

The Gospel Keeps Going

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Mark 1:14-20 ¹⁴ Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom¹ of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." ¹⁸ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

God's kingdom is like the energizer bunny, or an avalanche, or that boulder that chases Indiana Jones out of the temple, it just keeps going.

God himself describes it that way in Daniel 2:34. He calls the kingdom of God a rock cut without hands. It rolls down and smashes the statue representing the kingdoms of men. It grows and continues growing.

In our text Herod the king opposes it. He attempts to silence it. He puts John in prison, where he can no longer preach and baptize the people. In response to Herod, Jesus goes out and calls four more men into the service of the kingdom. Where there was one preacher, now there are four.

Martin Luther wrote that beautiful hymn "Flung to the Heedless Winds." In that hymn he describes martyrs who have been burned to death for witnessing about Christ. This does not stop the kingdom of God. Rather the ashes of those martyrs are born on the wind and the gospel of the kingdom is still preached. Where there were a few, now there are many.

Luther was not of course suggesting that the literal ashes accomplish this, but rather people witness their dedication to Christ and their death. This speaks in a more powerful way than their words the truth of our faith. More are inspired by their example through the power of the Word of God, and the kingdom continues. It just keeps going.

We see this in the book of Acts. When the Christians in Jerusalem are persecuted, they leave. They go everywhere throughout the Roman Empire. They take with them God's Kingdom, preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. God's kingdom continues.

French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) declared in 1776: "One hundred years from my day, there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker." One hundred years later, Voltaire was dead, and his own house and press were being used to print and store Bibles. The kingdom keeps going.

Jesus keeps preaching because he is the great prophet. In confirmation class we learn that he was the perfect prophet who correctly proclaimed the full word of God. He is the only one who can fulfill this role because he was with God and was God and came down to tell us about God.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

John 3:13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

It is for this reason that God told the Apostles:

Luke 9:35 "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

We are to listen to Jesus because He alone, who is one with the Father, can reveal to us the truth of God, sin, and grace. Jesus came down from heaven to reveal to us the truth of God's word. He is our prophet.

But we also learn in confirmation class that he not only was he the great prophet, but he also *continues* to be our prophet. He preaches to us through the word, pastors, teachers, and Sunday school teachers.

It is so important that we believe and understand this. It is not just an answer to put on the test and say in front of the church on the day of our confirmation. It is an article of faith which we grasp and hold firmly to our heart since our lives depend on it. Jesus is our prophet and still preaches to the world the gospel of the kingdom. For this reason, the kingdom continues.

Preachers come and go. Martyrs are imprisoned, killed, and burned. Churches are built up and torn down, but the Kingdom continues. Jesus is still preaching the gospel of repentance and forgiveness.

When one preacher is silenced Jesus calls four more and continues to preach through them the love of God.

Not even great sin stops God's word. **God's word keeps going preaching repentance to sinners.**

The man who put John in prison was Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee. It is into Galilee that Jesus goes. Why does he go into the very area which is ruled by the man who threw John in prison? Was he challenging Herod? Was he showing off? Our text is clear why he went. To preach the kingdom of repentance. He was there to preach repentance to all the people of Galilee including Herod.

This is always God's response to sin. He doesn't ignore it. He doesn't look the other way and pretend it didn't happen. But neither does he strike people down with thunder and lightning.

Cain murdered his brother. Eli was a terrible father. Jonah refused to go to Ninevah. King Saul didn't kill all the sheep. The children of Israel made the golden calf. Each and every time God's response is to confront sin with the preaching of repentance and forgiveness through Christ.

Of course, Jesus went to Galilee when Herod did such a terrible thing. That is what God does with sinners like us. He confronts us with the gospel and calls on us to repent. And because we keep sinning, he keeps calling us to repent. Right now, he is preaching and calling you to repentance as he did Herod.

Our response when someone does something we don't like is to get angry. Even before we really know what happened. Jesus' response is to preach the gospel of repentance.

Compare Herod and Jesus. Herod got angry because he didn't like it when John correctly pointed out that taking his brother's wife was not right. Herod had John imprisoned and beheaded.

Jesus didn't like it that Herod imprisoned and killed his prophet. Jesus preached the love of God, calling Herod to repentant and receive forgiveness.

What is your reaction when people do something you don't like? The anger of Herod, or the love of Christ? The fact that we are more like Herod is just one more example of why we are glad that Jesus isn't like us. Just one more example of why we need his forgiveness. One more reason to rejoice that Jesus comes to us preaching forgiveness and repentance. One more reason to celebrate that the Gospel keeps coming to us.

The Gospel keeps going to all.

When Jesus called the disciples and promised them that they would be fishers of men. He was calling them to dedicate their life to preaching the Gospel. They left everything, family, business, and property. There was much work that needed to be done.

Jesus tells us "**the harvest is great but the laborers are few**"

The Psalm reminds us:

Psalm 68:11 The Lord gave the word; Great was the company of those who proclaimed it:

Paul reminds us that Jesus ascended on high and gave gifts to men. The gifts he gave were apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

The need for the gospel is great because all need it, therefore the *preaching* of the kingdom continues.

When Jesus came, some of the lepers were healed. Some of the deaf heard. Some of the blind saw. Some of the demons were cast out. Some of the dead were raised, but all heard the good news that their sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ.

It would be nice if we lived in a world where we can heal every disease, stop every crime and all people had plenty to eat. That would be nice, but it isn't what is necessary. What is necessary is the preaching of the kingdom, the love of God and the forgiveness which Jesus gives to all.

All of us live very different lives, with different challenges, heartaches, troubles, worries and sadnesses. God gives healing as he sees fit. Here he prolongs a life, there he shortens one. As the psalm reminds us, "My times are in his hands," but all he calls to repentance and gives the good news of salvation through his death and resurrection.

The kingdom keeps going now as it ever has. Jesus keeps preaching to us and through us. He calls men to repent. He promises the grace of God. He sends out more and more preachers. This is his promise God gives us for all times "but the gospel of the kingdom will be preached unto the ends of the earth." Amen.