

Mark - Jesus Begins to Preach

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and calling people to repentance and faith.

Duration: 43:04

Scripture: Matthew 4:17, Matthew 9:12, Matthew 24:14, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 4:18-19, Luke 19:10, Acts 10:38

Topics: "Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that the good news of the gospel is about what God has done, who God is, and what God will do. He highlights the significance of Jesus' ministry, describing it in terms of dancing, joy, and fulfillment. The speaker also mentions a debate on television about religion being the opiate of the people, and he addresses the question of where God is. He then turns to the Gospel of Mark, specifically verses 14 and 15, which talk about Jesus coming into Galilee to preach the Gospel of God. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of preaching this good news to all nations for salvation.

Transcript

Will you kindly turn with me in your New Testaments to the Gospel recorded by Saint Mark and we shall read as the basis of our meditation this morning verses 14 and 15 in chapter 1. You will notice immediately how this text fits into the context of the passage we read from Matthew a little earlier. We are now going to look at Mark's record. Now, after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel. Now, this is a strategic moment in the history of our Lord because it is the beginning of his ministry in Galilee. I want to look at this passage this morning in terms of three main divisions and the first is this.

I would like you to notice the sequence of events. There is something here which is very significant. I can put it to you in terms of two statements.

First of all, John the Baptist is silenced. Over against that, Jesus speaks. John silenced, Jesus speaks.

Now, after John was arrested, put in prison, silenced, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the good news. John silenced. Jesus spoke of John the Baptist as the greatest ever born among women or born of woman.

And he certainly was that. He was a gigantic man, however you care to assess his life and his ministry. His influence upon the province of Judea and especially upon the center of life in upon Jerusalem and the leaders of the Jews of his day and upon the ordinary populace must have bordered on the phenomenal.

His ministry only lasted a short while. He comes on to the scene like a meteor. He performs his remarkable ministry of preparing the way for the Messiah and then he almost as suddenly vanishes.

But in that short space of time, John the Baptist performed his God-given ministry. And what is particularly important as far as our present theme is concerned, he continued to do what God had given him to do in suffering and in his death, as much as in his life. In the course of the short period when John was free to proclaim the word of the Lord and prepare the way of his of his master, he summoned the people from various quarters to hear what God was saying to that day and to that age and they came flocking even into the wilderness.

It's a tremendous testimony to his power and authority and to the anointing of the Spirit of God upon him. Imagine King Herod coming out of his palace and going down into the wilderness to listen to this fiery preacher of judgment and hell. John attracted men from high places and low and thither they went.

But now John's in prison. The remarkable thing, let me repeat it, the remarkable thing is this. That the sense of mission is still upon him and in the closing days of his imprisonment and in his eventual death he performs his ministry in a manner in which he could never have done it if he were free.

What was John's ministry? Well, there were many aspects to it but I think we have already seen that the main aspect perhaps was this. He was exposing the need of men, the condition of the human soul, the condition of society. He had already exposed the spiritual and the moral condition of the leaders of the church of the day, scribes and the Pharisees and others in high places in the church of the day.

He had done that. He called them some terrible names. He was a rough, rugged man and he called a spade a spade.

But he equally daringly, almost defiantly exposed the sin of the king. You remember the story, Mark doesn't go into it at this point, we shall have to return to it when we come to chapter 6. The story is this, that King Herod had seduced his brother's wife from Rome. Philip, his brother, was in Rome.

King Herod had seduced his brother's wife away from her rightful husband and she was living with Herod now and John said to him, look here man, he's talking to the king, look here man, he says it is not lawful for you to marry this woman that's living with you in the house. You're sinning in the sight of God. Now strange to say, even though Herod was angered in his soul, he was afraid of John.

We're told that in chapter 6. There was a fear of John. Perhaps it was a sense of reverence, perhaps it was more, because the sense of authority that came with the preaching of John the Baptist meant that he was really God's own mouthpiece. He knew that therefore, he knew that John was a man of God.

There was no question about that in Herod's mind. But you see, lust can overrule and override and overrun a multitude of thoughts and much knowledge and much else. You remember what happened.

This woman that was living with him at this point, she and her dancing daughter found a way into Herod's soul and into Herod's heart and when they've pandered to his every desire, they machinate a way in which they can have the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And when Herod's lust was aroused, he handed

over the man, the head of the man who had daringly told him what was right and what was wrong in the name of the Lord. Now, what I want you to notice is this.

That was exactly and precisely the ministry of John. It was to expose the heart of man. And he did it.

Here is a king who knows that John is a prophet of God, who has a sense of fear and awe in his presence, and yet because of his lust and his passion and his desire for physical pleasure more than anything else, he will hand over the very mouthpiece of God to be slain. And that's the nation that will ultimately hand over the very incarnate Lord to his death. See what he's doing.

He's letting the nation see the heart of the nation. He's exposing the situation of the human heart and the condition of the human soul as in need of none less than the Lord God Almighty come down in the person of his Son. But John was silenced, and yet there is nothing more vocal than the testimony of John to the heart of mankind, even as he is slain in the prison of Machairas.

But now mark this. I don't know how Herod felt when he slew John the Baptist. Don't let's pursue that.

But one thing I know you cannot ultimately frustrate the purpose of God. You shut the mouth of John the Baptist and Jesus comes into Galilee where John was, and he takes the same text and the same theme and the same message, and he takes John's message and he announces it to the same people. You can't ultimately, let me repeat it, you cannot ultimately stand in the way of God's will.

And of course this is a principle. I would like us to get the principle this morning, not simply this fact of history, that our Lord Jesus daringly, defiantly almost, comes to stand in the breach and when the voice of John is silenced in death, he himself says, I'll preach the message. I'll continue the theme.

I'll declare the same thing. There's more to it than that. There's a principle here as well.

You find it even back in the Old Testament. A wicked queen can silence the prophets of God, murder some of them, send the others underground in fear and trembling. But an Elijah will appear on the scene from somewhere.

The Spirit of God has given him extra grace. And here comes this amazing man who is prepared to defy king and queen and country and false prophets and all. Silence the multitudes and you always have someone whom the Lord will provide.

Silence John, here comes Jesus. Crucify Jesus and he will rise from the dead. And he will kindle the fire of zeal and passion in the hearts of men that they will be ready to go north, south, east and west, to Jew and to Gentile, to declare the same glad tidings that Jesus preached.

Let Stephen be silenced in martyrdom and some character such as Saul of Tarsus will come to new birth. And his soul will be fired with the glory of the Savior that he will go into death itself for the privilege of declaring his name among men. Let the Sanhedrin song Stephen then Saul comes.

Let Hus burn in Constantinople or Savonarola die in Florence and a Luther or a Calvin will emerge on the European scene. Let bloody Queen Mary as she's been called, burn Latimer and Ridley, Cooper and Cranmer and God will always have somebody else to stand in the breach. And that's why we're here this morning.

That's why we're here this morning. The church of Jesus Christ might have been burned to a cinder were it not for the sovereignty of God over history. And you burn the one and the testimony of the saints will kindle a glow of holy life in the heart of someone else who will stand in the breach.

John silenced. Jesus speaks. The sequence of events.

Just a word about the sphere of the ministry that is now beginning. Just a word about it because I think it is significant. Jesus came into Galilee.

Now the geographical location is familiar to you all. Galilee is in the north of what was in biblical times known as Palestine. Galilee is right in the north.

Judea in the south separated by Samaria in the center. Now being in the north, Galilee had always been open to all kinds of evil influences from outside, political and moral. So much so that in the time of the Maccabees, pious people who lived in Samaria were so upset by the inroads and the infiltration of evil influences that they moved south.

This speaks voluminously of some of the God-fearing people that lived in the days of the Maccabees many years before our Lord Jesus Christ. They couldn't tolerate it and they moved south. They packed up everything and they moved right down south so that later on you had to have a movement of population to go back to repopulate Galilee.

Because Galilee was always open to political inroads as well as military. Jesus went into Galilee. Jesus went into the place that was darkest and dimmest and therefore, as Matthew stresses, he fulfilled a biblical prediction.

I want you to notice this. This is the context. He went into Galilee so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled.

Now listen to what Isaiah said. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. This part of Palestine, of ancient Palestine, had been dominated by Gentile influence.

Galilee of the Gentiles. The law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets had become submerged in an accumulation of alien teaching, alien philosophies, and alien religions. Galilee of the Gentiles.

He went into Galilee and the prophet says the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. For those who sat in the region of the shadow of death, light has dawned. Now what does all this mean? It means this, my friends, that our Lord Jesus Christ did not simply go into the most dangerous place but into the neediest place.

He went to the darkest. He went to the most miserable. He went to the most benighted.

And if you want me to apply that to those of us gathered here this morning, I would put it just like this. Who's the neediest person here? Who's got the heaviest heart this morning? Who's got the blackest sin this morning? Who is it who's in chains this morning and you can't escape the foul iniquity that has chased you all your days? Who is sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death? My Lord comes right there and He is by your side. This is His habit.

They that are whole have no need of a physician. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost. He's setting a pattern and He comes into the most dangerous situation and to the neediest location because He is the only Savior of man and He's come in search of you in your need today.

May the Spirit of God disable us and disqualify us from shrugging away the blessed news that this is so today. Galilee then symbolized a people in sheer bondage, in distress and in disgrace, submerged by the evil influences of the outside world and who lost all contact with Moses and the prophets and the higher things of divine revelation. Jesus comes right there.

But now the thing that most grips us when we come to our text this morning is the substance of His preaching. Why did Jesus go there? Well we know that He healed the sick. We know that He taught many things but I want you to know where the finger of the evangelist falls.

Don't miss it. Let's put first things first and here they are. Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying the time is ripe.

The time is fulfilled. That's what it says here. The time is ripe and the kingdom of God is right at hand.

Repent and believe the good news. Now preaching occupies a cardinal place in the New Testament. I think we have to be careful in the modern church that we do not try to displace an institution of God.

More about that on another occasion but here in the New Testament preaching is very, very central. The meaning is this. Jesus became a herald.

Now the herald, that's the word for preacher, herald. The herald in the ancient world was a very important man. Usually he was a man of character who could be trusted.

Who could be trusted at least to do two things. He was given a message and he could be trusted not to add to it or take away from it. Usually he got his message from the king or from the state, from the government, from some of its officials and he went out into the center of the city, perhaps moved around in the city and he read the message.

He declared the message as it was given him. He was a trusted, trusty person. It's very thrilling.

Jesus became a preacher. Jesus became a herald. The very son of God comes down into this world to be a preacher, to be a herald, to declare the word of God, adding nothing to it, taking nothing away from it.

To be loyal to what God is saying to this world that we humans cannot hear with our ordinary ears. But now look at the substance of it. Notice first that Jesus preached the gospel of God.

Those of you who have the King James Version will see that something is added in the King James Version which is not really found in the oldest manuscripts. It says in King James he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. Now the concept of the kingdom of God comes later on but not just there.

What the oldest manuscripts have is this. He preached the gospel of God and we have good reason to believe that this is exactly what Jesus wanted to emphasize. He's got good news.

But what's it all about? Well it's about God. It's about God. And my dear friend, if there is one thing this this world needs to know today, it needs to know something about God.

We are experts about everything but about the knowledge of God. The gospel of God. Good news about God.

Now Jesus, it is true, took up the John the Baptist's theme. But I want you to notice that even though there was a measure of continuity there, he preached the same theme as John the Baptist repented for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus introduced a different element.

Now I'm not quite sure how to put this because in a sense it is not fair to John the Baptist in that his ministry was so short. And had it been longer he might have brought out other points that Jesus brought out. But at any rate the main thrust of John the Baptist's ministry was one of judgment.

His emphasis was upon the axe laid to the root of the tree. It was to show men that they were vipers at heart. And when the Holy Spirit comes he will burn men to a cinder.

All these are his terms. It was upon the axe. It was upon the winnowing fork and things like that.

He exposed and he brought to men and women the awareness that God in judgment was very very near. Now when Jesus came to preach he also sounded the word of judgment. In fact when you compare Jesus teaching proportionately with that of John he had much more to say about judgment than John the Baptist.

Much more. Now I can prove that to anyone who comes to speak to me. But the point is this you see.

Jesus ministry lasted for three and a half years or so. And proportionately it was not like John's. It wasn't one-sided.

Jesus also spoke of the good good news. He had come as the physician to heal. Heal the body, heal the mind, yes but especially the soul.

He had come to relieve the brokenhearted. He had come to bring pardon to the transgressors. And so when Jesus comes to compare his ministry with John the Baptist he does it in this language.

He says you know this generation is a queer generation he says. We've tried to get you to play funerals and you didn't want to play funeral. And we've tried to get you to play dancing and you didn't want to dance.

You say what does that mean? Don't understand the language. Well the scriptures explain to you Matthew 11 16 to 19. Jesus compared the preaching of John to this.

It had a very somber note. It was like sounding the death knell. But they wouldn't listen to the man who showed them conclusively and with authority that judgment follows sin.

They wouldn't have him. Says Jesus in contrast the emphasis of my ministry is to bring you the joys of sins forgiven and peace with God and hope of heaven. I wanted you to come to the wedding feast.

I've talked about the glory and the grace of God. And what you say about me is this that well he's a winebibber. I don't want to go into the details of that imagery.

I just want to bring it out. Jesus thought of his own ministry in terms of dancing, in terms of joy, in terms of fulfillment, in terms of hope. Good news.

And fundamentally I want you to notice this is good news about God. Good news of God. The gospel of God.

Now of course it comes from God. That's true. But basically the gospel is good news about God.

This has come home to me in a new way. I happened to turn on the television last night when I was having a cup of beverage before doing some further study and later going to bed. And I saw that great debate on one of the channels, I don't remember which it was.

And I heard this doctor, or her is it? The good man who was trying to address her on the fact on the proposition that religion is the opiate of the people. And I heard someone ask the question, where is God? And oh the answer that was given was so feeble and so uncertain I wept in my soul. Listen my friend, the good news is good news of what God has done.

What God has done and who God is and what God will do. It was God who sent his son into the world to be born of the virgin, to live the virtuous life, to die the vicarious death and rise again triumphantly and send the Holy Spirit to recreate men after the image of God. It was God who did that and the good news is the good news of what God has done and God is still doing.

Not only was it good news of what God has done, we've got to link this up with the first verse in Mark's gospel. The good news of what God has done of course is, as I've indicated, related to good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Because fundamentally what God has done for the salvation of men, he has done in his only Son Jesus Christ.

And this gospel, says Mark, later on needs to be preached to all the nations because it is so important. He will tell us later on, he who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned. But now come a step further.

Jesus preached good news, good news of God. Jesus preached good news saying the kingdom of God is at hand. As the herald and king of the kingdom of God, Jesus had already refused to come to terms with a head of that alien kingdom of Satan, the kingdoms of this world.

I found tremendous, tremendous sense of satisfaction in understanding the passage as I remember Greg Scharf's message to us last Sunday morning on the temptation. But you see, it's the context in which we have this. Did you hear Satan say to the Lord Jesus, look, see all the kingdoms of this world, I'll give them to you.

Now, of course, they were not his to give ultimately, but there was too much truth in that statement to gloss over it and take no notice of it. Temporarily, they were very much under his influence. Because all mankind are in the hand of the mercy of Satan, apart from the intervention of God in Christ.

Now, you see, in this temptation, Jesus Christ has said this, Satan, I'm having no truck with you. There are certain things that are not negotiable. You suggest this to me, you suggest that to me, you suggest another thing to me.

Look, he says, I have nothing to do with you. I've come to do my father's will. I've come to establish my kingdom, which rules over all.

Now, that's the context you see. He has rejected every notion of satanic rulership. And he says, I have come to establish something, which is over against what you stand for.

The kingdom of God to which Jesus refers, of course, is primarily a spiritual entity. It's the rule of God, basically, over the hearts and the minds and the consciences and the wills of men. You may find Jews, you may find Gentiles who are members of the kingdom of God.

You may find black and white, all kinds of people, all conditions of people. It's the rule of God, it's the reign of God. But sooner or later, we can see it, can we not? There are colonies of heaven upon earth in every land, in every nation, so that we comprise a people of God, ruled by God rather than by men, rather than by Satan.

Ultimately, of course, all this will come to its own. One day, the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Now, says Jesus, look, it's come, it's arrived.

I have come, the King has come, and in my presence, the power of God and the rule of God has come, so that, he says, I can liberate you from the bondage of Satan. When Jesus cast out demons, they said to him, oh, you're doing this kind of thing by the power of Beelzebub. Now, what they're saying in other languages is this, what you're doing is something in liaison with Satan, evil forces, evil power.

No, says Jesus, it isn't that. I'm doing it by the finger of God, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Follow it through.

I have no time now. I'm doing it by the finger of God, and if I do it by the finger of God, then it is evident to you that the rule of God, the power of God, the reign of God has come right into this world. When I heal the sick, when I raise the dead, when I heal the mentally derailed, when I bring pardon of sin and exorcise the demons, it is the reign, it is the rule of God come right into your life, right into your territory.

The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God has come. Now, my friends, I would like us to recognize this in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and especially in that you and I are living in the day when He has sent forth the Holy Spirit to abide with His people. What is the significance of it all? Well, it is this or it is nothing.

That in the coming of Christ and now in His coming again by the Spirit before His final return, He is here by the Spirit. There is a rule of heaven, there is a power of heaven, there is a reign of heaven that we may experience right here upon earth. First of all, it must be a rule of God over us.

And then as it becomes the reign of God over us individually, we shall discover the resources of God and the sufficiency of God in all the manifold circumstances of our lives. The kingdom of God is at hand. So what? Well, now the main thing, indeed the one thing, the basic thing, the cardinal thing here is this, how to be a member of it and how to profit from it.

Now there were many people in the day of our Lord's ministry upon earth, there were many people in that day who saw what He did but they never profited. Others who heard about what He did in different places but it never touched them. You know, there may be people right here in Knox this morning in that same category.

There are those in our day and age, every genuine Christian man and woman that knows something of the kingship and the rule of Jesus Christ, to bind the strongman, to bind Satan and to burgle his house and

liberate his captives. But there are some who've only heard about it, only heard about it, only read about it. Some of us have sung about it and we've watched movies about it.

We know nothing more. The one vital question is this, how can I get into that realm? How can I know the resources of the realm? How can I get into it and be part of it? If this is the kingdom of the kingdom that is to outlive every other, if the kingdoms of this world are ultimately to be gathered to our Lord and those who don't belong to it are to be cast with their prints into outer darkness, then it is important. Jesus says, now I can't enter into the details, into the deepest significance of this passage this morning, but I just want you to notice two things.

Repent and believe the good news. Repent and believe the good news. Now, what does repentance mean? Oh, it means so much.

I can't start on it this morning. The only thing I want to say this morning is to relate it to this context and I believe it means exactly what it meant for Jesus. Oh, I should not use that word exactly.

That is wrong. Something akin to what Jesus did when he said to Satan, Satan, I'm having no truck with you. Not exactly the same, but there is a principle there that applies.

I'm not having any truck with you. Jesus had never had anything to do with Satan anyway. He had never given in to him.

We have. That's what makes us, puts us in a different position. But it means that we come where Jesus came and we say, look, whatever your temptation is and your kingdom and your claims, and you say you can do this, that and the other.

It means changing our mind concerning him and saying to him, look, none of it. None of it. That's what repentance is.

It's a change of mind. It's a metanoia, a new mind. And it's a new mind, especially concerning sin and Satan and evil.

And if you and I want to come into this kingdom of which Jesus Christ is Lord, this is the first step. We've got to say to ourselves, look, I am prepared to break from sin and Satan and wrong as God reveals it and tear myself away. I'm changing my mind.

But that's not the end of it. That is one step which must be accompanied by another before we come into the kingdom and believe, says Jesus, the good news. Believe the good news.

The word believe is the same word as faith. And what it mounts up to is this. Jesus came declaring the good news about God, what God has planned, what God has covenanted, what God has purposed for men, what God has provided for men in his son.

Here's the good news now, just believe it. Which means, in other words, receive it. To believe is to receive.

And this is the way that brings us in under the rule and under the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world. And one day it will be consummated in the world to come. Now, my friend, here is the basic question this morning.

You prepare to tear yourself away from Satan and his rule and from sin as God enables you. Oh, there are many people who would like to be in the kingdom of God, if only they could bring in the pleasures and the sins and the passions and the what not and the dirt of the kingdom of Satan. But you see, you can't do that.

You can't do that. These two kingdoms, the one excludes the other. And there's got to be a change of mind.

It'll tear your soul, maybe, but out of the tearing will emerge a new creature. Repent. And believe.

And as you begin to believe the promise of divine and the promises of God and accept the provisions of God in his son, now life becomes the arena in which daily, hourly, you draw upon those resources and enter into the enjoyment of his rule and of his reign. Are there those among us this morning whom the spirit of God is calling to do exactly this? It is not given to the preacher to know those who sit before him. And David doesn't often know his own heart.

My good friend, the Lord who's brought you here this morning knew you as he knows me. And if there are some of us in the wrong kingdom this morning under the wrong rule, I pray with all my heart that you'll hear the summons of heaven on this Thanksgiving day to come out, change your mind, and put yourself under the rule of the King of kings and Lord of lords, for it is only in fellowship with him and in dependence upon him that life in all its fullness in this world and in all its eternal bliss beyond this world, life is to be found. Let us pray.

Father in heaven, you know us all and you know us individually. You know our allegiance. You know our character.

You know our conduct. You know perhaps the slavery which characterizes our lives. We often rejoice that physical slavery has almost come to an end in the world.

But our Lord, some of us maybe know a kind of slavery that has continued into the 20th century. A slavery which is found in the highest ranges of society as well as in what is sometimes called its lowest. Among rich and poor, cultured and illiterate, a slavery to Satan and sin.

We thank you for these words. The time is ripe. The kingdom of God, the better rule, the saving reign of God is a reality.

Change your minds and trust. Give us a heart and a mind to heed and to obey and to discover each of us in his or her life the glorious realities that lay behind these words. Through Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen. you

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