

## **“Jesus Came Preaching”**

Mark 1:14-15

Turn with me in your Bibles this morning to the first chapter of Mark, and in just a minute we will read verses 14-15. I'm sure that every preacher can remember his first sermon. In fact, he'd probably like to forget it. When I was a student at Fruitland, one of the most terrifying experiences was the day you stood before Dr. Kenneth Ridings in his homiletics class and preached in 'The Pit.' Every student had his day. Fortunately, my last name starts with a 'W' which meant my turn was close to the end of the semester. But when the day came for me stand before Dr. Ridings and the entire class, it was a humbling experience to have them grade your sermon in terms of its organization, its clarity, and—most important of all—its faithfulness to the text (but not its brevity, interestingly enough:-). Not every first sermon goes as smooth as a preacher would like.

I heard the story about a young preacher was asked by the local funeral director to hold a graveside burial service at a small local cemetery for a man who had passed away, but had no immediate family or friends. On the way to the cemetery, the preacher got himself lost, making several wrong turns. Eventually, a full half hour late, he finally arrived at what he thought was the church and saw a backhoe and its crew, but the hearse was nowhere in sight, and the workmen were eating lunch. The young pastor went over to what looked like the open grave and found the vault lid already in place. And so he took out his Bible and began to read some verses. Feeling guilty because of his tardiness, he went ahead and preached a passionate message anyway. As he was returning to his car, he over heard one of the workmen say, “Man, that sure was something. In fact, I've never heard anything like that done before...and I've been putting in septic tanks for 30 years!”

Well, I'm glad nothing like that happened when Jesus first came preaching. After His baptism and forty days of being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Mark tells us in verse 14 that Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God. (Read)

These verses record the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. From verse 14 on, we have Mark's account of the ministry of the Lord Jesus which involved preaching, teaching, healing, casting out demons, all of which lead up to His greatest accomplishment—the triumph of the cross and rising from the dead. Jesus knew what His purpose on earth was and, as this text reveals, He fills with purpose the lives of those who follow Him in discipleship, as we will see when we get to verse 16. But the point that I want to make from this text this morning is that God the Father had a task for God the Son. Everything up until this point has involved preparation for that task. Remember, Mark presents Jesus as the Servant of God. Mark is the Servant gospel, and the key verse is:

**Mark 10:45—“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”**

Jesus is the Servant who has come to do the Father's will. As such, He has work to do. Having received the Father's affirmation in verse 11, and having overcome the enemy's temptation in verses 12-13, Mark wants his readers to see that Jesus is well qualified for this task He has come to accomplish. Nothing could distract Him or keep Him from fulfilling that purpose. And so verse 14 now shows us how He went to work in obedience to that purpose. As the incarnate Word, it is significant that the Bible says 'Jesus came preaching.' This is how He begins His ministry. His task involved the ministry of 'proclaiming' the gospel of God. That word 'proclaiming' is very important:

**“Proclaiming”** — word is *κηρύσσω* which means to herald or to preach; to proclaim or publish; 61 times in the NT

Mark uses this term six times here in the first chapter (1:4, 1:7, 1:14, 1:38, 1:39, 1:45) to underscore the importance of preaching in the overall redemptive plan of God. God uses the instrument of His Word to save those who believe. In fact, the apostle Paul says as much when he writes in:

**1 Corinthians 1:17—“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”**

**1 Corinthians 1:21—“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”**

**1 Corinthians 1:23—“But we preach Christ crucified.”**

Elsewhere, Paul tells the young pastor Timothy:

**2 Timothy 4:1-4—“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead and His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.**

**Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”**

Preaching involves making an authoritative proclamation, to be a herald before the people. Throughout history, it has always been a dark day in the church

when preaching took a back seat. The church is always to be a place where preaching is prominent. No pastor should ever apologize for the simple, bold proclamation of the message of Jesus Christ. When preaching is replaced with something else, the church instantly loses its voice. It will eventually wither and die. Someone has well said that the problem with so much of the church in our day is that it has become a ‘non-prophet’ organization.

And so it is significant here in verse 14 now as Mark tells us that Jesus begins His ministry by proclaiming the gospel of God. The Greek word is ‘εὐαγγελίον’ from which we get ‘evangelism.’ It means ‘good news’ of salvation which is announced. And it is a word that would have been familiar to those in the first century, both Jews and Gentiles. To the Greeks, a ‘gospel’ was an important announcement of victory by the king over some enemy. As such, it was news intended to be published far and wide so that all the king’s subjects would hear his accomplishment. Jesus came preaching the gospel of God. The first thing Mark tells us involves:

### **1—WHEN Jesus came preaching (1:14a)**

*“Now after John was arrested...”*

That first phrase in verse 14 is important, “Now after John was arrested.” It establishes the timing in which Jesus will begin His public ministry. It indicates the time when Jesus had to go to work, the sign that His earthly ministry had to begin. The last time we saw John the Baptist, he too had been preaching, and was baptizing in the wilderness. But now, John has been arrested, the details of which Mark will explain a bit later on in chapter 6.

Why exactly is John the Baptist arrested? Suffice it to say that John had been arrested by Herod because of the boldness of John’s message. John’s

preaching had gotten him into some trouble. Herod had committed adultery with his brother's wife, and John called it out. Herod wanted to silence John, and so his response is to have him 'arrested,' and the word there is significant.

**“Arrested”** — *word is ‘παραδοθῆναι’ (παραδίδωμι) and means to be delivered up; to be seized and incarcerated*

Mark uses this word several times in his gospel:

**Mark 9:31 — “For He was teaching His disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after three days He will rise.’”**

He will be 'delivered' (παραδίδωμι) into the hands of men. Then he uses it again in chapter 10, then in chapter 15, three times in that chapter alone. And so this word that is used for John being arrested and put in prison is the word 'delivered up.' Now, that's significant because is used by Mark of how Christ, the Suffering Servant Himself, would be delivered up. It is used elsewhere of God delivering up His own Son:

**Romans 8:32 — “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”**

This same word is also used of Christ delivering Himself up in a voluntary act of sacrifice:

**Galatians 2:20 — “I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”**

And Paul will use this very same word again in Ephesians to speak of how Christ has 'delivered' Himself up:

**Ephesians 5:1-2—“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”**

**Ephesians 5:25—“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”**

So the point is that there is some foreshadowing going on here with the use of this word by Mark. It is after John is ‘delivered up’ that Jesus begins to preach. John the Baptist was delivered up, as Christ would be delivered up, as God the Father delivered Christ up, as Christ delivered Himself up. One of the reasons why Christ delivered Himself up, and was delivered up by God and sinful men was as the writer of Hebrews says:

**Hebrews 9:14—“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”**

As John was removed from the scene, Jesus’ ministry was about to begin. And here’s the application for us today, now that Christ has been removed from us in a physical sense, that is the sign that we are now to serve Him. Jesus said in:

**John 14:12—“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will He do, because I am going to the Father.”**

The sign for Jesus to begin His ministry was the delivering up of John the Baptist into prison, and the sign for us to begin working and serving for the Lord as the servants of God is that Christ has been delivered up for us, so that we might serve the Living God. In other words, the sign for you to start a work for God, if

you're waiting on one, has already been given. The sign for us that we should be serving happened 2000 years ago on a rugged cross. I mean isn't that why He says what He does at the end of Mathew's gospel? All authority has been given to Him heaven and on earth has been given to Him, and He now commissions His followers to preach, to make disciples. Friends, that's our task.

## **2—WHERE Jesus came preaching (1:14b)**

*“Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God.”*

So verse 14 says after John is arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God. He's not running from danger, but walks right into the face of it, for Galilee was the region ruled by Herod. He's not withdrawing from peril because John was arrested, but He is actually going into the very region over which the man who had arrested John was ruling.

The world might be able to silence the messenger, but it will never be able to silence the Message!

**G. Campbell Morgan** — *“Men may silence the voice of a prophet, but they cannot hinder the Word of God.”*

Now, I want you to turn to the very back of your Bible for a minute to the section where you find the maps. If you're on your smart phone, you might be able to do a quick search and find a map of Israel in the time of Jesus. But I want to show you where Jesus began His ministry...

It is estimated that around 70% of Jesus' recorded ministry took place in Galilee. Now, we know that because in the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—the majority of Jesus' teaching, miracles, and public activity occurs in Galilee. His home base appears to have been Capernaum (Matt. 4:13). And key events

such as calling His disciples, many of His miracles of healing, parables, and the feeding of the 5,000 all happen in Galilee.

Why Galilee? Well, it is less legalistic and hostile than in Judea where the scribes and Pharisees were. His Judean ministry (especially in and around Jerusalem) becomes more prominent toward the end of His earthly life. John's gospel highlights more Judean activity than the Synoptics, but even when you take John into account, most scholars still conclude that the majority of Jesus' ministry—likely somewhere between 65–75%—occurred in Galilee. That's roughly two-thirds of His earthly ministry. And we need to know that this was not by accident, but it was prophetically significant:

**Isaiah 9:1-2—“But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time He has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them a light has shone.”**

Light is associated with truth, and truth is often pictured as light. When a person gains wisdom, we say he or she has been 'enlightened' or in the know about something. Isaiah said that the time would come when God's own Light would shine upon Galilee. It says on them, not from them. Which is to say that it would be a Light from another world, a Light that did not originate with them, but would shine upon them in the midst of their spiritual darkness.

**John 1:9-10—“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him.”**

**John 9:12—“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”**

Luke’s gospel records how Gabriel is sent to the region of Galilee, to an obscure little village named Nazareth, to deliver a message to an unknown virgin girl named Mary. Such a fact would have elicited amazement from those in the first century world. Those who were looking for the Messiah likely would have been looking for Him to appear among the religious elite in the city of Jerusalem. Gabriel shows up in Galilee of all places to announce the news of the Messiah’s birth. And now that it is time for the Messiah to begin His public ministry, He begins preaching in Galilee. It is a rugged area in the northern region of Israel 60-70 miles away from Jerusalem, known for its predominantly Gentile population.

It is wonderful to think that when God sent the Light into our world, He chose a place that is predominantly Gentile. He is saying, “Here is the Savior of the world. Here is the One in whom is life and light.” None of the scribes, none of the religious leaders of the time were looking for Messiah to show up in such an obscure place. Yet that is exactly where Jesus came preaching the gospel.

### **3—WHAT Jesus came preaching (1:15)**

*“And saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’”*

What is it that Jesus was proclaiming? Verse 15 is the very first time we hear Jesus’ voice in Mark, and notice He says, “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” This was the message that the Lord Jesus went about proclaiming.

**A prophetic element of His message**—“the time is fulfilled”

For centuries, Israel’s prophets had been announcing that God would one day break into human history and establish His kingdom. From Genesis 3 all the way to Malachi 4, the Messiah had been promised as the One who would come to rule and regain what had been lost in Adam. So Jesus begins His ministry with the announcement, “The time is fulfilled.” The One who is promised is now present.

**A predominant element of His message**—“the kingdom of God is at hand”

Pay attention to that word ‘kingdom.’ The Old Testament Hebrew word means a rule or dominion, or a realm in which royal authority is exercised. It is used in this way 136 times in the Old Testament. The Greek equivalent is ‘βασιλεία’ and is used 154 times throughout the New Testament. It is a word that involves both the realm itself as well as the right to rule. When you add it all up, the concept of ‘kingdom’ is involving at least three essential elements—a ruler who rules, a realm to be ruled, and a right to rule. All three of these elements are needed for a kingdom. There can be no kingdom without a ruler on the throne, a realm in which that ruler exercises authority, or a right possessed by that ruler to rule the realm. The gospel of the kingdom is the wonderful announcement that the Ruler who has the right to the realm is now here. Human history is not an endless cycle of sin, suffering, and death.

If the kingdom of God is at hand, then why is there still so much disease, death, and demons? The answer Mark gives us is that the kingdom is already and not yet. It has been inaugurated with the first coming of Christ, but will be eventually consummated with His second coming.

**A personal element of His message**—“repent and believe in the gospel”

He is calling on people to repent and believe in the gospel. It is not two separate steps of salvation, but is two sides to the same saving response to the gospel, two sides of the same coin when it comes to responding properly to the gospel. It involves a negative aspect as well as a positive.

Negatively, repentance is turning from our sin. To repent emphasizes the proper attitude toward our sin. It is turning away from it, confessing it before God. It means that we renounce and forsake sin and all attempts to excuse it or seek self-justification.

**Luke 13:3—“Except you repent, you will all likewise perish.”**

Richard Owen Roberts said that ‘repent’ is the first word of the gospel. It is the first required response. Before there is comfort, there is confrontation. Before there is assurance, there is awakening. Before there is forgiveness, there is a humbling that first takes place. Repentance is a change of mind resulting in a change of direction. Repentance is a rich biblical term that signifies an elemental transformation in someone’s mind, heart, and life. When people repent, they turn from walking in one direction, and do an about-face that walks in the opposite direction. From that point forward, they think differently, believe differently, and live differently. But the positive side of the coin involves faith:

Positively, faith is turning to our Savior. Repentance turns from sin and belief turns to the Savior. I turn away from sin and self, and in faith, I turn to Christ. To repent is to surrender, and to believe is to place my faith in the Lord Jesus. Repentance cannot exist by itself, but will always be accompanied by right belief. It is turning from sin while turning to Christ. You can’t truly turn to Christ without also turning from what separates you from Him. And you can’t truly turn from sin without turning toward a new Master. It is one motion with two directions—like a

U-turn. When you do a U-turn, you're simultaneously leaving one direction and facing another. Repentance empties the hand, while faith embraces Christ. Repentance renounces all rival allegiances—self-rule, sin, idols. Faith bows to the rightful King and seeks His rule.

Jesus says, 'Repent!' It means 'change your mind' about your sin. Start thinking differently, see how it's harming you, see how it separates you from God, how it's robbing you of all the good that God would give you. Repent and believe, embrace Christ. It's necessary to trust and rely on Him alone for salvation. Turn from your sin, turn to Him in faith. Don't ever separate the word repent from the word believe. They always go together. Together, they describe the right response to the gospel. Repenting of our sin and believing in Jesus Christ is the essence of saving faith.

Before we finish, let me give you a few closing principles by way of some application. Write these down:

- **God gave a task to His Son, and He gives a task to you**

Jesus came to accomplish the work which the Father sent Him to do. He had a divinely appointed task that would bring glory to God. Jesus came preaching. Jesus came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. He said in John 9, "I must do the works of Him who sent Me while it is day, for the night is coming, when no one can work." And at the end of His ministry, He would say in John 17:1, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do." The Servant had a work to do. And this has important application for us, because we are all servants of God. And we too have a work to do. The New Testament echoes this same principle that we are God's servants, and our task on earth is to proclaim the gospel and make disciples. How might you do

that? How will live with a sense of calling? More people than ever are living with a sense of aimlessness and hopelessness.

**Fyodor Dostoyevsky** — *“The secret of man’s being is not only to live but to have something to live for. Without a stable conception of the object of life, man would not consent to go on living, and would rather destroy himself than remain on earth, though he had bread in abundance.”*

- **The world may silence the messenger, but it cannot stop the Message**

Herod had John arrested, but he couldn’t stop the Word. It was a shocking thing when he would later find out that One took John’s place and preached truth with an even greater boldness. Herod even thought that John had come back from the dead. Silence the messenger, but you can’t stop the Message. In 2 Timothy 2:9, Paul acknowledged that he had been kept in chains like a criminal, and he says, “But the Word of God is not bound!” Therefore, it frees us from fear. If the success of God’s gospel depended on us, we’d constantly live in anxiety. When you share Christ and are rejected, unfriended, or marginalized, the message has not failed. Your responsibility is faithfulness—not results.

Not only does this free us from fear, but it reminds us that our influence goes far beyond what we can see. You may never see the fruit of your witness. A sermon that seems flat may be remembered years later. A gospel conversation that feels awkward may echo in someone’s mind. A faithful life may speak after you’re gone. Even the martyrdom of Stephen became a turning point in the spread of the church—and a man named Saul was standing there watching!

- **Though it may take time, God always keeps His promises**

Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.” The world had waited hundreds of years for this moment as Jesus begins to preach. The message of the prophets had been that Christ was coming. Our message is that Christ is coming again! Friends, the time is quickly approaching when our Lord will be revealed in all of His glory and majesty. Don’t mistake God’s patience for His promises. He’s made a promise, and He intends to keep that promise.

- **Since the gospel is urgent, your response must be immediate**

Jesus said, “Repent and believe in the gospel.” That is an urgent message, isn’t it? There’s no time to waste. Don’t put off the decision another day. If there are things that the Lord has for you to do, don’t wait until tomorrow. Make the most of the time today while you still have it. Let’s pray.

*“Father, we thank You that in the fullness of time You sent Your Son. The time has been fulfilled. The kingdom is at hand. You have not left us in darkness, but have sent the light of Christ into the world. Lord, we confess that we are often slow to repent and believe. We cling to our sin. We resist Your Lordship. Forgive us for wanting the blessings of Your kingdom without bowing to You as King. And so I ask that today, by Your Spirit, grant us true repentance—not simply regret, but a turning of the heart. Grant us true faith—not mere agreement, but wholehearted trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ. For those who’ve never repented of their sins and believed the gospel, open their eyes and soften their hearts as You draw them to Yourself. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*