

Scripture Reference: Mark 1:14-15

Date: February 23, 2014

Title: "The Kingdom of God is at Hand"

Focus: John and Jesus witnessed, so must those who follow Him. (What the Church is Series 4 of 10)

To appreciate the opening of Mark's Gospel, one needs to understand humanity's condition, God created humankind in a state of relationship with Him. The rebellious actions of Adam and Eve severed this. From that moment forward God has moved to redeem humanity from their sins (This is a view of man based on revealed truth and stands in stark contrast to evolutionary perspective of humanity's origin).

John the Baptist filled an important and necessary role in God's desire to restore humanity to a relationship with Him. He was the "forerunner of Christ." In this capacity he called the people of Israel back to YHWH and prepared them for the arrival of Messiah (Luke 1:17).

With Jesus' arrival, John's task was complete. What Mark recounts for his readers is Jesus' assumption of the all-important responsibility for calling people to a relationship with God.

V. 14; "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God"

The word “preaching” has come to mean a task carried out by a select group of people, Preaching = Preachers. This is not the case.

What Mark tells his readers is that after the arrest of John, Jesus went about publicly declaring, speaking about, the Gospel of God.

Do not picture Jesus holding evangelistic crusades or tent revivals. Mark is saying that as Jesus came into the region of Galilee He spoke publicly about the Gospel of God.

Open proclamation is both natural and expected.

Natural: When people experience something that affects their lives, whether it is good or bad, it is natural that this will be spoken about.

Expected: Were people to find out another knew something that would benefit them, they would expect that to be shared.

However, when it comes to the *Gospel*, people have accepted it to be opinion and something to be kept to one’s self.

Jesus’ three and half year public ministry was devoted to *preaching the Gospel*. The energy of those He selected to follow Him was given in the task of *preaching the Gospel*. The very lives of 11 of the 12 were surrendered in the course of *preaching the Gospel*.

The speaking in public with other people about *the Gospel* is not something left for others to do. It was what Jesus did and it is to be what *all* who follow Him do as well.

But, what is *The Gospel*?

V. 15; "*Jesus came into Galilee . . . saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'*"

What the Gospel is, is laid out in v. 15. Mark elaborates what it was Jesus was telling people:

"The time is fulfilled . . ." – What Time?

All people need to be reconciled to God. But, a person cannot determine when he or she will be saved, nor can he earn his own salvation.

The first use of the word Gospel (Good News) was at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:10).

It is possible only because of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Acts 4:12; "*There is salvation in no one else [other than Jesus]; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.*"

The promised one has been provided by which all people must be saved (John 14:6)

". . . The Kingdom of God is at hand . . ."

The rule and reign of God is a *present reality*.

Sharing the Gospel is not about going to Heaven.

Heaven is the continuation of the present reality that God is active right here, right now in creation and in the lives of those who follow Him.

When people *accept Christ, get saved*, what they are doing is yielding their lives to the rule of God. They are surrendering themselves to live according to the Kingdom of God as Jesus was.

". . . Repent . . ."

Repentance is not sorrow over sin. A person can be sorry and never initiate any change in behavior.

Repentance involves the active investment of effort to turn from the way a person has been going to a new way.

Without God, people live by their own reasoning, feelings, and desires. To repent means to change and live according to *God's* reasoning, to consider *God's* feelings, to be obedient to *God's* desires.

Being that it is contrary to a person's natural tendencies, this entails effort by the disciple.

". . . and believe in the Gospel."

There is nothing *natural* about accepting Jesus as the atonement for sin, or God's rule and reign as existing in the here and now, nor that a person is to live contrary to what is natural.

Though not natural, it is true. Though not humanly reasonable, it is real.

It is a willful decision on the part of a person to accept the reality of God and what He has said. This is what it means to believe.

Closing:

1. Mark 1:14-15 is the continuation of God's effort to redeem humanity for his lostness.

2. From God, to John, to Jesus . . . to You?

3. If you are a follower of Jesus, you will do what He did. You will speak openly and publicly to people about Jesus and about God's work in your life. You will live according to His precepts and commands.

4. Just like Jesus did.