

## Jason Upchurch - Mark 1:14-15 - The Good News Is Actually Good News

This morning we come to the dawn of Jesus's active ministry. He's been identified by John the Baptist, he's been baptized and identified as the Messiah. He's been tempted and succeeded in righteousness for us. And now he begins his very short 3 year ministry before he is led to the cross to be crucified for our sins. Luke says Jesus was only about 30 years old when he began his ministry.

If you think about it, Jesus was not very old and didn't minister very long until his mission of salvation was completely accomplished. But in those brief short years he accomplished an awful lot. But his ministry on earth consisted really of only a few things. He healed, he cast out demons, but even the goal of all of that was that Jesus could teach and preach.

And his life in ministry really revolved around preaching. One way of thinking about Jesus's ministry is as an itinerant preacher. He moves from place to place. He is very seldom in one area for long.

You remember the man who said to Jesus: I will follow you wherever you go! And Jesus said to him foxes have holes and birds have nests but that Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head (**Luke 9:57-58**). Jesus always had a massive group following him, but this man needed to understand that to follow the man Jesus was to live essentially a nomadic life.

And since Jesus said he always does what he sees the Father doing and since he prayed to the Father that he gave the disciples the words the Father wanted them to have, we know that preaching and teaching were always on Jesus's mind.

And just a side note, this is why I am so committed to the importance of preaching ministry. Not everyone is called to preaching ministry, but it is an essential part of the life of the church to not only have faithful preachers but to desire faithful preaching and teaching. The way we grow in our walk with the Lord is not super spiritual experiences, it's not feeling the groove of music, or whatever. The way the people of God grow and flourish is to be constantly nourished by the teaching and preaching of the Word of God.

Jesus gives us this model even as he moves throughout Israel. Although Jesus had a home, he was very rarely there. He was almost always on the move. Even here in chapter 1, Jesus is traveling from Nazareth to Judea, out to the wilderness, back to the Sea of Galilee, then to Capernaum at the top of the Sea of Galilee. He preaches one sermon in one synagogue, heals people all night. Then look down at **1:35-39. Read**

He's always moving. And he always moving because he's always preaching. He needs to preach to more and more people. They need to hear what he - the God-Man - has to say.

And the message is so weighty and consequential that not only does Jesus need to preach it, he raises up others to train to preach it as well. And I think right here at the beginning of Jesus's ministry we have not only a glimpse into what Jesus preached, but a model for what our lives as following Jesus need to be about.

Big takeaway: We are to preach like Jesus preached. Not just in the pulpit, but to everyone as we make disciples of all the nations. **Read 14-15**

So what we have here in these 2 verses is really an amazing summary of what Jesus preached. And it's really the paradigm we are to follow.

Now, I think there are several things about the preaching of Jesus that are remarkable and I think that we need to take note of.

First of all, notice the optimism of the preaching. What Jesus goes about preaching is the gospel of God. The euangelion - the good news of God. Or we could say the good news from God. And then, to drive that home even further, the actual message that Jesus is preaching is believe the good news.

Whatever else we can say about the message of Jesus and eternal life and what Christ has done is that it is good news! It's the best news possible.

I'll be honest, a lot of times when we tell people about Jesus it doesn't sound like good news. It sounds like a life of drudgery and religiosity. It sounds like judgment and difficulty. It sounds complicated. It sounds like anything except good news.

And so I think it's worth stepping back and asking ourselves: Do we actually believe that what Jesus is and what he has done for us in his life, death and resurrection is good news? Do you believe what he's done on the cross for others is good news? Does that come across when we're talking to people about Jesus?

Because whatever else we can say about what Jesus is preaching is that it's good - it's amazing news. And so whatever else we tell people about Jesus should sound optimistic.

Imagine, by chance you happened to be sitting at a coffee shop. And at the coffee shop were the CEOs of 2 different publicly companies. One was going to buy out the other company in the next 6 months. And there sitting there sipping pumpkin spice lattes talking about how this deal is going to make every stock holder billions of dollars.

And you have this insider information. That information is some very good news. In fact, it's such good news that you begin buying as much stock as you can. And you start telling your friends to buy as much stock as they can. You've got this massive stock tip! Do you think that would change how you present the news to people? Of course.

In America, depending upon the situation, this can be classified as such good news that it's felony insider trading and securities fraud. But that's beside the point. **Look at Matt. 13:44-46.**

Here Jesus gives us 2 short parables that are almost precisely insider trading parables. **Read**

The man goes and sells everything he has - in joy - to buy the field. He has insider information. His profit from the field purchase is about to go supernova.

Same thing with the pearl of great price. What Jesus is getting at here is that the knowledge of the gospel is scandalously good news.

What Jesus is preaching and what we have is scandalously good news.

Imagine telling someone this in a heart of joy. Hey, listen, I've got some bad news for you that you're stuck in your sin and God is going to judge you ever so severely - you know this, I know this, that's what the Bible says but I've got a way for you to get out of that judgement, and not only get let off, but actually cash in on all the riches of God and reign with God forever and ever." "Alright, what I have to do?" "Nothing - literally nothing! God has done it all for you all you have to do is repent and believe." "You're selling me a scam, that's not good news, that's a joke."

"No, I'm telling you that's actually it: you do nothing, Jesus pays your fine, and gives you all his righteousness and you get to reign with him as a co-heir and a child of God forever and ever."

You guys, that's what we're preaching. It's insider trading. It's news that too good to be true.

And listen: if you're a believer it's still news that's too good to be true.

I don't know what goes through your mind and your mouth and your actions all week. But I know what goes through mine. If you knew the sin in my life, you'd be like "Paul ain't the chief of sinners, pretty sure it's Jason. Not sure how he's up there preaching, we should probably check out the church down the road."

No, once you're saved it's still good news. It's always good news. Did you sin again for the billionth time? Can I tell you something? Jesus knew that in eternity past when he chose you and he still laid down his life for you.

You're still his child, you're still forgiven, God still looks on you as though you are as righteous as Jesus himself.

What do you have to do to get square with God? Answer: nothing! You're square with God.

You guys, it's still good news. It's still scandalous! "I'm a Christian, I've sinned for the millionth time, I'm sure God is mad at me what do I need to do?" Answer: nothing. It's done.

This is what Jesus is preaching. He's not preaching religious news. He's not preaching Bible nerd news. He's not preaching self-pity news. He's not preaching hate yourself over your sin news. He's preaching euangelion. Good news, which turns out is the understatement of the millennia.

Now, go **back** to **Mark 1**. How good is this news? **Read 14**

Do you notice some irony here? Jesus is on the scene preaching good news. What just happened? John got thrown in the slammer. Remember John had been preaching against king Herod because Herod had committed adultery with his brother Phillip's wife. So John calls him out over and over. Herod is tired of that so he locks him up.

He locks up the prophet who Jesus himself calls the greatest of the OC prophets. There is no equal to John in the economy of God up to Jesus. Eventually John will be beheaded for his preaching of righteousness.

You'd think if the good news were here that John would just quietly retire into the Judea countryside. Maybe instead of eating locusts and honey, he gets a steak every once in a while, has a little vineyard spread going on. That sounds like good news.

No, the good news Jesus preaches is greater than that. It's that despite opposition and persecution - despite the world killing off it's greatest preacher up until Jesus - God is about to do a work in the world through Jesus that is so amazing that no one can possibly imagine. This offer of salvation and forgiveness and sonship and righteousness is not just for Jews and not just for Israel. God is about to open the flood gates of grace for all nations and all generations all people who believe in Jesus.

And no matter who dies or is persecuted or loses their life for the sake of Jesus, the news is so good, it's better than our very lives.

You guys, first and foremost what we believe about Jesus and what we tell people about Jesus has to be good news to us. Can I ask you, when you think of the gospel do you think of it as actually **good news?** Is that what you preach? And is that what you believe?

We'll only preach it if we actually believe it.

So we preach good news like Jesus preached good news. And, really, the good news Jesus preached is the good news of God's work in him and through him.

2) We also preach the Kingdom of God because preached the Kingdom of God. **Read 14**

What is the Kingdom of God? In other places it's called the Kingdom of Heaven - I believe they're basically the same thing.

What Jesus is preaching is that God has established a new Kingdom that revolves around Jesus. The prophets and the patriarchs looked forward to the Kingdom coming. But God has sent Jesus as the King over his Kingdom.

**Turn to Daniel 2:31-45.** If you remember in Daniel, the Jews have been exiled to Babylon. God used Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon to judge the southern Kingdom of Judah and Nebuchadnezzar hauled off all the Jews in Judah to Babylon.

Now, in Babylon, there are some Jewish young men whom the Babylonians train to be part of their government - Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are the ones we know of.

Shortly after they arrive, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream but not only does he not know the interpretation but he doesn't even remember the dream. He calls all his wise men to have them tell the dream and interpretation and of course that's impossible. Nebuchadnezzar is so angry he rounds all the wise men up to kill them when Daniel shows up. He says don't kill the pagan wise men. Instead, through God's miraculous work, Daniel gives not only the dream but the interpretation. **Read 31-45**

So we've got 4 kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar's is the top - it's gold. And although the next ones aren't identified by name, it's pretty easy to look at history and figure this out. The silver chest and arms is Media-Persia who conquers Babylon by the end of the book of Daniel. The middle and thighs of bronze is Greece - the next historical superpower. The iron is Rome, the superpower who conquers Greece and is in power when Jesus shows up.

Rome was a strong kingdom but very conflicted with regional kings and governors and sabotage was commonplace. It was strong to those outside but the kingdom itself was fragile.

And then comes a kingdom not made by man but made by God. The Kingdom starts out super tiny, like maybe the size of mustard seed at first and it strikes this fractured kingdom of iron and clay and eventually it fills the whole world.

What kingdom is that? It's the Kingdom of God. **Read 44**

Jesus is called the King of kings and the Lord of lords. This Kingdom is now here and the Kingdom is now growing. This is the Kingdom the Jews had been waiting for.

Now, what do we know about the Kingdom of God? First of all someone only becomes part of the Kingdom through faith in Jesus as the King. Christ is building his Kingdom but it's not like how nations build their kingdoms. Usually kingdoms are built through military force. Jesus builds his Kingdom through people submitting to the merciful message of the gospel that we preach.

In fact, as Christians we are called ambassadors. An ambassador is a government official who speaks on behalf of their country.

**2 Cor. 5:20:** Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God.

You say: wait a minute: Jesus says his Kingdom is not of this world. That's true. Jesus does not advance his Kingdom by worldly means. But his Kingdom and his subjects are active in the world.

We're not trying to take over governments by force and compel conversion. We simply preach the gospel and the Kingdom grows and expands and gains influence in the world.

So here's what's happening. The Triune God is in heaven now reigning in the fullness of his Kingdom. King Jesus has come to earth and will one day come again. In the meantime, we are telling people that King Jesus is coming back. And when King Jesus comes back all people will be divided over whether or not they are part of his Kingdom. Those who are will be glorified, those who are not will be dispatched into hell.

So there is a sense in which the Kingdom is here already. We are part of the Kingdom, we preach the Kingdom, the number of people in the Kingdom is growing on a daily basis as Jesus promises to build his church.

But there is also a sense in which the Kingdom is not yet here in its entirety. The Kingdom will come in its fullness when Jesus returns. We live in what scholars call the already but not yet. The Kingdom is here and growing, but it is not yet in its fullness until Jesus returns.

But the Kingdom was established the moment Jesus arrived on the scene.

By the way, for Christians we are dual citizens. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God, but here on this earth we are also part of the Kingdom of the USA. We have brothers who are part of the Kingdom of Germany or Japan or Brazil. All believers are dual citizens. But we also realize that our allegiance to the Kingdom of God supersedes any other affiliation.

So we walk in a manner worthy of the Kingdom. We are royal subjects of God most high, and our lives are to reflect nothing less than the dignity and honor of King Jesus. While at the same time we call everyone else to be part of the Kingdom.

How do you get into the Kingdom? I'm glad you asked. **Look back at Mark 1. Read 14-15**

Someone enters the Kingdom through these 2 commands. And they are commands. They're not suggestions, they're not feelings, they're not good religious ideas. These are commands from our King.

The first command is to repent. Metanoia in Greek. Repentance means to change your mind about something. And usually when we think of repentance we're thinking about sin. We turn from our sinful ways and turn toward righteousness. And that's true. We call people to repent from sin.

But what we are calling people to in the gospel is a whole lot more than just turning from their sin. We're calling them to completely change their mind about everything fundamental to their life.

The call to following Jesus is a call to reevaluating your entire life and bringing all of your life into full conformity with Jesus.

Instead of loving sin, we now hate our sin and do everything we can to rid ourselves of sin.

Instead of hating believers, we now love other believers and celebrate what Jesus has done in their life.

Instead of seeing God's commands as a burden, we now rejoice in the commands of God because we realize they give us freedom as we worship the Lord. And we meditate on the Word of God day and night.

Instead of living for this life, we now orient our entire lives around the life to come.

Instead of a vain commitment to ourselves and to our physical family, we now live our entire lives for God and our believing family, willingly sacrificing everything for them.

Martin Luther got it exactly right in his 1st of 95 thesis: "that when the Lord and Master Jesus Christ said repent - he intended the whole of life to be in constant repentance."

The command to repent, to change our mind, begins at salvation, but it continues throughout our life.

It's like if someone said, I need to get healthy so I'm going to the gym. And then they go 1 time. Is that going to change their life? Of course not.

When we follow Jesus as King we are signing on for the rest of our life to constant reexamining what we believe in light of God's truth and continually conforming ourselves to it.

Now, the biggest pushback against preaching repentance is that it sounds an awful lot like works. Like this is salvation by works.

But it's not because repentance is a change of mind. It's flip side of the coin of faith. Just as much as faith in Jesus is not a work we do to earn salvation, neither is repentance.

Both faith and repentance are gifts that God gives to those he saves.

That's why Peter can say: Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance. (**Acts 11:8**)

Repentance is a work that God sovereignly does when he saves a person. It's almost synonymous with faith, but not quite. Usually there is an emphasis in repentance on what someone is turning away from, whereas faith has an emphasis on what someone turns toward.

But the bottom line is that we preach repentance. Jesus preached repentance. The apostles, the prophets, John the Baptist all preached repentance.

And I want to encourage you in this. Especially those people who are seemingly hard toward Jesus. Don't make the mistake of avoiding the obvious issues they need to repent from.

A lot of times we think someone is close to the Kingdom so we'll talk to them about all this important doctrine stuff and so on, but we're going to ignore the fact that they're a huge gossip, or have an issue with greed, or are sleeping with their boyfriend. Almost like, "As long as they're cleaned up half way hopefully they'll get better." No we need to be frank with them about what following Jesus requires.

Rememberer with the rich young ruler? Here's a guy who wants to follow Jesus, he knows the Law, keeps all the commands, he's rich so the budget is going to look amazing. But Jesus gets right to the problem he has: his riches. Go, sell all you've got and give it to the poor and follow me. He rejects Jesus. Why? He loves his stuff.

Jesus didn't waste time. He knew exactly the hang up in the man's life. We don't always know what's in a person's hearth but we often know obvious sin and we need to be honest with people about what they need to repent of if they're going to enter in the kingdom.

The second command here is to believe. Believe in the gospel.

Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. Faith is the flip side of repentance. Repentance is what we're changing our mind from - usually sin and pride - faith is what we're trusting in: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

We have to have faith - we trust, we believe - that Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom. That he has come to rule and reign. And he rules and reigns and conquers through his death and resurrection.

His death for our sin and his resurrection for our righteousness. And his mercy on all who follow him as King over his glorious Kingdom.

**Pray**