



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Come and Die

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Mark 1:14-20

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¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." ¹⁶ Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

(Pastor prays)

President Roosevelt called it "a day that will live in infamy," December 7, 1941, when the United States was dragged into World War Two. Unprovoked Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and there the Pacific fleet was wiped out. And the sleeping giant was awakened. While that was going on in the United States, Germany started tightening its grip. Belgium fell and France would fall and Hitler was eyeing England. In the mid-1940s the grip that Adolf Hitler had on Germany was complete. Not with just the leaders politically, but with the leaders religiously in Germany. Germany, in that great country where we look back and thank God for the Protestant Reformation. Germany. Germany had long since abandoned the tenets of the Protestant faith and liberalism had seeped in and would seep over in the United States at some point. The state church, which was a Lutheran Church, had yielded to Adolf Hitler and was doing part of his bidding.

But like always, God had a remnant there in Germany. They called themselves the Confessing Church, the church that held onto the truth of the Bible and the clarity of the Gospel. Several men and women are part of that church. One became famous, his name is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a confirmed bachelor, although at one point engaged. Dietrich Bonhoeffer came up in a religiously liberal home and studied the liberal theology that Germany was putting out at the time. But he made the mistake of coming to the United States, and in New York he happened to go into an African American church. There he heard the Gospel and his life was changed. Rumbblings of war were coming in; he could have stayed in the United States but he went back home to be with his people. There he led the Confessing Church.

The problem with leading a confessing church under a dictatorship is that it puts a bullseye on your back. And he certainly had one on his. He became part of a move to do away with Hitler. The Gestapo knew of his existence and his leadership, and they knew he was a part of the plan to assassinate Hitler. They finally caught up with him and arrested him in 1944. You think the Gestapo was bad in 1944, in 1945 he was taken to Buchenwald, the death camp, where so many Jews would be killed. In 1945, if you know history, at the outset of 1945, here we have World War Two coming to an end. The Americans have come across the Rhine. They are in Germany. Hitler will soon be dead by a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Why? Why would you kill that man? You can find the poem written in prison. "Who am I?" You can probably find that on the Internet, it's so moving. They walked him out that day as his allies were coming in. They walked him out of his cell that day and into where the hangman would meet him. The attending physician said that they had never seen a man die so bravely. Remember, Dietrich Bonhoeffer is the one who said, "when Christ calls a man, he bids him to come - and die." Bonhoeffer stood upon the stool and they put the noose around his neck and they give him a few final words. And this is what he said before they tighten the noose: "Today is the end, but for me, it is the beginning."

That's the kind of faith that I want. That's the kind of faith that you and I are going to need as we go into the future. A future that the Lord, of course, waits

on us there, but a future that is filled with peril in a world that has lost its mind. This is not the first time it's happened. It's always been like that. In fact, we pick up a story in the Gospel of Mark. Mark has given us an introduction. We know that there are lots of things going wrong, and yet Jesus has shown up. We know that He's been out into the wilderness for temptation. Now coming out of the wilderness, we see His ministry begin and today we see the call of Jesus. And I want to use the words of Bonhoeffer, "Will you come and die?"

Not *play* religion, not *casual* Christianity. Not going to church because it *feels* right, hoping to *feel* better. Will you come and die?

This morning we look at this passage. It's broken up. I mentioned in the introduction that it's broken up into two sections and they really are what drive the two questions that become my points that I hope that you'll process. I'll offer it up in two questions. Here's the first one. Number one.

Will you hear what he says?

Will you hear what Jesus says? You will you put away what you've heard other people say about the religion of Jesus and will you hear what He actually preaches? Let's get the background verse 14. Notice what Mark gives us. He gives us a time stamp in verse 14. He says, "now after John was arrested." Mark moves so quickly that he knows you might be disoriented as to where this is in the story of Jesus, and so he brings us up to date.

John and Jesus, John the Baptist and Jesus would have crossover in the desert. You would see in the other gospels where some who were with John the Baptist would end up with Jesus. We meet a couple here. So Mark knows he's been going so quickly he drops us right here with a time stamp when John was arrested. That word "arrested," when John was delivered up. It's the same word that Mark will use to describe what happens to Jesus when He is delivered up to be crucified. So John the Baptist is not just a forerunner, he is a foreshadowing of Jesus. John the Baptist has served his purpose.

All of us at some point or other will serve our purpose, and history moves on. Mark gives us a time stamp when John the Baptist is put in jail. Why is he there? He told Herod that what he was doing was adultery. Be careful when you speak truth to power. He said to Herod, you took your brother's wife, it's adultery and Herod, who's a king, when you're a dictator you do what you want. He put him in jail. In Mark 6 we'll find out that John is going to have his head cut off, but that's for another day. The time stamp tells us "after John has been arrested." And then he brings us in verse 14 to the gravity of the message of Jesus. Before Mark tells us exactly what Jesus preaches, he gives us some description of it in verse 14. Join me there after John was arrested.

Jesus came into Galilee, and here's what He was doing. He is preaching the Gospel of God. That's an interesting way to say what Jesus is doing. He's giving us an understanding that this is not just a new way to live. This is not just a path to follow. This is not even just a new religion. What you have here is the Gospel, which means "good news." And that good news is coming from God. Mark says there is gravity in this message. This is the same phrase that the apostle Paul will pick up when he writes Romans to give us all of that theology. He says this is the Gospel of God. This is good news that comes from God. This good news is about God.

Let's you and I be careful when we think about the Gospel and how it applies to us. So often, we reverse the roles and we think that the Gospel is all about us. That when Jesus was on the cross, we were on his mind. Brothers and sisters, when Jesus is on the cross, the glory of God is on His mind and God is glorified when sinners are saved. It's the Gospel, not of self-help or you just getting better. It is the Gospel of God. This book in front of us is not something that is just a user's manual for life. This is the story of God. This is God speaking to you and coming to you and pursuing you. It is the Gospel of God. If it is the Gospel of God, it is God's prerogative to write out how it will happen. He gives us what it takes to be saved. He tells us how we are to live. It is the Gospel of God.

It's good for us to remember the gravity of the message. What is the gravity of that message? It's the good news about God; that He is a God of grace. He is a God of love. The Bible tells us He is a God who plans, who calls, who saves. He is a God who has sustained you. It's the Gospel of God. The gravity of the message reminds us of the holiness of God and the justice of God. It reminds us of the mercy of God; that this Gospel came from God.

It's the gravity of the message, but let's get to what Jesus says. Let's go to the content of the message. You'll find it in verse 15 the content. What does Jesus actually say? You have two statements and then two commands. You have a lot of theology and the two commands are calls for action. Those two statements that you find there are packed with theological significance.

Notice what He says in verse 15. "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.* Let's deal with the first one. "The time is fulfilled." Now when you're reading Greek, you would come up on two different words for "time." One is the word *chronos*. It's what we use when we talk about what time it is. How much time will that preacher use when he's preaching? You're sitting here listening to me. You get bored with the message so you look at your watch. That time is *chronos*. That's not the word used here. There's another word that is *kairos*. That is the idea of something so epic that history turns. It is a historic event. That's the word that Jesus uses. What He preaches is that the *kairos* has come that all creation has been groaning for. It's everything the prophets and the Old Testament spoke of. It's the hope of all mankind that the universe would hinge on. The *kairos* has been fulfilled. The content of this message is that here is the most epic event that the universe has ever known: that Jesus Christ came into the world.

This is what Paul would say in Galatians Chapter 4 when he says that the fullness of time has come. In fact, if you take that backward the way Jesus said it is the time, the *Kairos*, is fulfilled. That word fulfilled is plural *pleroo*. This is the way R.C. Sproul explained it. He said that if I ask for a glass of tea and you fill it up but you leave enough room in that glass of tea that when I tip it up to drink it, it doesn't spill all over me, that's not *pleroo*. But if you fill it all the way up to the very brim so that when you move it, it's going to spill

out everywhere, that's the word here. The time has absolutely come at last, fulfilled in every possible way. And the message that Jesus preaches is about Himself. The time is fulfilled.

Not only that, but I want you to notice what else He says about Himself. The time is fulfilled but also in the next statement, in verse 15 is "the Kingdom of God is at hand." Do you see that, the Kingdom of God? There's a lot of discussion on what that means. The Kingdom of God. There have been many books written on the Kingdom of God, so we won't discuss all of the ways it could be understood as the Kingdom of God, except to say, when the King comes, He brings the Kingdom with him. Jesus comes and says that all you've been waiting for, what creation has been groaning for, is this day. That time has been fulfilled and the King, the ruler, the one who was sovereign has come.

The two phrases that often are used to describe the Kingdom of God are **already** and **not yet**. **Already**, Jesus has come and established his Kingdom. His Kingdom is established whenever someone gives their life to Christ and the Gospel bursts forth in their heart. The Kingdom of God is at hand so that we live as outposts of the Kingdom of God. But we live as outposts in a foreign land. **Already** the Kingdom has been established but **not yet** has it been consummated. We don't see everything under the rule of Christ. We see pictures of what it can look like but we don't see all of it. We are still in a broken world, broken creation, a sinful society. We live in a world that's in some sort of terrible downward, spiraling whirlpool. People are reaching up for something to hold onto. We've seen this complete loss of humanity, the loss of the image of God, the loss of what it means to be a man or a woman. Our world is in absolute chaos. We stand here on this outpost saying, look the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand. It's Jesus. Christ comes preaching that the Kingdom is at hand.

You think when you read from Chapter 1 and all the way through, you're going to see Jesus cast out demons. You are going to see Him. I mean the demons know Him and they ask, "Why have you come? Have you come to destroy

us?” You’re going to see when the King comes, He provides this complete healing of people who were suffering. Why is that there? Not for us to fall off into some sort of health and wealth. It is there to remind us when the King comes, things are made whole. When He feeds the hungry, when He goes to the cross and there pays the debt, pays the price for all the sinners who will ever be saved. He pays that and when God raises Him from the dead, it is the miracle of the Kingdom. All of that is in the future so for now, hear the message: The time has been fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand - two statements.

But now I want you to see the commands. I want you to see the cost of his message. More than likely, everybody sitting in this room at some point or other you have heard the Gospel and in some way you’ve understood the sequence of events and how to appropriate it to yourself, how you can actually become a Christian. But just because you understand it does not mean that you have given yourself and yielded to it. So you’ve heard the statements.

Let’s go to the cost of this message. There are two commands right there in the passage. You will see them in verse 15. *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”* Repent, believe the Gospel. Let’s just deal with the first one, to repent. What does it mean to repent? Why do people hate the word? Often I’ve heard preachers say to repent means to change your mind. But let’s think more deeply about repentance. Changing our mind is a pretty easy thing to do. Go to a restaurant and I’m giving my order to the waitress and I say I’d like to have a cheeseburger and French fries. And I then I might say, no, I’ve changed my mind, I want a bacon cheeseburger and French fries. (I’m off the apple train by the way, quit sending me things about apples. See how easy it is to change your mind. I was eating apples and you know what I thought, this is terrible, I changed my mind).

Be careful how you use the phraseology to change your mind. To repent, it’s more than just changing our mind. It’s even more than just changing our mind

that leads to a changed behavior. To repent in the Biblical sense is to understand sin like God understands it. How does God understand it? It is the most heinous thing so that the wages of sin is death. To repent of sin and believe in the King is to say what I've done is terrible. This is an offense to Almighty God. Repent is to hate sin and run from it. It's not just to repent of something you've done. All of us here can think of some terrible sin that you've done and or thought, something you want to not do. It's not even enough to think of that and be sorry for it. The word "repentance" has to do with an absolute turning away and running in the other direction. That's why it goes with the word to **believe**. Why do people hate the word repent so much? Because when you repent of something you are saying, I was absolutely wrong. Jesus comes and He gives a statement. The time has been fulfilled. The King is here. You need to turn from what you've done.

I'll press it even a little further. There's a man named Richard Owen Roberts. He wrote a book called Repentance. It's intense repentance. I met him one time at a prayer conference. He looked like what I imagine what Elijah looked like. I mean, he's about 85 years old and had one eye gone. I think he's one-eyed and anyway, I was afraid to look him in the face. But if you read this book, Repentance, it is so strong and what Roberts says is that we don't just repent of things we've *done*, we repent of who we *are*. We don't just think God is going to wash certain things we've done away. The Gospel tells us He's going to change who I am. One of the commands that Jesus gives is the command to repent, but it goes with the second command right up under verse 15. Repent and believe. Remember, this is a Gospel of God. Repent and believe the Gospel. That word "believe" means to trust, to release your hold on the safety net and fall right into the Gospel. This means for you to put all of your faith into the Gospel.

When I say the Gospel, what do I mean? We hear it from time to time. Here I'm talking about this creator God, who is also the judge. And he's judging his creation that has rebelled against his rule. We've all rebelled. We inherited a sinful nature from our parents, Adam and Eve, but it's more than that. We rebelled in our own free will. We just rebelled against God and condemnation

hangs over every human who has rebelled. And the message is, the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom is here. Turn from that sin and come and trust. It hasn't fully developed yet in Mark, but this King will come and live in ways that you and I can't, perfectly fulfilling the law of God, earning the righteousness that you and I can't. He'll go to the cross. At the end of Mark, He'll be on the cross and there take the wrath of God. He will take all of that condemnation. Every bit of it falls on Jesus and all that righteousness He earned goes to you when you repent and believe. But it means dying to yourself. Will you? Have you? Will you come and die? Will you hear what He says?

Let's go to the larger passage. Here's another question.

Will you do what he commands?

Verses 16-20 describe the call of four apostles. Of these four apostles, three of them will be in the inner circle, James and John and Peter. This describes the four closest to Him.

Remember when Jesus was in the Judean desert, when he was by the Jordan, when John was down there preaching, people had to trek down from Jerusalem. They had to go all the way down into the desert. Now, instead of everybody having to go to Jesus, Jesus, we are told, comes up out of the desert and goes to Galilee. He goes where the people are. Let's read the account of Jesus calling the four. Then I'll come back and make just a little application. ¹⁶ *Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, (It's a lake really, about three times the size of Lake Norman) he saw Simon (that's Peter) and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.* ¹⁷ *And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."* ¹⁸ *And immediately they left their nets and followed him.*

¹⁹ *And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets.* ²⁰ *And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.*

What do we learn? One thing we learned is that Jesus is the seeker. Jesus seeks people, goes after people. He came up out of the desert and He went to Galilee. In that day and time, if you were going to be in the school of a rabbi, you would apply to that school. You would hope to get into see that Rabbi and be one of those students. Much like it is trying to apply to a college. You apply, hoping you are accepted. But the rabbi here, this rabbi is different. He's not waiting on you to apply to Him; He comes seeking you. Look, if you're a Christian, you didn't find Jesus, He found you. He came looking for His disciples. Something else we find just in a basic way in verse 17, is that Christ is sovereign. In verse 17, this is what He does. He does it with Simon and Andrew and He does it with James and John. He just gives one call: Follow me. And they follow. Now if I walk into a room and I say to a bunch of people that don't know me, hey, follow me, they're going to throw rocks. I don't have any reason to give them to follow me.

We don't know that Jesus has offered anything. This call is clear, it is unconditional. And they responded. Here's the power of God and the call. Here's the picture of God creating what He commands. When He calls you, He gives you the heart to believe that call and to turn to him. Here is this sovereign picture of Christ. It's an overwhelming picture of grace.

I'll give you another principle you can learn from this story. It's in Verse 17 and 18.

He will not be second place. Brothers and sisters, this is the plague of American Christianity. Christ, when it's convenient. In verse 17 and verse 18 Jesus comes and we see Him calling and the text says, "they left their nets." These are not minimum wage workers. These are businessmen. The Sea of Galilee is teeming with fish. They've built the business, they have partners, they're partners and their father is involved. This is not them leaving a menial job. This is turning away from a complete lifestyle. A lifestyle that would be lucrative and provide for their family. Here's this call. What is it that's keeping you? What is it that's keeping you from giving your life to Christ? What are

you holding on to that seems better? You should hear that He will not play second to anything.

Something else to learn here and that is that the call is so clear there is no prerequisite. There is nothing that Jesus says, here's what you have to do to be a part of this Kingdom except what He has preached and that is, repent and believe. There's nothing He says to Simon, or to Andrew, or to James and John. These are not great people. James and John have the nickname, Sons of Thunder. You don't get that helping old ladies across the street. And you know about Peter, how mouthy he is. These are men who needed change and Jesus didn't say, Now look you need to get your act together and then then you come and join me. The beauty of God's grace in Jesus is you come like you are but you never stay like you are. There's no prerequisite.

I'll give you another principle that you might see in verse 18 and then also in verse 20. That is that there is no room for hesitation. There's no room for that. Mark uses his word immediately. That word he will use over and over again. He uses that to sort of hustle the story along. Verse 18 he tells us that immediately Simon and Andrew left their nets and followed Him. Drop down to verse 20, and immediately He called them, that's James and John, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat. You know you can stand there and resist and hold on and quit, and the conviction, it'll pass for a little while. You know how guilt sometimes comes in these waves and you feel it, but some of you have developed such a willpower, then it'll pass. Come to church on a day like today and we sing the songs we did, that are so moving. We saw a grown man in front of his friends and peers in the body of Christ, be baptized. His old self was dead and he was raised to a new life. Here the call of Jesus, the Kingdom is here. There's no room for hesitation. Immediately, the text says immediately they went to it.

I'll give you another point. You'll find it down in verse 20. There is nothing worth missing Jesus for. Simon and Peter, James and John, they had a great careers.

But not only did James and John have a great career, notice what they are to leave in verse 20. Immediately He called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed Jesus. Look, there are no future plans you have that are worth keeping you from surrendering your life or hearing the call of God on your life. What is it that that has you procrastinating? What is it that has you dulling your senses? Some purpose, some career, maybe one day, when you get the kids raised or get the house paid off. Let me just tell you, there's nothing worth missing Jesus.

One last one, I'll give to you. It's that phrase you all know; it's found in verse 17. His purpose in your life is greater. His purpose is greater. Jesus says in verse 17, you fish now but I will make you into something different. I'll make you fishers of men. What is God calling you to do?

As I close this message I'll just put it before you. Today will you come and die? Will you hear what Jesus says, the time is fulfilled? The Kingdom is at hand? Repent and trust. Will you do what He commands? Follow me. I'll make you fishers of men.

This morning as we close our time together, let's end it praying. I want to pray for you. I want to guide you through with a couple of questions. Won't you join me with an attitude of prayer?

With your heads bowed this morning, let me ask you a question: what do you need to lay down? What do you need to let go of? There's something you've been very casual with but today you've been made acutely aware that God sees and God calls. What do you need to stop? What Grace do you need? Let's not forget our God is a God of grace. It is the Gospel, the good news of God. It comes with grace, but you may feel so ashamed. So sinful. What Grace do you need? Run to Jesus. What do you need to repent of? What is that needs to change? It happens when you repent.

(Pastor prays)