

God Comes Near Nov 8,15

Pray & Read Mark 1:14-20

Jesus begins in Galilee v14

Straight from the wilderness testing, Mark moves the clock of God forward to John already taken from his ministry in the wilderness of Galilee and held in a prison.

Where's the background?

It's comes later. Mark is quickly establishing the spotlight on the main character, which John announced as the One more powerful, which God the Father declared His Son and the Holy Spirit anointed then sent out to the wilderness with the enemy to establish His readiness.

Galilee was thought of as...out from the center of things, on the North side of Samaria: a minor character in the family of Israel. Yet the people flocked to the Galilean wilderness to hear John. Jesus picks up where John was interrupted.

V15 "The time has come," he said.

"The kingdom of God is near.

Repent and believe the good news!"

Jesus declared that God's rule is now...in their presence. We know God is stepping into human history to fulfill His promise...in the person of Jesus Christ.

God's Kingship

God is king. Who will submit to Him?

When Israel entered the Promised Land – they were to recognize God had established them and that He would be their king. Yahweh would provide direction through His prophets and priests. And as a result of their obedience, they would thrive. They would be a living testimony to all the nations (Isa 43:10) that there is only One God; and all nations would be blessed through them (Gen 12:1-3). But they did not stay loyal and sadly they yearned for a man-king. God had been truly insulted yet He continued to choose and guide their human rulers for a time. But most became corrupted by the world...dividing their loyalties with other gods, greed, lust, superstition and pride.

Did God pack His bags and leave Jerusalem?

Well that doesn't exactly sum it up...He continued warning and disciplining His children. The warnings fell on deaf ears so Israel almost got wiped out. God protected a remnant...a little root growing out of the fallen tree of Israel. God stayed true to His side of the promise...even when Israel did not keep her side. That little root of Jesse (Isaiah 11, Rom 15)

survived the exile in Babylon

(Daniel, Esther, Ruth).

And now the root of Jesse stood before them:

a 30 yr. old Galilean, recently baptized by John and secretly inducted by God ...announcing the Gospel of God in Galilee.

For us looking back at this event, we can see Jesus is God's servant to bring His reign near...right to the hearts of those who believe. God's new reign arrived when Jesus was born. It was introduced during Jesus' earthly ministry but not fully known until after His death and resurrection...and not fully empowered until the Holy Spirit descended upon the first church at Pentecost. It will be completed when Jesus returns.

Was Jesus' message the same as John's?

3 Message updates

1. Jesus moved the message of God from the wilderness to the people
2. Jesus declared God's promised reign was being fulfilled in their presence.
3. Jesus announced that the key to God's nearness was repentance AND belief.

We explored godly repentance the previous 2 sermons: conviction of sin and a godly determination to

clear out the weeds, stones and roots that block the garden path for God in our heart. we change our will to meet God's. Now Jesus combines repentance with belief.

Repent AND Believe

"Both these must go together; we must not think either that reforming our lives will save us without trusting in the righteousness and grace of Christ, or that trusting in Christ will save us without the reformation of our hearts and lives." Matthew Henry

"Repentance alone is not enough to save us, even though God expects believers to turn from their sins. We must also put positive faith in Jesus Christ and believe His promise of salvation. Repentance without faith could become remorse, and remorse can destroy people who carry a burden of guilt" (Matt. 27:3-5; 2 Cor. 7:8-10)

Warren Wiersbe.

From the very first man chosen to save humanity (Noah) to the very first man chosen to birth a people of God (Abraham); faith was always that special relationship God required. There is only one worthy of complete trust – our Lord, God.

In the prayer Jesus taught (Matt 6:9-13), it begins:

“Our Father in heaven; hallowed be your Name; Your kingdom come, Your will be done.”

That is a declaration that God is most high king and that we trust His reign as it happens partially now and completely when Christ returns.

Do we pray with complete trust today? And a sincere longing for God to put things right once and for all?

Or do we have a strong box buried in the garden of our heart? Things we don't want to give up yet?

Oh, the day we say I surrender all.

“All to Jesus I surrender;

All to Him I freely give

I will ever love and trust Him; In His presence daily live.”

(Judson W. deVenter 1896)

Notice that Jesus doesn't directly say, “I am” initiating God's reign or that God's rule is near because “I am the Messiah”. He is declaring God's message like a prophet...drawing people who want to know about God. He knows the hearts of people and does not want to become their political figure to unit the country in a war against Rome. That is not God's agenda. The battle for human hearts is not waged with weapons of war against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12).

Kingdoms in Conflict – Remembrance Day

It is a huge tragedy when the destruction of human life becomes the chosen path for change. It does not bring about true change of heart. If it did, there would be no more armed conflicts. God teaches us not to kill and Jesus reinforced that fully (Matt 19:18). Killing in the name of God is an oxymoron. It is a mountain of sinful choices that lead to war. It is a consequence of sin.

As Canadians, we see our military role as a defender of the defenseless...the enforcement of peace in areas of conflict, to hold the bully at bay. I pray that God would bless us to continue being the ones that bring aid rather than the first strike. We are a nation of many nations so we have a more global perspective. I pray our authorities would ever be cautious to know the whole story before taking sides. And not to be enticed into conflict that represents financial advantage over moral ground. This Wednesday, our nation sets aside a day to remember the loss of loved ones through military commitment. Many live with that loss every day. Only the Prince of Peace can heal those families and heal our land. If only we would turn to Him. Pray

for the many families affected through military service.

Back to our study in Mark...

So how does Jesus back up His powerful words and prove He is Christ, Son of God...without entrusting Himself to the people's motives for military triumph? Mark's Gospel tells us to 'Come and follow' – you'll see.

V 16-17 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. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Not a Typical Rabbi or Revolutionary

Jesus does not campaign. He is not the guest speaker at a great banquet fundraiser full of dignitaries. He's the man on the move. There is urgency to establishing God's new reign. The timeline demands...get 'er done. Jesus makes a beeline for the shores of lake Galilee and begins recruiting.

Jesus' platform promise is to do a work of transformation in his disciples. From fishermen to fishers of men. He doesn't have a building or a courtyard. No sign-up, no tuition, no credentials from the top rabbi training schools. And

He doesn't endlessly quote other rabbis. He speaks from God directly. His curriculum is not endless scrolls to memorize with examination dates. Instead, Jesus finds His own students and He calls them from the midst of their occupations...while at work. Job site to job site, His students are called away from their past life – from all socio-economic securities.

And we don't even get a whisper about what they were thinking at the time. No dialogue – just action.

"What is striking is that Jesus calls them to "follow *me*." Prophets did not call people to follow themselves but to follow God (compare 1 Kings 19:19–21). The sages of Jesus' day never called people to follow them, only to learn Torah from them. Jesus' call of the disciples is therefore dramatically authoritative and matches the biblical pattern of God's calling of humans: a command with a promise, which is followed by obedience (see Gen. 12:1–4)." Mark Gundry

Applying the Gospels

Let us agree that Jesus is the highest point in Scriptures: God in the flesh. The Old Testament leads up to God's revelation in Christ and the letters following the Gospels instruct believers, 'how

now to live' (as God's spirit filled international kingdom community abiding in Jesus).

If you believe as I do that this is more than history, then we need to keep re-evaluating our direction and purpose together...to see if we are keeping in line with the Jesus of the Bible.

AMEN?

V18 At once they left their nets and followed Him.

Responding to the Call

This passage really challenges our commitment level.

We could justify that these fishermen didn't have a lot on the go. Simon and Andrew were doing grunt work. Ever watched a man gather a circular net in waist deep water then toss it just right so it spreads out and the edges drop down first to form a trap where sea creatures get caught. Then carefully draw in that circle to keep them inside...especially the valuable ones. Ever watched them clean off all the unwanted materials, fix the snags and repair the holes? It's grunt work - long and tedious.

Whether they disliked this or not...it was their livelihood.

Would we leave our livelihood just like that...at the call of Jesus?

It's like Jesus is saying, I'll take you as you are but come now. You used to work for people - a temporary existence and purpose. I will make you into a worker for God - an eternal existence and purpose.

- You learned to cast a net for fish. Come now and I will make you able to cast a net that saves people's souls out of the abyss.
- You learned construction as your trade. Come now and I make you able to build a refuge of salvation for the lost.
- You learned to become a seamstress, a tailor. Come now and I will make you able to thread a needle that mends torn hearts to set captives free.
- You learned how to manage a business. Come now and I will make you able to manage God's people to show the way of Jesus.
- You learned how to cook. Come now and I will make you able to feed souls with nourishment that gives life eternal

Do not become discouraged...God is active. God's kingdom advances every day and draws closer to the full number who will be saved...when Jesus returns as conquering king. And finally God's kingdom will be the only kingdom...heaven and earth forged

together anew, completed:
dwelling with God in His city.

Principles of Discipleship

Following Jesus Right #1:

Respond in Complete Trust

Multiple Choice: At once they left their nets and...

- a) Went home to packed their bags and saddle their camels
- b) Posted all their belongings on ebay to recoup losses
- c) Followed right away

They left all behind, trusting Jesus at His word.

Jesus wasn't stopping for a picnic. In fact Jesus wasn't stopping at all. He continued round the lake to their partners.

V19 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 the hired men and followed him.

Was this their first meeting with Jesus?

Marks concern is to show us how to respond to Jesus. You can fill in some blanks with John's Gospel here. These 4 had spent time with Jesus before John was taken to prison. Andrew was probably most prepared, being first a disciple of John. At that time they were

invited by Jesus to "come and see" (Jn 1:39) where he was staying and what he was up to. After John was taken, they went back to what they knew best...their family business.

The sons of thunder had risen above mere laborer's status. Their family could afford to hire workers. They were probably good friends. Presently they were working from the boat getting their nets ready to cast off the side...likely a weighted drag net with a much higher yield than hooks or casting from shore. So not only did they have more to lose but they were in the presence of their father. The ties between father and son for passing on the family business was traditionally very strong in the first century...any century, Jewish culture.

Following Jesus Right #2:

Respond with Complete Loyalty

How many of us are torn by the choice of natural family or Jesus? There are people here who know about sacrificing peace with the family to follow Jesus. God made us for family, but our first order relationship is with God...then spouse...then family. Brothers and sisters, let us not take lightly that by gathering here in Jesus name,

we are a spiritual family. We were made to care for each other.

When I was reading up on the sacrifice these first disciples made, I came across this story from David Garland's commentary:

"My maternal grandparents felt a call to India in the early 1900s. My grandfather did not qualify for support by the Methodist Mission Society but decided to go anyway as an independent faith missionary. They were recruited by a man who claimed that if they collected enough money, they could run a wonderful boarding school while learning the language. They gathered enough money from friends to pay their passage to India and to support them for a year; but when they arrived, they found that the boarding school did not exist and that the man had absconded with all the money. They were stuck in India with no money, no place to live, and no work. They begged a ride on a train to Calcutta, where some other missionaries took them in. For some reason, they did not despair and started an independent work in Bihar that became so successful the Methodist Mission Board requested that they work under their auspices. And they did—for

thirty-six years! They made enormous sacrifices—three of their six children died from disease—but they reaped enormous spiritual rewards. Others might offer many explanations as to why they made such sacrifices, but they attributed it to the power of Jesus' call to go and serve.

The problem with trying to balance friendship with the world and service to God is that one becomes religiously a split personality, looking both to God and to the world for standards and assurance. In the imagery of the Bible, one winds up with two hearts (two wills) and tries in vain to walk along two separate ways. When one tries to accommodate God and Mammon, one cannot be totally committed to God. Mammon crowds God out. The advantage of leaving all sources of human security is that the disciples are now totally dependent on Jesus."

It's like they saw the treasure in the field...the opportunity to be transformed by Jesus...and sold everything to get that field (Matt 13:44).

With an amazing economy of words, Mark reveals the message and first mission of Jesus.

God is available through Jesus
right now...repent AND believe.
The Holy Spirit shows us the way:
Follow Jesus Today.

I look forward to hearing your
kingdom adventures.

Jesus is the only one worth
spending the rest of our lives
following.

If you can't say that about Jesus,
please continue with us through
the Gospel according to Mark...and
learn why so many see Jesus as
more than just a great teacher.