

“The Kingdom Come” – Mark 1:14-15
Series: Look and Live #2

There are certain events that have happened in this world that have changed *life* on earth in an instant! They are like milestones in history; events we can look back upon and think, “What would it be like if *such and such* had never happened.”

What would it be like if *Russia* beat us at landing on the moon? Or what if those shots had *missed* JFK that day? What if Martin Luther King survived? What if, as the 9/11 hijackers went through the metal detectors on their way to their planes, what if they were *caught* before they ever boarded?

There are six *moments* like that in the history of our salvation. These are world-defining, salvation enabling, events. Here they are: Creation, the Fall, God’s promises to Abraham, the Exodus, the appearance of God’s Kingdom, and the final consummation of God’s Kingdom. All of biblical, and salvation, and even *world history* fits between those events. Those six events *define* every other event. *Our text this morning is event number 5.* As of our text this morning, the world changed.

What makes this text so significant, aside from the fact that it marks one of those six events we talked about before, is that it seems to summarize the entire ministry of Jesus. This is not just a single episode in Jesus’ life that Mark is telling us about. The text just says generically, Jesus came into Galilee preaching. When you consider that from here on in the book of Mark, Mark is just going to say that Jesus preached or Jesus was preaching, not one more time is he going to tell us *what* he was preaching and saying, it seems pretty clear: Mark wants us to understand these two verses as a summary of Jesus’ three and a half year ministry on earth. He was preaching the appearance and drawing near of God’s Kingdom. That was Jesus’ *main message* in a nutshell.

(*And for confirmation of that, you can look at Matthew 4 where Matthew summarizes Jesus’ teaching in the same way. Or you can look at Luke 4:43, where Jesus says “I must preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God...for I was sent for this purpose.” And just as significantly, in Matthew 24:14, Jesus summarizes the message that we’re supposed to preach to the ends of the earth as the “Gospel of the Kingdom”!*)

That’s amazing, because when we think *Gospel*, when we think, the *Good News of God*, we might think things like, “God wants us to be happy” or maybe that “God wants us to be prosperous in this life.” Or maybe Gospel for us equals a get out of Hell free pass, kind of like fire insurance.

For Mark, for Jesus, for Matthew, for Luke, even for Paul in the book of Acts, the Gospel, the Good News *is* verse 15, “The time is fulfilled, the KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND!” That’s the Gospel.

That makes this pretty outstanding. If this is how both Mark and Jesus preach and summarize the Gospel, then that makes this something worth giving our attention to! So let’s think about what this means here in verses 14 + 15.

Four questions concerning the Kingdom of God that Jesus apparently spent his whole ministry proclaiming. First of all, what is it? Second, how did *he fulfill it and bring it near*, like he, like he proclaimed? Third, why is that message the same as the Gospel? What do the Gospel and the Kingdom of God have to do with each other? Fourth and finally, what does that have to do with us?

- 1) Number one, what is this “*Kingdom of God*” that Jesus comes proclaiming? What does Kingdom of God refer to?
 - a) Clearly from this passage we can learn one thing: the Israelites were *expecting and anticipating* the coming of the Kingdom of God. They read promise after promise about God coming and his rule and his reign coming in its fullness. More so at the time of Jesus’ birth than any other time, the Jews in Israel were hoping for and longing for the coming of the Kingdom of God! That’s why Jesus comes preaching, “The Kingdom of God that you all have been longing for has drawn near! It has come!” So they were expecting it.
 - b) To understand what exactly they were expecting the Kingdom to be, think about the kingdoms of David and his son Solomon. That period, from the start of David’s kingship to the end of his son’s, that was the golden era of Israel. That was when *Israel* was at her prime.
 - i) That was when her military was the strongest. That was when her borders were the biggest. That was when all of Israel was united under one king and one rule.
 - ii) Then, when he died and his son took the throne, for the first half of his rule anyway, things only got better.
 - iii) Not only did they have massive land holdings, they were at peace with all of their neighbors.
 - iv) They had money and possessions and tradable goods coming out their ears.
 - v) And, their king was the wisest, most stunning man on the face of the whole earth.
 - vi) That was the time they would forever be looking back upon with nostalgia.
 - c) So after that, when those kings were dead and gone and the *prophets* started talking about the coming of the kingdom of God, most pictured a restored kingdom much like Solomon’s peaceful, wise, rich, prosperous kingdom.
 - d) And when Israel started to be oppressed by outsiders and foreigners actually moved in and took over their land and began to rule over them, the people of Israel were longing for the Kingdom of God which had been promised to them, where they thought God would put a rightful king descended from David on the throne of Israel. And that wonderful king would be wise like Solomon and strong like David, and he would drive out Israel’s enemies like the Romans and he would restore the nation of Israel to her proper glory. That’s what they were hoping for.
 - e) Well, they were wrong!
 - f) That’s *not* the Kingdom of God that God had in mind and that he had been promising.
 - i) In a certain sense, they were kind of on track. God’s Kingdom would be kind of *like* Solomon’s kingdom. But it won’t be like it as in, David’s Kingdom was *like* Solomon’s Kingdom.
 - ii) It’s more like a painting is *like* the thing that is painted, where the painting is Solomon’s Kingdom and the real thing that is *painted* in the picture is God’s Kingdom that Jesus now brings. It’s a whole better, bigger reality, at the very least because God’s Kingdom will, in the end, be both physical and spiritual, whereas David’s and Solomon’s were just physical.
 - g) So there certainly are some similarities.
 - i) Like Solomon’s, God’s Kingdom is going to have God’s King set up over God’s people.

- ii) Like Solomon, under God's King the people of the Kingdom will be prosperous and will thrive.
 - h) But, God's Kingdom is going to be *far superior*. Here are **five ways that God's Kingdom is superior to Solomon's**:
 - i) First, God's Kingdom will be both physical and spiritual because God's King will rule the hearts of his people, whereas Solomon's was just physical.
 - ii) Second, God's Kingdom is superior to Solomon's because it is eternal. The King is eternal. The Kingdom is eternal. And everyone who enters *into it* is in it for eternity.
 - iii) Third, God's Kingdom is superior because it's not just going to be another Kingdom on this earth, another nation among many nations, like Solomon's was, but God's Kingdom is going to be the sole people of God living in eternal fellowship *with God*, ultimately, in a new heaven and new earth! While all of the rest are destroyed and suffering.
 - iv) Fourth, God's Kingdom is superior to Solomon's because becoming part of this Kingdom means you are eternally reconciled with God, forgiven of your sins, and adopted as his own! So in Solomon's day, and even in the church today, we have a *mixed community*. Ideally, everybody belongs to the Lord. But in reality, we know that's not true. There are wolves and misguided ones and hypocrites. But in God's Kingdom, there is no mix. Only those who are reconciled and forgiven are truly part of God's Kingdom.
 - v) And fifth, in God's Kingdom, the King is infinitely more glorious and worthy to rule over God's people than Solomon was.
 - i) One more thing about the Kingdom:
 - i) Israel *totally* missed the fact that God's Kingdom was not going to come *all at once*.
 - (1) In actuality, when God's Kingdom finally comes, we learn that it is going to happen in *two stages*:
 - (a) It will appear and come so that people are able to enter into it. That happened in Mark 1.
 - (b) But it will not come in all its fullness until the very end of time, as described in the book of Revelation.
- 2) Second question: how did Jesus *fulfill* and *bring near* the Kingdom of God, like he proclaimed?
- a) Did you notice how Jesus began his sentence? "*The time is fulfilled.*"
 - i) That tells us that God has been preparing for this event for some time. It's like saying, "The hour that we've been waiting for has now finally come!"
 - ii) So here's the important thing: God's Kingdom didn't come out of nowhere! God didn't wake up on that day and say, "Hey, I've got a great brand-new idea!" It wasn't like that at all. It was, in fact, so deliberate. History had been *moving towards this event!*
 - iii) The question is, for how long? How long ago did God start to prepare for the coming of his Kingdom? Well, we'd have to go all the way back to the first page of the Bible.
 - iv) Everything in history had been *moving and preparing* for that time.
 - (1) God's plan since the creation of the world was to have a physical, spiritual Kingdom of his special people in eternal fellowship with himself under his royal Son as King. That's God's Kingdom. He's been preparing and working towards that since Creation.
 - (2) That's what Israel was all about. That's what Solomon's Kingdom was all about. Getting ready for the final, true Kingdom, which Jesus now appears saying, "IT'S HERE! GOOD NEWS! This is the moment the history of the world has been waiting for!"

- b) Now here's the most important part of everything this passage says: the *reason* the Kingdom of God was all of the sudden *near*, the reason it was all of the sudden *there*, in Mark 1, is simply this: Jesus was there! Jesus was standing in front of them! Jesus was the bringer of God's long-awaited and hoped for Kingdom! When he came, the Kingdom came.
 - c) So somehow, the Kingdom of God is all about Jesus. And, as he himself said, Jesus' coming was all about the Kingdom.
 - d) Since we've read the end of the story, we know already that Jesus is going to die to forgive the chosen people of God so they can be part of God's Kingdom. We know that he is going to rise to give new kingdom life to those same people. We know that he is going to give his Spirit to *rule* and *reign* in those chosen kingdom people. And, we know that he is going to dwell in them through that same Spirit so that they have fellowship with God.
 - e) That's how Jesus brings God's Kingdom and begins to rule as God's King. It hasn't come in full yet, that will happen on the last Day of Judgment, and we will be in the Kingdom physically that day. Today, we are in it spiritually. But it has truly, really come in Jesus.
- 3) Third, why is that message the same as the Gospel?
- a) Well first of all, *it is*.
 - i) Verse 14: Jesus goes into his home region of Galilee preaching the **Gospel** of God, and saying, verse 15. Now I suspect some read that and think Mark tells us two separate things. Number one, Jesus was preaching the Gospel. And number two, he was preaching verse 15. That's not true. Mark is labeling Jesus' message as God's gospel, and then in verse 15 he summarizes that Gospel with "the Kingdom of God is fulfilled and at hand." So that's a summary of the Gospel.
 - ii) And in case we missed it, Jesus himself labels that summary just *the Gospel*. In verse 15, Jesus says, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand." There's the truth, the message. Then Jesus tells people what to do about it. "Repent and believe." Believe in what? Believe in what he just said! And he labels that as, "the Gospel!" Believe in the Gospel!
 - iii) We see that *exact same* thing over and over in Matthew and Luke. *The Gospel* and the *message that Jesus brought the Kingdom of God*, those are not two separate things but they are one thing, one truth: the Gospel.
 - b) But why? Why is the Gospel **Good** news? We know why it's news, but why is it *good* news? What makes Jesus think that he has Gospel, that he has good news when he comes proclaiming the coming of God's Kingdom?
 - i) The coming of God's Kingdom is *Good News* because God created us to be obedient to him and under his rule, and when Jesus brings God's Kingdom, he is giving a people the opportunity to submit to God and come under God's rule once again like God created us to be. That's good news.
 - ii) The coming of God's Kingdom is *Good News* because God's rule and reign over that people is going to be through a king descended from David, who is more glorious than David, more just than David, more wise, more fair, more powerful, and more compassionate. In fact, God is going to rule over us through a king who is like David in every *good way* and yet, who is infinitely more valuable and worthy to be our king. And he will be our glorious king forever and ever without any danger of losing him or being lost by him. That is *good news*!

- iii) The coming of God's Kingdom is *Good News* because every one is born into this world after the Fall belonging to the Kingdom of this world, belonging to the ruler of this world, Satan, following his ways and in chains to our sin. And so when Jesus comes saying, "I've got good news. The Kingdom of **GOD** is now here." He seems to be implying that we can somehow be transferred! There is somehow a hope that even though we are currently classified as rebels, as traitors, as belonging to the Kingdom of God's enemy, there now seems to be hope that there could be a change of allegiance and a change of kingdoms for us. Good news!
 - iv) The coming of God's Kingdom is *Good News* because we already learned that the coming of God's kingdom is bringing the blessing of salvation and the joy of the forgiveness of sins for all the citizens of God's Kingdom. So now, in Jesus, he's saying, "Good news beloved. It's come! It's finally come! Forgiveness of sins and restoration to God has come."
 - c) That is why the coming of the Kingdom in Jesus is called the Gospel! The Gospel is not a separate message.
- 4) Fourth and finally, what does that have to do with us?
- a) Most importantly, we just need to hear from Jesus: *this is reality*.
 - i) I'm really thankful for how clear the New Testament has made this truth. Jesus says, "If you're not against me, you're for me." And he turns around and says, "If you're not for me, you're against me." What's the overwhelming implication? When it comes to kingdoms, there are only two options! You're either *with, in, and for* the Kingdom of God and King Jesus, or you are a sworn enemy fighting against him.
 - ii) Every single one of us was born as a citizen in the Kingdom of God's enemy. We lived our *childhood* as rebels and as fighters against him. *Most of us* lived into our adult lives as rebels. And, unless at some specific point I deliberately laid down my weapons, and unless I came unto God and sought forgiveness and asked to be embraced into his Kingdom and to serve his King, unless that has happened, then I am still a rebel this very moment.
 - iii) At some point though, we heard the call of the One True Glorious King saying, "Although we've been serving and working for the enemy, although we have despised him and rejected him and disobeyed him, yet he extends to us the *free offer* to come into his Kingdom, to swear allegiance to him, and to be reconciled so freely to God!
 - iv) That's what Jesus is doing when he called folks in verse 15 to "repent and believe in the Gospel." Believe and trust in King Jesus' willingness and ability to take you into God's Kingdom, to wash you of your sin-stains, and to restore you and reconcile you to God for eternity. And, *repent*. That is, come under him as King and Lord. Serve *him*. Obey *him*. Repent and believe.
 - v) So, which kingdom do *we* belong to?
 - b) I will close with two encouragements for those who have changed Kingdoms. To those who, all by God's grace, have been plucked *out of* the kingdom of this world and firmly planted in and adopted into God's Kingdom.
 - i) Remind yourself *50 times this week* that you belong to and serve a glorious King.
 - ii) Find your purpose and your joy in being part of this Kingdom God is building.
 - (1) What an amazing redemption we have! We have been made *full citizens* of a great, eternal Kingdom, God's Kingdom! And we serve a great and glorious King, descended from David, and yet *greater* and infinitely more *glorious than* King David. We own Jesus Christ as our King! We pledge our undying allegiance to *him*! Would we not die

for such a King? Would we not give our lives on the sacrificial altar for a King who gave his dying affection to us!?

- (2) This morning, as I was kind of finishing up my notes, I just started kicking myself as I thought about every time I live my life as though I need some *bigger purpose* and some *better joy* than being restored to God and being granted full, eternal, body-soul citizenship into God's chosen Kingdom. That's STUPID!
- (3) If I was a nobody, with no name, no fame, no house, no car, no friend, no family, no accomplishment, no money, no job, **AND**, if I belong body and soul to God, if I owned the King of Kings as my personal King who laid his life on my Cross, then I have *all the purpose in creation* in just loving, serving, honoring that King! In just *seeking first his Kingdom*, in advancing his Kingdom, and obeying my King, I have more purpose and more joy than every Fortune 500 CEO in the world combined.
- (4) What we do counts for eternity. The King we serve receives glory for eternity! There is no greater, bigger, more glorious purpose in this world than to seek and to serve the Kingdom of God. And, we are its citizens. Glory be to God!

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