

God Himself Preaches the Gospel

Mark 1:14-15

Halifax: 21 October 2018, 10:30 AM

Introduction

Today we will return to our sermon series in Mark's Gospel.

- Our text today is Mark 1:14-15, but I want to read from the first verse.

Please give attention to God's holy and infallible word.

Mark 1:1-15: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You." ³ "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.' " ⁴ John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. ⁸ I indeed baptized

you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ⁹ It came to pass in those days *that* Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. ¹¹ Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ¹² Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. ¹³ And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. ¹⁴ Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

May the LORD bless His word to our comfort and edification.

We have certainly seen some marvellous things in Mark, and today is no exception as we come to verse 14-15.

I. Here we see that God Himself comes preaching good news!

A. Mark has made it clear from the start that Jesus is the Son of God.

1. He tells us in the very first verse that He is Jesus Christ the Son of God.
 - There needs to be no guessing with Mark.
 - He gets straight to the point.
 - Jesus of Nazareth is both the Messiah (Christ) and the Son of God.
2. Perhaps you will remember how Mark records that John told us that Jesus was the one who would do what only God can do—baptise us with the Holy Spirit of God.
 - John baptised with water to symbolise the washing away of sin,
 - but Jesus is the one who baptises us with the Spirit.
 - He actually washes away our sin—both by the washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit and by the Spirit attaching us to Himself as our Mediator through faith for complete forgiveness.

- John declares that He is the LORD Yahweh...
 - And that he, John, is not even worthy to loosen His sandal strap—a job that even the lowest Hebrew slave could not be require to perform.
- 3. Mark went on to tell us of Jesus getting baptised—a remarkable thing...
 - for this is God the Son getting baptised...
 - Getting baptised not because He needs to be personally cleansed from sin, but because He came to represent His whole church as our mediator and *we* need to be cleansed.
 - And Mark tells us how the Father affirmed Him as His Son, even though He was now associated with sinners...
 - He declared with a voice that Jesus was His beloved Son and that He was very pleased with Him.
 - And He anointed Him with the Holy Spirit as the Christ—the Messiah—the Anointed One.
- 4. And then last time, we saw how Mark tells us that even though He was God the Son,
 - And even though the Father was still pleased with Him even though He was now the mediator of a sinful people...
 - He was nevertheless driven into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted of Satan.
 - He had to be the father to His church that Adam failed to be to his posterity—
 - a father for us who would honour God the Father by serving Him no matter what... the way it ought to be.
 - He is the One who would establish a kingdom that is about loving God and doing His will instead of rejecting Him to do our own will.

TRANS> What a remarkable person He is—God the Son, our Christ.

B. And now this very same One begins to preach the gospel!

- This is God the Son Himself preaching to us.
- 1. Surely you cannot ignore what He says!
 - People sometimes say that they wish that God would come and speak to them... that then they would believe.
 - Well here it is.
 - This is God preaching.
 - You ignore Him at your own peril!
- 2. And what He preaches is the gospel—the good news.
 - He has good news for a broken rebellious world that is destined to perish in their sin.
 - He has good news for a rebellious church that has provoked God through the ages by their sin.
 - He has good news for people who are labouring and struggling under the dominion of sin.

3. You can accept His words wholeheartedly and with full confidence.
 - He is the Son of God and what He says is sure and true.
 - You can entrust your very life, your eternal soul, to Him.
 - You cannot walk away from what He says once you see that it from God.
 - It is too good to walk away from when you believe it to all be true.
 - It is not something you can be indifferent about.
 - It is good news from God about how to fix all that is wrong with us.

II. So what is His message, His gospel?

- It consists of three parts.
 - First, that the time is fulfilled.
 - Second, that the kingdom of God is at hand.
 - Third, that you should repent and believe the good news.
- A. The time is fulfilled... the decisive moment has come...
1. All through the ages there were promises to God's people that He would bring His salvation to them.
 - There was the promise right after the fall that the seed of the woman would come and that He would crush the serpent's head.
 - There was the promise to Abraham that this Son would come through him and that in Him all the nations would be blessed.
 - And there was the related promise that God would provide the sacrifice that would atone for sin—a firstborn son that would come...
 - All the firstborn sons represented Him, and for each a sacrifice was killed instead of these firstborn sons to show that a firstborn was required...
 - but not just any firstborn son—only the one promised who be anointed a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.
 - Here would be the complete forgiveness of sins—all promised under the New Covenant.
 - There was the promise that the promised Son would be born to David, and that He would reign forever and that He would sit at God's right hand until all His enemies were put under His feet.
 - That He would lead us into our inheritance from God and bring in everlasting righteousness.
 - That He would free us from all our enemies by His might and power.
 - There was the promise of baptism in Ezekiel 36, the sprinkling of clean water, that would be accompanied by the Spirit taking away our stubborn hearts and giving us a heart of flesh that would respond to God and His call.
 - Truly the time is fulfilled...
 2. It is the fulfilment of the ultimate jubilee that is spoken of in Daniel 9:24.
 - a. Daniel prophesied of this time when he said: "Seventy weeks are determined for your people for the holy city..."

- “To finish the transgression,
 - “To make an end of sins,
 - “To make reconciliation for iniquity,
 - “To bring in everlasting righteousness,
 - “To seal up vision and prophecy,
 - “And to anoint the Most Holy.”
- b. Here would be the jubilee of jubilees—
- God had structured times so that every seven years, slaves were set free and the land was given rest...
 - And after every seventh seven year period (49 years) debts were cancelled and land was returned to each family to give them a fresh start...
 - But here, Daniel is speaking of a period of ten jubilees—seventy weeks—or 490 years.
 - It would be the ultimate jubilee when God cancels our debts and sets us free from bondage.
- c. It is the time of the coming of the Son, the Messiah, that God’s people through Him might:
- finish the transgression,
 - make an end of sins,
 - make reconciliation for iniquity,
 - bring in everlasting righteousness,
 - seal up vision and prophecy,
 - and anoint the Most Holy.
3. Here in Mark 1:15, we are told that Son of God Himself came preaching the good news that the time is fulfilled.
- The day had come for God to bring forth a Son to save us and set us free from sin and guilt.
 - The Son of God who preaches is the One who has come... who else could He be but that Son?
 - What a momentous time this was!
- B. He also tells us that *the kingdom of God is at hand*...
- This is the second part of his message to us.
1. This speaks of the kingdom being nearby—in location...
- To say that *the time is fulfilled* speaks of chronological nearness... and now to say that *the kingdom is at hand* speaks of spatial nearness.
 - The idea is that God has come to establish His rule—it is here now among His people—now He is ruling where He did not rule before.
2. Let me explain...
- a. Of course, God has always ruled over all things, but we have not been under His rule in that we have been in the rebellion initiated by Satan.
- Even though God called Israel to be His people, they were never truly in harmony with God as their God.

- There was always rebellion in them—a far from acceptable situation—a deplorable situation, making them completely unfit to inherit His blessing and unfit for communion with Him.
 - The church, without Christ, is truly a basket of deplorables.
 - That is all we could ever be until someone came who was different.
- b. When He came, the kingdom of God—the rule of God—was established.
- Now there was a man who actually did the will of God.
 - With Him, for the first time, the church has a king and a priest who is not a rebel at all.
 - He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.
 - In Him there can be the kingdom of God—where instead of rebellion, there is sweet submission in perfect love.
 - Where there is true worship as it ought to be.
 - Where there is true neighbour love.
 - Where God is God and where we are His people.
 - In Him, God has beautiful harmonious dominion over man.
 - In this kingdom, man is what He should be before God... at last!
3. When the Son of God comes to be our mediator, He preaches to us and tells us that at last that kingdom is here.
- It is here because He is here.
 - The good news is that now man, through Christ, is truly under God forever.
 - He has come to bring sinners into the kingdom of God.
 - To take us and to restore us to God forever—which requires Him to deliver us from our sin by His saving work in us and by His saving work on the cross... the things we saw in Daniel 9:24 that are fulfilled in Him.
 - Finally God and man are reconciled.

TRANS> And then there is the third thing that the Son of God preaches...

- Not only that the time is fulfilled, not only that the kingdom is at hand...
 - but He tells what to do to be a part of this kingdom.

C. He tells us to repent and believe in the gospel.

1. This is wonderful.
- This is not a kingdom that we must purchase.
 - Nor is it a kingdom that we must perform some great feat or go on some pilgrimage or some quest.
 - In fact, it cannot be any of those things because of what it is.
 - It is a kingdom for ruined sinners who are incapable of ever living in this kingdom.
 - It is a kingdom like no other—
 - The kingdoms of this world either require you to prove that you are fit to be a citizen of them...
 - Or, they bring you in even though you are not fit to be a citizen and you introduce even more disorder into the kingdom.

- But with the kingdom of God,
 - You come to Him as unfit and He makes you fit.
 - That is why it is good news.
2. So what must you do to enter? What does God the Son tell us?
- a. First Jesus says to *repent*... to turn from what you were...
 - You must come to Him as one who rejects your way of living—of living in disobedience to God.
 - You come as one who acknowledges fully that you are unfit, but who comes to Him because you want to be changed by Him.
 - You come as one leaving your rebellion to be a true servant of God—indeed to be a son of God living in harmony with Him and His people forever and ever.
 - But you do not come claiming to be such a servant and son, but as one asking Him to make you such.
 - That is repentance.
 - It is a gift of God’s Spirit who writes God’s law in your heart so that you no longer want to live in sin and rebellion.
 - b. Second, Jesus says to *believe the gospel*.
 - You believe the good news that with Jesus the kingdom has come.
 - You believe the good news that He is righteous—fit for this kingdom—and that He is able to make us righteous.
 - You believe that by His priestly work by which He offered Himself to die for our sins, you receive complete pardon from all your sins.
 - You believe that He is able to do all that is required to restore you to God, and you put yourself into His hands to save you.
 - c. In short, He is the Saviour, and you simply present yourself to Him as a ruined sinner and ask Him to do the saving.
 - It is not you who must do it, but Him.
 - Only He can change you by His Spirit and only He can atone for your sins so that you can be forgiven.

TRANS> But just a minute...

III. There’s something wrong here... at least it seems like it’s wrong...

- I don’t know if you noticed it or not—because you are used to this kind of thing—but...
- A. John is in prison!
- In verse 14, it says: “Now after John was put prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching...”
1. Even as Jesus announces that the kingdom is here, His most noble and faithful servant has been arrested.
 - Mark just mentions it in passing...telling us when Jesus began to preach, but what it says is rather disturbing if you think about it.

- Do you see the problem?
 - We have the kingdom of God, and we have God the Son declaring to us that the kingdom of God is here...
 - but His own herald has been put in prison.
 - How can this be the kingdom of God when the King's faithful herald, one of His most loyal servants, is put in prison?
 - By what power can this be done to the king's servant?
 - What kind of kingdom is this?
 - Where is the authority of the king to tolerate such things?
 - Yet he confidently asserts that the kingdom is at hand. It sure doesn't look like it!
2. And this brings up something else—look at the king Himself!
- Where is His palace? Where is His entourage? Where is His army? Where are His robes and His crown?
 - Why has He been in the wilderness without food? Driven there to be tempted?
 - And yet, He undauntedly stands and preaches that the kingdom of God is at hand and everyone should repent and believe the good news.
 - What kind of kingdom is this?
3. And let's apply this to us now...this kingdom...
- What kind of kingdom is God's kingdom where even though I enter, I still get sick, I still struggle with sin, and there are people that sin against me?
 - I thought this was the kingdom of God where these things are no more.
 - Why is it that I still struggle with my lust and my pride?
 - Why is it that I still don't love God the way I should or see His glory the way I should, when I have come to Jesus where I am supposed to be restored to God's rule of my life?
 - Can this be the kingdom of God?
 - What kind of kingdom is it where there are divisions and scandals even in the very church itself?
 - Sometimes it is hard to even know who is right...
 - There are leaders that are found molesting children or embezzling funds.
 - There are people who flare up in anger... and there are discouraged people who are ready to give up... and there are selfish and proud people...
 - And there are people like John who are faithful servants of the king,
 - but they are in prison.
 - or in a hospital bed with terminal cancer at age 35.
 - or unable to find a job—or food and water.

TRANS> Is *this* the kingdom of God?

- Yes it is.
- You must understand the nature of the kingdom at the present time.

- B. At present, the kingdom has a perfect king, but the members are not yet perfect.
1. This makes it clear to us that our acceptance is not found in what we are, but in what Jesus is in our behalf.
 - He is the sacrifice for sins—both past sins and the ones that are still a part of us and our lives.
 - He is the righteous One who represents us all—it is Him and His righteousness alone that is acceptable to God, not that of any other member.
 - All the glory goes to King Jesus and it always will.
 2. This also makes it clear that this is a kingdom of hope.
 - a. We are not yet what we should be as far as our walk with God,
 - but we have put ourselves into His hands... the hands of King Jesus... that He might make us all that we should be—and we know that He will.
 - b. We are not yet delivered from our enemies but are often called to suffer persecution and ridicule not to mention lack of acceptance in the world,
 - but we are looking to our Saviour Jesus who told us that He will overcome all who oppose His kingdom... we are waiting for Him to do that.
 - c. We have our bodily infirmities and the effects of the curse upon the creation to contend with—famine, storms, sickness, and even death...
 - but once again, we have come to our Saviour who has promised that we will inherit the earth with Him and that when we do, there will be no more death or sorrow and no more curse.
 - He has promised us that our bodies will be raised from the dead and perfected.
 3. So the good news is that our Saviour has come and that we are in His hands for salvation.
 - a. The good news is that if we have come to Christ in repentance and faith,
 - 1) We are safely in His kingdom.
 - We are forgiven by His sacrifice and accepted in His merit...
 - We are reconciled to God and are accounted as His children...
 - 2) These things are unspeakably wonderful.
 - To think that we who were under the wrath and curse of God are now fully accepted as family with our names written down in heaven—that we have an inheritance with Christ in glory!
 - To think that we shall see the Lord of glory and that when we see Him, we shall be like Him!
 - To think that even now, He has given us the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of things to come—and that our hearts have been turned to Him when they were cold and stony!
 - Truly, this is good news—very good news.
 - b. We are safe in His kingdom and we are looking to Him to perfect all that concerns us...
 - And because He is the Son of God, we know that He will.
 - Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in Him.

- We do not always know why we have our ongoing struggle with sin and with sorrow and with sickness and with other people...
 - but we know that God the Son Himself has called us into His kingdom and that He will not fail to do all that He has promised.
 - Our joy is in our hope in Him and His promises until He comes and fulfills them.
- He Himself suffered greatly while He was in this world...
 - And He told us that we would have much tribulation in this world also.
 - If our King who redeems us had to suffer while He was here, what have we to complain about if He calls us to suffer till this life is past?
- We have the forgiveness of sin and we have eternal life and we have the first-fruits (the beginning work) of the Holy Spirit.
 - That is enough until He returns and perfects the kingdom.
 - The Son of God has preached the gospel and it is ours to believe.

Conclusion:

And now I would ask each one of you.

- What do you know of this kingdom?
 - Have you repented and believed the gospel?
 - Have you come to Christ that you may have forgiveness and eternal life?
- I should truly hope that none of you will refuse this kingdom.
 - You do not have to perform some great feat to enter it.
 - All you have to do is turn from your rebellion and entrust yourself to Jesus to save you.