2! The king saw a gigantic statue. The head was made of gold and it represented his own kingdom. But as he looked down the gold made way for silver and then after that, bronze. The legs and feet were made of iron and clay. The kingdoms that came after Babylon would each be less impressive than the one before. This statue did not stand on strong legs. A stone, 'cut out without humans hands', came rolling down the mountain and smashed the statue. That stone became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

What does the stone represent? It symbolizes the reign of God in the Messiah which is forever and ever. He is the Stone who breaks the reign of all His enemies. He is also the Rock and foundation of the church: **"on this Rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"** [Mathew 16: 18]. This kingdom, this reign, is not 'of this world' but from heaven in Jesus. It begins in our hearts, changing ourselves, our families, societies and even nations.

Hear, now, the Messiah's call for a response to God's love and to all that He has done for us. It's free; paid for with the price of Christ's blood. This brings us to our second point. Hear the Messiah preach,

Calling for a genuine response from us [v.15b]

The kingdom of God has come in His Son. He comes to us with the free offer for eternity! But how do we enter into His kingdom? How do we receive the blessings and joy of salvation? Answer: By surrendering our lives unconditionally to His reign, His kingship. How do we do that? His call is so clear and straightforward. You can't miss it. **"Repent and believe in the gospel."**

We harm ourselves if we ignore it. We deceive ourselves if we think there is another way. Nor is He giving us a suggestion or an option. It's a command. It's urgent. His motive is love for us. His goal is our salvation. Repent and believe in the gospel! To all who do not repent and believe in Jesus, there is no salvation, only everlasting judgment.

So what does it mean to repent? Often we hear the call to believe in Jesus but not the call to repent. Christ requires both. Repenting means 'a change of mind and heart.' It's 'a change of direction.' If I am driving the wrong way down the highway, I need to make a U-turn and go the opposite direction. It is a resolute [firm] desire to turn away from sin in our lives and to follow Christ and what God says [commands] in the Bible. True repentance results in a changed life. Some people think you can believe on Jesus and not do what He says [Luke 6:46].

Christ requires repentance from us. But who gives repentance to us? God does. Otherwise we would never repent. Naturally, our hearts are too stubborn and sinful. When the Gentiles believed in Christ, the apostle Peter said, **"God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life"** [Acts 11:18]. In speaking of those who live in opposition to Christ in the congregation, Paul says to Timothy that **"God perhaps will grant them repentance"** [2 Timothy 2:25]. Repentance is one of the first fruits of God's reign of grace in our hearts! It's a grace of God's Spirit!

Repentance does not only happen at the time when one first comes to Christ. It's a way of life for the Christian. When the Messiah says, "repent and believe", He is saying, 'keep on repenting and keep on believing in the gospel.' It's a life of continually turning from our sin and turning to Christ in faith.

The Messiah summons us, "***Repent and believe in the gospel!***" Jesus is the gospel. He is the good news. He calls us to believe in Him. Believing in Him means trusting in Him entirely for our salvation, committing yourself to Him! Picture a father on the ground below calling to his five year old son who is standing on the roof of a burning house. As father holds out his arms, he calls him, "Jump my son, you are safe in my arms." The child's confidence and assurance is not in himself but in his father!

Likewise, our confidence is not in ourselves but in Christ alone. We see our sins. We doubt His Word for us. We are not good enough. We become afraid. Hear His promise in the first epistle of John, "*these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life*" [1 John 5:13].

This is such good news for us here! Our assurance of salvation is based not on our goodness, our works but on Christ alone and His perfect work for us. By believing in the Messiah, God declares us righteous on the basis of Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Spurgeon says it this way, "You stand before God as if you were Christ, because Christ stood before God as if He were you." Let us not doubt His promise

The kingdom of God has come in the Messiah Jesus, the King. The way into the glorious kingdom of God is by repenting and believing in the Gospel. All the blessings of salvation are now in Christ and there is more to come: an eternity with Christ in the new creation! Joy and feasting. The Bible says, "***Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts***" [Hebrews 4:7].

We hear the Messiah again today. May we all respond in faith to His 'good news' sermon! Amen.