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Title: The Gospel of Jesus Christ in Galilee - Early Galilean Ministry -
The Servant's Message
Text: Mark 1:14, 15
Theme: The kingdom message preached by Jesus was good news to His audience.

BIG PICTURE:

- The Servant's Message (1:14, 15)
- The Servant's Men (1:16-20)
- The Servant's Ministry (1:21-34)

Introduction:

The statement of John's imprisonment assumes the audience is aware of the circumstances of the event. Thoughts about John are left and will not be expanded on until 6:14ff. The narrative makes the point of our Lord's proclamation in contrast to John's silence.

Everything up to this point (His forerunner, His baptism, His temptation) validates the character of the One who has come. The focus has shifted from John to Jesus. The message brought by Jesus continues that of John's.

"Everything we know about Jesus suggests that he would have prayed and waited upon his Father for the sense that the moment had arrived. But God speaks through situations and events as well as through the still, small voice in the heart, and God was now saying that if this kingdom-movement was to go forwards rather than backwards, it was time for Jesus to go public with his own vocation." (Tom Wright, Mark for Everyone, [WJK, 2004], 9).

"His arrest indicates that the time has come for Jesus to act." (William L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark, NICNT, [Eerdmans, 1974], 63).

Questions:

1. What sets this period apart from other periods? What makes this time different?
2. What is the kingdom of God and how does it differ from Paul's gospel?
3. How is Paul's gospel a continuation of our Lord's message?
4. Is the church and the kingdom the same or different?
5. How does one gain entrance into the kingdom of God?

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know that the King has come and we must accept Him by repentance and faith.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Jesus as the King of life in general and as our King specifically.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the rest and contentment that comes by choosing Jesus as King of life in general and as our King specifically.

How will they best hear:

There are those occasions when my wife and I go to the movies. When we do, the first thing we secure is a ticket in order to gain admittance into the theater. After we purchase the ticket we are greeted by an individual who checks our tickets and directs us to the appropriate showing. In the absence of the ticket, I will not gain access to the movie. If I cheat and slide in any other way, I am in danger of being found out and kicked out.

In order for anyone to gain access into the presence of God they must have the right “ticket.” This ticket was purchased for them by the person and work of Jesus Christ. God gives the ticket freely to all who ask. In the absence of this ticket, you will not be allowed in. Some try to get in through other means, but access will be denied and when found out will be promptly removed (cf. Matt. 22:1-14).

The message Jesus preached is an invitation for all who hear to come, but they must come through repentance and faith. There are three ideas inside of these two verses that deserve our attention: the completion of a promise, the content of His message, and the condition for entrance.

I. The Servant’s message (vv. 14, 15)

Theme: The gospel of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ are one and the same (v. 14). Everywhere Jesus went He was “preaching” (Present Active Participle) the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Whatever the message Jesus is preaching, its content is “good news.” “Jesus proclaimed a message of hope and mercy, not of accusation and condemnation.” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Mark: A Portrait of the Servant*, [Moody, 1947], 46). I always find this of interest since some people feel threatened by the message of grace believing that such a message is light on sin. Jesus rejects no one who comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. His embrace is warm and encouraging. Those of us who feel the sting of failure and rejection should find in Him healing and strength.

Each of the following three statements is sequential. One flows from the other.

A. The completion of a promise (“The time is fulfilled”)

He uses a perfect passive indicative. The perfect tense speaks of something that has happened with continuing results, and the passive voice means “the time” is having something done to it in order for it to be fulfilled.

Now “was the opportune moment for the establishment of God’s kingdom in the acceptance of the Messianic Servant.” (D. Edmond Hiebert, Mark: A Portrait of the Servant, [Moody, 1947], 46).

“The emphasis upon the fullness of time grounds Jesus’ proclamation securely in the history of revelation and redemption. It focuses attention on the God who acts, By sovereign decision God makes this point in time the critical one in which all the moments of promise and fulfillment in the past find their significance in one awesome moment.” (William L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark, NICNT, [Eerdmans, 1974], 64).

“‘Time’ is kairos, referring to a particular time marked by an epochal event, not chronos, time as such. The older order was giving place to a new one, the dispensation of law to the announcement of the good news of God as later defined, the Kingdom of Heaven, namely, the Messianic earth-rule of Messiah.” (Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest’s Word Studies, [Eerdmans, 1973], 1:27)

Remember, Mark’s account is but one chapter within the larger story-line of God. It brings us to the climax of the story with the person and work of Jesus Christ. God is moving the story-line from **the stages of anticipation and preparation to one of introduction and realization.**

B. The content of His message (“The kingdom of God is at hand”)

That which fulfills “the time” is the presence of God’s kingdom. “The perfect tense verb is again emphatic by position. The announcement is that the kingdom, whose coming had long been anticipated, was now in a state of being near.” (D. Edmond Hiebert, Mark: A Portrait of the Servant, [Moody, 1947], 46).

Nowhere in the New Testament Gospels is the kingdom of God defined. Its description is assumed. If we are to understand the kingdom of God, we must look at the Old Testament narrative.

“The kingdom of God is a distinctive component of redemptive history. It belongs to the God who comes and invades history in order to secure man’s redemption. The emphasis falls upon God who is doing something and who will do something that radically affects men in their alienation and rebellion against himself.” (William L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark, NICNT, [Eerdmans, 1974], 64).

Remember, Israel’s history is marked by defeat and exploitation. Currently they sit under the heel of Roman rule. A new kingdom is coming. What will mark this kingdom? “It is true to say that men had always thought rather of a God of threats than a God of promises. All non-Christian religions think of a demanding god; only Christianity tells of a God who is more ready to give than we are to ask.” (William Barclay, Mark, 25).

“This was what all Israel had been waiting for. It wasn’t a new piece of good advice. It wasn’t a new political agenda. It wasn’t a new type of spirituality. It was the good (and

extremely dangerous) news that the living God was on the move, was indeed now coming into his kingdom. And it demanded a definite response.” (Tom Wright, Mark for Everyone, [WJK, 2004], 9).

“The kingdom of God is defined as God’s rule over all moral intelligences willingly subject to His will, including the holy angels and all believers of all ages.” (Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest’s Word Studies, [Eerdmans, 1973], 1:28)

“The primary meaning of *kingdom* is the sovereign’s actual rule, the reign itself; but the idea of the people or realm over which he rules is necessarily involved. McClain points out that *kingdom* involves ‘at least three essential elements: first, a *ruler* with adequate authority and power; second, a *realm* of subjects to be ruled; and third, the actual exercise of the function of *rulership*.’” (D. Edmond Hiebert, Mark: A Portrait of the Servant, [Moody, 1947], 46 [emphasis his]).

Whatever this kingdom is, it is a fulfillment of promises previously mentioned. This kingdom is going to look like the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ beginning in Mark 1:21 and clearly noted in Luke 4:18, 19.

¹⁷ “And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ **‘THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, ¹⁹ TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.’** ²⁰ And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, **‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’**” (Luke 4:17-21).

This kingdom is God’s kingdom. “It is something which God gives, and not something which men ‘build’.” (D. Edmond Hiebert, Mark: A Portrait of the Servant, [Moody, 1947], 46).

Question: Is there a difference between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel as preached by Paul (1 Cor. 15:1-4)? The gospel of the kingdom emphasizes the **program** whereas the

The kingdom brought by Jesus Christ was not abandoned at the cross or overthrown by evil. This kingdom continues to this day and will have a more direct and open presence in the near future. “What His people now await ‘is not something more complete than Christ himself, but rather Christ manifest and in glory.” (D. Edmond Hiebert, Mark: A Portrait of the Servant, [Moody, 1947], 48).

“In the person of Jesus men are confronted by the kingdom of God in its nearness. A faithful response to the proclamation of the gospel is imperative.” (William L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark, NICNT, [Eerdmans, 1974], 65).

This kingdom is an expression of who God is and what He has done. This kingdom reflects God, it radiates Him. It is the kingdom of God because God is the centerpiece of its existence. His presence makes the kingdom what it is.

- It is a kingdom where love exists without condition.
- It is a kingdom where acceptance exists without requirement.
- It is a kingdom where forgiveness exists without limit.
- It is a kingdom where service exists without reward.
- It is a kingdom where grace reigns.

- It is a kingdom where His touch brings healing.
- It is a kingdom where His look brings comfort.
- It is a kingdom where His voice soothes agitated souls.
- It is a kingdom where there are no longer tears.
- It is a kingdom where all aspects of sin have been completely abolished.

This is the kingdom of God. This is where I want to be and this is where I desire for all of you to be, but we are confronted by a problem. How does a sinful, fallen, undeserving, and incapable individual such as me gain entrance into this kingdom? How do I become a citizen of this kingdom? Jesus tells us how. It is the message of John and it is the message of Paul.

C. The condition for entrance (“Repent and believe in the gospel”)

In light of the kingdom’s presence, we are called to repent and believe the gospel. Remember, the gospel is not a set of principles, but a person. The gospel *is* Jesus Christ.

The means by which an individual becomes a citizen of this kingdom is through repentance and faith. No one is a citizen through natural birth. You must be “born-again” in order to inherit the kingdom of God.

Remember our Lord’s encounter with Nicodemus in John 3?

³ “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**’ ⁴ Nicodemus *said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?’ ⁵ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be amazed that I said to you, **‘You must be born again’**” (John 3:3-7).

Repentance and faith are two sides of one coin. Both must be present to be saved. **Repentance without faith is turning over a new leaf, but not receiving new life; faith without repentance is perfuming a pig.**

Whatever you and I have placed our past confidence in, we are to turn from it and place it in our Lord. Some of us have placed our confidence in our jobs, our church, our families, our government and our schooling, but God is calling us to repent of this misplaced confidence and to come fully to Him.

“Either a man submits to the summons of God or he chooses this world and its riches and honor. The either/or character of this decision is of immense importance and permits of no postponement.” (William L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark, NICNT, [Eerdmans, 1974], 66).

Friend, there was a time when the weight of my sin was destroying me. There was a time when I wanted heaven and knew that I was barred from entrance. It was at that time that I came to Jesus Christ through repentance and faith, and in that simple gesture I became a citizen of the kingdom of God. Since that time I have grown in my understanding of who God is, what He has done, and who I am in Him, but nothing has changed in my citizenship. This passage leads us to a simple question, “**Have you become a citizen of God’s Kingdom by new birth?**”

APPLICATION:

1. The question needing to be answered is simple, “**Have you become a citizen of God’s Kingdom by new birth?**” Have you believed the good news *about* Jesus Christ? This is not a question that you or I can postpone in answering.
2. There is form to the Christian faith. The message of grace presupposes that the recipient recognizes their need for grace. It is impossible to enter the kingdom of heaven in any other way than through repentance and faith in King Jesus.
3. There is another issue that I believe is vital for us from this passage. What is the verbal and visual message you preach to those inside your circle of influence? Is your message one of “good news” or are you judgmental and condemnatory?