

January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018

Epiphany 3

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**Mark 1:14-20** <sup>14</sup> Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." <sup>16</sup> And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." <sup>18</sup> They immediately left their nets and followed Him. <sup>19</sup> When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also *were* in the boat mending their nets. <sup>20</sup> And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

### The Time Has Come

**The Kingdom of God is near; the time to repent is now.**

**Your God calls, choose earth or heaven.**

**The good news is the Savior is here.**

**After John was put in prison** – Why is it significant that John was in prison? Because now his work was fulfilled. We had this question in Bible class the other day. Why did God allow John to be thrown in prison? Why did He allow him to be beheaded? Well, his ministry was done. What is John the Baptist going to do hang around and not preach? No, he has fulfilled his purpose, he gets to go home. From our perspective we might think God didn't answer John's prayer to deliver him from prison. But actually He did answer it and he answered it quickly.

This phrase "john was put in prison" is all about timing for Mark. All things have now been fulfilled; the time has come. Jesus goes forth to begin His ministry. How does He begin?

#### Number One – Preach Repentance

Jesus is hardly the first one to preach this message.

This is what Jonah preached to Nineveh.

This is what Elijah told the people, how long will you waver between two gods, choose today.

Joshua told the people, choose for yourself this day whom you will choose, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.

And it's what Martin Luther wrote in the first of the 95 theses, "When our Lord and savior Jesus Christ said repentant, he meant that the whole life of the Christian should be one of repentance."

This is always the message of God's prophets, because the Kingdom of God is always near. For the city of Nineveh it was 40 days near. How many days do you have?

Examine your life according to scripture. Consider what the Lord asks of you as a spouse, parent, child, employee, employer etc. Are you doing these things? What do you think Christ would say if he were standing in front of today and reading the thoughts of your heart?

Many think we'll have fun now and we'll repent later but you don't know when the kingdom of God will come. It is near, far nearer than you think.

This is always true but it is especially true at the time of Christ.

The kingdom of God is always before us, but now it stood before them in bodily form. The Kingdom of God was near indeed and the judgment of God was coming. This is how Christ's word and ministry always begins with this reminder of who we are, how sinful we are.

## **Number Two – Call His Disciples**

The first thing Jesus did was call everyone to repentance. The second thing was to call a group of disciples.

Here we have what some think is an inconsistency. Doesn't John's gospel indicate that Jesus call them to be his disciples earlier than this. Back when they meet him, when John the Baptist said, "Behold the lamb of God."

Well, no it doesn't. John's gospel says that they came and listened to his teaching and talked to them, it does not indicate that Jesus called them to discipleship. Other than Philip and even there that could have been simply a temporary, "come walk with me."

Not only is there no disagreement, John's gospel actually explains a lot about what Mark says.

Do you think it likely that Andrew, Peter, James, and John would have simply left everything to follow a man they didn't know? No matter how good his preaching was? Not likely.

But they already knew Him. They had seen the miracle of the water into wine. They had heard the testimony of John the Baptist. They had spent much time with Him. They had heard His teaching. The Word of God had done its work on their hearts. They knew that here was the Messiah.

And so Jesus knew it was time, time for them to make a bigger commitment.

It's one thing to say that Jesus is the Messiah, to go to the house and listen to him speak, to go and tell your brother, "we have found the Messiah." It's an entirely other matter to leave your fishing nets, your parents, your house and follow him, wandering around, dedicating your life to the ministry.

Because they knew Him to be the Messiah, because the Word had done its work, they were ready when the call came. They left all, nets, boats, father, business and followed Him.

Not all of us receive this call. Not all of us are called to be apostles or even pastors and teachers. But we are all called to make that decision. That decision of what we are going to put first in our life.

Church or sports,  
our friends thinking we are cool or reminding them of what God has said in his word  
doing what we know God wants us to or doing what we want

Remember the epistle reading? The time is short, so don't waste your time piling up the things of this world, they aren't going to matter. We certainly want to enjoy those things that God has given to us. But at the same time we want to recognize they aren't important. We are always ready to let go of these earthly things for the sake of the kingdom.

### **And the time is fulfilled for the Good News**

Nothing we have talked about so far sounds like good news. But this is what Jesus claims, not just that he was preaching repentance but that this preaching of repentance was good news.

When we hear the word Gospel, we immediately jump into the full story of Jesus death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. But that isn't really what these people would have pictured. In fact it's probably better to translate this verse:

"the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in THIS GOOD NEWS."

The good news that Jesus is referring to is this same message that the kingdom of God is at hand.

At this point I really want to describe for you what is called a "plenary genitive." I would like to describe it because I think it is really interesting. But it is a grammar thing, and so if I do try and describe you all turn into zombies and won't listen to anything else I say.

So I'm just going to say, that the term the "Kingdom of God" is both, the Kingdom that belongs to God, and the Kingdom which he gives to us.

And this is the good news, yes He calls us to repent, to look at our lives and realize how far we have fallen. But NOT because that kingdom is near at hand to judge, but because the Kingdom is near at hand to forgive. Because the kingdom of God is near at hand to enter in.

I heard it again just this week. That excuse that people keeping giving as a reason for rejecting the Word of God. "Why should people die just because they don't believe? Why should faith be the thing that gets

you into heaven?" But of course such an attitude completely ignores the context of this and other statements.

We are not going to die because we don't believe. We are dying because we are sinful. We are dying. That truth is patently evident in every second of our life, in every atom of this world. "The only thing that is certain in life is death and taxes."

Into this world of death, the Savior proclaims, "You don't have to die. The kingdom is right there, waiting for you to enter." This is the good news that He came to bring.