

**Mark 1:14 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." (NKJV)**

We need to keep in mind that Mark moves right along in his story. It is helpful for us to get some context from the other Gospels so we know **where we are** in the story. Reading the book of Mark is a little like **napping** on a long drive. You know **what you can see** but you are unaware of **what you missed**.

From the time that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness to now, some time has elapsed. In that time these things have happened:

John was questioned about his authority to do what he was doing. He told the priests and Levites that he was not the Christ, he was not the Elijah, he was not the prophet (which probably refers to another Messianic prophecy). Then they ask him, well what are you? What gives you authority to do what you do? The implication is- "because we sure didn't give that authority to you."

He told them "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness Make straight the way of the Lord". This referred to a prophecy in Isaiah.

Every answer John gave... pointed to the humble job that John was given to do... in light of the greatness of the one he served. He doesn't even compare himself to a person. He compares himself to a voice. I am the voice of one, he says.

What an excellent example for us to follow. Jesus refers to John as the greatest person prior to Him. And look how John sees himself. A servant to a mighty Lord. When we get **full of ourselves**, we do well to look at John.

It was at this point, in fact the next day, that John sees Christ again and he tells his followers what we see in the Gospel of John. He tells them that Christ is the one. He is the lamb of God who takes away the "sin of the world". He tells them that Christ is the one He has been preparing people for. He even says, like Mary pointed out in Sunday school, that John did not even know for sure who the Christ was until the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. That was the sign that John was waiting for to confirm the Messiah's identity.

The next day John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples and he saw Christ walk by. He said- behold the lamb of God. These two, one of them being Andrew, Peter's brother, went with Christ. They followed Him, but probably not permanently at this point. They were following Him to learn what He was preaching. They stayed with Christ that evening. Then Andrew found Peter and told him that "we have found the Messiah". Jesus then told Peter he would be called Cephas. The next day he found Phillip and told Phillip to follow him. Phillip found Nathaniel and asked him to follow Christ. That is when Nathaniel said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?". But when he met Christ he found out that Jesus knew Nathaniel long before Nathaniel knew Jesus.

After this Jesus was invited to a wedding, probably of a family member. The groom ran out of wine. That was a huge problem in those days. Jesus displays to his mother that this sort of thing is not his priority. While reading it I could almost imagine Christ saying, not my circus, not my monkeys. But nonetheless, Christ turned water into wine. This was the first of His miracles. Some of Christ's disciples were present here. This all gives us more perspective on what the disciples knew before Christ called them.

I really like the fact that Christ made really good wine. That has got to be a burr under the saddle of all the hyper-fundamentalists. I guess we will get a taste of His brand of wine at the Marriage supper of the lamb.

After this, Jesus cleanses the temple for the first time. The money changers were making a killing by changing all foreign currencies to the currencies that were allowed for purchasing animals for sacrifice at the temple. They were essentially exploiting **people's love for God** by ripping them off in their pursuit of **sacrificing to God**. That would be similar to charging people to hear the Gospel of Christ. When you think about it, it is awful. So Jesus drove the crooks out of the temple. Then the authorities asked him, essentially, what authority do you do this by? Jesus said the sign they are asking for is that if they destroy this temple, in three days he will raise it up. They didn't understand that he was referring to His body. After this Christ evidently did a bunch of miracles in Jerusalem at Passover because people believed in Him as a result of those miracles. It looks like what they believed was that Jesus was the Messiah. But they didn't have any kind of saving belief. Because it was at this point that Christ **did not commit himself to them** because He knew what was in them.

After this Jesus meets with Nicodemus. We learn from this encounter about the Gospel Christ was preaching. He is telling people that the problem is their spiritual condition. They cannot improve. They need a miracle. They need regeneration. They need to be born again. He also gives a vision into **what is to come** because Jesus tells Nicodemus that Christ was not sent this time to judge the world, He didn't come to execute justice on the transgressors. No, He came that through Him the world can be saved. This is the first in depth look into what Christ was saying about Himself. We are learning early on that Christ knows and preaches that He was not going to fulfill most people's expectations of what the Messiah would do. After this Jesus came back to Judea and began baptizing, probably not far from John the Baptist. Then John's disciples started griping about Jesus's disciples. And John, in no uncertain terms, sets them straight.

As I was studying this I was gripped with the enormity of what John does here. Let's look at what he says to his disciples.

**John 3:24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison. 25 Then there arose a dispute between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.**

**26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified--behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"**

**27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.**

**30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease. 31 He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. 33 He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. 34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. 35 The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. 36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."** (NKJV)

Put yourself in John's place. John grew up in a way that deprived him of much of what this world had to offer. By the looks of things he was not married. He couldn't drink wine. And when he was 29 he began a life of severe austerity. Yet his ministry was very successful. He had people travelling miles to see him. He was having wonderful ministry results. He was the biggest thing around spiritually. And his purpose was singular. To prepare for Christ. That is it. That is why he was alive.

Then Christ came. And Christ stole the show. The people who had come to see John are now coming to see Christ. John's disciples were probably thinking, Christ could at least share. It could at least be the John and Christ show now. But John, who had the most to lose here, would have none of it.

Look what he says. Verse 28- You heard me say this. I am not the Christ but I am preparing for the Christ. He might have said as well, did you think I didn't mean it? Did you think I was just saying that stuff? No. I understand my purpose. My purpose is not about me or my ministry or my benefit. My purpose is about Christ and His Glory. Period.

In fact, John is essentially saying, not only does it **not bum me out** when people follow Christ instead of me. My joy, the thing that could make me the happiest, is fulfilled. I am as happy as could be to see that my ministry had this result.

Wow. What a minister. No flesh. No selfish motive. No dual motives. Just purity of purpose.

So how do we know when our ministries are like John's ministry? We will know it when **our success** results in **more glory for Christ** and **less attention on us**, and **we like it**.

I think John is probably one of the greatest examples of a person who understood his purpose in the Bible. He could answer the question, what are you here for?

Why are you alive? Why do you breath? He would have answered, I live to prepare people for the coming of Christ.

How about us? How about you? Why do we live?

Do we look confused? If anyone is looking on, would they think we are unsure about our purpose? What do we get upset about? What do we get excited about?

Where does our money go? Where is our time spent? What distracts us most?

What do we not do without? What do all those things say about our purpose?

John was utterly congruent. He was glad to see people coming out to him in the wilderness to repent of their sin. He was glad to preach to them about how to prepare for Christ. When Christ showed up John was glad to see Him. And when all these people he had prepared began to follow Christ, he was thrilled. It made his joy full.

I am convinced that much of the chaos in our lives is due to our failure to really understand what we are here for. Or if we understand it, it is due to our failure to align ourselves with our purpose. It is so easy for us to live as if our purpose is our own pleasure. Or to live like our purpose is our own comfort. Or even to live like our purpose is found in our accomplishments. But we are misguided. We do best, we are most content, we are most useful when we realize that our purpose is to glorify Christ. Our marriages, our children, our homes all have their ultimate purpose in glorifying Christ. How much better our lives would be if we were to follow the example of John the Baptist and live out our purpose more purely, less distracted.

Then back in our John text John ends by saying this:

**. 35 The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. 36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."** (NKJV)

John got it. John understood who Christ was and what He was here for. It was all about belief in Christ. And the issue was not the political leadership of the country. It was not about economic development. It was not about national sovereignty. It was all about who will live forever with God and who will face the wrath of God.

That is what Christ is all about. (focus on Gospel)

Now back to our story line, at this point we find in Luke that John gets arrested.

**Luke 3:19 But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20 also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison. (NKJV)**

So we see that John the Baptist's honest ministry cost him dearly. He told the truth to everyone about their need to repent, and in this case he knew some of the sins that Herod Antipas needed to repent of. Well it appears that Herod liked his sin more than he liked God and decided to silence the messenger.

Then in John we see this

**John 4:1 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), 3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. 4 But He needed to go through Samaria. (NKJV)**

So John and Jesus were ministering fairly close to each other. Herod Antipas arrests John. John was a real thorn in the Pharisees side. They had to receive the news of John's arrest as good news for themselves. And it may have made them a bit more brave regarding Christ, who was turning out to be a bigger thorn. So they begin to focus on Christ.

Christ decides at this point that it is time to relocate His ministry. He decides to go back to Galilee under the jurisdiction of Herod Phillip, I believe. It is a better political climate for what Christ had to accomplish.

But it is interesting that it says He needed to go through Samaria. Why? I think it was because He had a divine appointment with a woman at a well. There were other ways to get to Galilee, but through Samaria was the quickest. Although most Jews would take the long route because they despised the Samaritans and their inferior religion.

So on this trip Jesus stopped at Sychar and that is where we read of the story of the woman at the well.

In order to keep the context of our Mark text, let's read it.

**John 4:5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? 12 Are You greater than our father Jacob,**

who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*." 27 And at this *point* His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" 28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him. 31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." 33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him *anything* to eat?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. 35 Do you not say, 'There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! 36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors." 39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I *ever* did." 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He

stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word. 42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." 43 Now after the two days He departed from there and went to Galilee. 44 For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. 45 So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast. (NKJV)

Ok, all of this happened between verses 13 and 14 in Mark 1.

Now we finally get to our text.

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Some scholars say that this was the beginning of Jesus's public ministry. Given what we have just reviewed I don't think that is true. But it seems like more attention is now given to the **preaching** ministry of Christ. In Mark's telling of the story we move from John completing his ministry, to Jesus beginning His. We find that Christ is preaching the gospel or the "good news" of the kingdom of God.

I think it is interesting to note who the people are **who did not regard this as good news** at all. We see all through Christ's ministry those who really don't think what Jesus was teaching was good news at all. And who are they?

They are all people who have one thing in common. They are all people **who don't really believe the bad news**. They are all people who don't recognize that **their greatest problem lies inside their hearts**. None of them believe they are sinners that totally deserve condemnation. None of them believe the problem with the world is really what is inside them. We will see a lot of people in the gospels who reject Christ, at least temporarily, and they all have this in common. We start with the religious leaders, but it goes farther than that. We will see a rich young ruler, we will see crowds who witnessed an exorcism, we will see crowds who want Christ crucified because He did not fulfill their expectations, we will even see a convicted criminal on a cross next to Christ. And none of them were responsive to the greatest good news to ever prevail in human existence.

We do the gospel great harm when we try to make it more palatable to the lost by making it less offensive to our human pride. The gospel, at its core, must convict us of our need. It must show us the absolute futility of human pride. It must show us we are incapable of fixing that which most needs fixed. The good news is not

good news until all hopes of self help are destroyed. Only then will we, or can we, call out to God for that which **only God can give us**.

We are given insight by Mark into what Christ was actually saying. This is what this good news consists of.

### **The time is fulfilled**

The word for fulfilled means to draw, come near, to approach absolutely. The word for time is not the normal word for telling time- *chronos*, but it is the decisive time. It means the preappointed period of time which must happen before the kingdom of Christ can be founded by Christ.

A Mr Schweizer says "He marks the fulfillment of the special salvation-time which is distinguished from all other time" (Schweizer, p. 45).

Christ is ultimately saying the time is NOW! God is about to do something dramatic. All of time has waited for this specific short period of time.

As for the Kingdom of God", Jesus uses this term a lot. This is not a phrase found in the old testament, but the **idea of it** shows up a lot.

We find in the old testament **that the Lord will reign forever and ever** Ex 15:18 **The Lord is enthroned as King forever** (Ps 29:10); **"I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King"** (Isa 43:15).

We see the idea of a forever Kingdom in which God reigns- the kingdom of God. Now to complicate this, we see this in two tenses. We see it referred to in a present tense and we see it referred to in a future tense.

We see that Christ did the same thing.

In our text we see that the Kingdom of God is at hand or near. Then in Matt 12:28 and Luke 11:20 Jesus says that the kingdom of God has come upon you. Basically Christ is saying that God's rule has invaded this world in the person and ministry of Christ. His rulership is right here, right now.

But then Christ also said

"I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11; cf. Matt 20:21).

So here we see a future Kingdom along with the forefathers.

Bruce Metzger pointedly says: "The kingdom of God in its essence is the reign of God, the personal relationship between the sovereign God and the individual. Thus there is no point in asking whether the kingdom is present or future, just as there is no point in asking whether the fatherhood of God is present or future. It is both" (*The New Testament* [New York: Abingdon, 1965], p. 148).

Mark emphasizes what Christ said about the kingdom of God. The kingdom has invaded our world by its King showing up in person in our world. The emphasis is also **on the time** because this kingdom arriving ushers in the end of time that will be followed soon after.



This idea of a kingdom of God brings with it an urgency, a need to **act now**. The only appropriate response to humans who understand this message and believe it is to worship the king. It is to fall at His feet understanding **the only salvation they can obtain** and the salvation that they **so desperately need** is found only in Christ. Their preparation for the kingdom will be done by repenting and believing. Repenting and believing are not really two separate things. It is more that they are two sides of the same coin. Like Mike always said, you can separate them to study them, but you can't separate their existence together. If you believe, you will repent. That is the effect that belief has on you. And if you are repentant, it shows that God has already worked upon your heart to believe. Regeneration precedes faith.

The idea of repentance also carries with it the urgency of **avoiding upcoming judgment and punishment**. We need to remember that most of these Jewish people would have understood the Messiah's arrival to initiate **both reward and punishment**. They would have thought that if Messiah is here, judgment of the world will happen soon. Most did not understand that Christ was coming to seek and save the lost. Following Christ's death at the hands of the Jews and the Romans there was a judgment on the Jews by the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. So there was a partial fulfillment then of the Messiah's judgment. But judgment of the world will happen when Christ returns.

God, in His grace and mercy, has provided 2000 years now for people to repent and believe this wonderful gospel. We don't know how much longer this opportunity will last. We do well to make good use of it.