

January 21, 2018
Sermon for 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Mark 1:14-20

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 1:14–20 (ESV)

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.

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Did you catch the first command Jesus gives in Mark's Gospel?

First, He says the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Then comes the command: repent. Repent is the first thing Jesus tells people to do. That word becomes the key word whenever He meets someone.

It's kind of a summary of what he taught, what He preached, what He wanted His miracles to bring about in people's lives.

Repentance has a fairly simple definition. It means to turn away from one thing and to turn to something else. It's like driving a car and making a U-turn. Repentance is a U-turn from one direction to another.

In talking about repentance, I like to use the example of an about face. Between marching band in High School and my time in the Air Force, this example works pretty well. I've heard some use the example of doing a 180 degree turn. I did not do well in geometry class so I tend to confuse things and sometimes say do a 360. But a 360 degree turn is a full circle. Repentance is a 180-degree turn. But we are often guilty of doing a 360. We do a 180, an about face in repentance, turning away from our sin, but then not too much later, we finish the circle with a 360 and go right back to our favorite sin.

We shouldn't go right back to where we started.

Repentance means you're headed in the opposite direction you were once going.

When Jesus uses the word *repent*, He is calling people to turn away from anything that leads away from Him and to turn instead toward Him.

Then comes His second command: believe. Believe not just anything, but believe in Jesus. Trust Him. Turn toward Him. Hold on to Him. Repent and believe is the heart of Jesus' message when He speaks or does something.

He says and does much more, but this is the gist, the summary, the heart of His ministry: repent and believe.

Repent of sin. Believe, for He has come to remove it. And He will! Why? Because the time had come. The time had been fulfilled.

Time here is not so much about a calendar date. No, it's more the right time, a decisive time. Like in World War II when the Allies decided on just the right day for the Normandy invasion: D-day.

Preparation, morning tides on the beaches, the element of surprise, even the weather all had to come together; all had to be just right. It wasn't just June 6, 1944; it was *the day*. And the day, just the right day, changed history.

Jesus is saying that now, since He has arrived on the scene, the prophecies from the Old Testament were fulfilled in Him. History now turns in a different direction.

Jesus is the decisive turning point in the history of this world. Everything changes because He has arrived. The exact date is not that important, but that He came into this world is.

Everything changes. All of history turns on what Jesus did. Jesus said that the kingdom of God is at hand. Now usually when we think of a kingdom, we picture some country or place.

The United Kingdom is found on a map, and within its boundaries are England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. But Jesus is not so much talking about a geographical place when He says kingdom. No, He is talking about the rule or reign or authority or power of God in this world and in our lives.

Are you starting to get the picture of what Jesus' first sermon was saying? The time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come.

Who is standing there? Who is saying this?

Jesus is. All of time was leading up to this moment. All of history would turn on Jesus and what He would do. He is the kingdom of God. He has come.

But not in the way the people back then were expecting.

They were expecting the Messiah to get rid of the political oppression of foreign domination.

They were expecting that there would be no more poverty, famine, or hunger.

They were expecting a place that would be safe and protected, where children could play together without fear, like the prophet Isaiah had talked about: *"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain"* (Is 11:6–9a).

They were expecting that sin would be destroyed and everyone would worship the true God. "*For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*" (11:9b).

But Jesus turns those expectations upside down.

Jesus selects fishermen to be His first followers, not a powerful army.

He doesn't hand out money and the best houses to those who believe in Him, but simply calls them to follow him. He doesn't play it safe, but is arrested and crucified. He doesn't do away with sin in this world, but forgives it.

His death on the cross forgives it.

Oh, the day will come when all those expectations will come true. At the end of time, Jesus will return in power and glory. Children will safely play with wild animals and snakes that we'd expect to be poisonous. Sin will be destroyed, and we will hunger no more. But until then, the kingdom of God is Jesus stepping into this world and calling people to repent and believe.

So when we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come," we're praying that Jesus comes to each one of us. And when He does, He calls us to repent and believe.

So repent, turn away from anything that would lead you away from him and believe; turn to Jesus.

Now comes the hard part—what this does in our lives.

Once again, Jesus turns everything upside down.

He turns our lives inside out. He changes the direction we so often want to go.

Start with something as simple as what you do when you do something wrong.

Now the direction most people go when they've messed up is to avoid taking responsibility. They blame someone else. They say they were only doing what everyone was doing. They say it really wasn't that bad. They call it a lifestyle choice. Their parents are at fault. It's in the genes, and so they were predisposed to be this way. They were only acting out on their anger. And so on.

Jesus calls for us to repent. He says take responsibility for what you've done wrong. He says confess it to Him and to each other. He says don't make excuses like the rest of the crowd, but come before Him with repentant hearts and seek His forgiveness.

So the confession of sins at the beginning of the service is not just a part of the liturgy we do each week. It's actually turning away from the sin in our lives and turning toward Jesus, for He does forgive.

But not just on Sunday. We are called to repent every day!

Of course, confessing our sins means changing direction in very real, sometimes painful, close-to-home ways in our lives. To repent is to turn away from anything that leads away from Jesus.

Jesus calls us to repent.

I think about the four fishermen—Peter and Andrew and James and John—whom Jesus called to follow Him.

There they were, going about their own business, their fishing business, cleaning their nets by the Sea of Galilee, and suddenly their lives were changed, turned around, in that now they were to catch people for Jesus.

Today, most fish swim in the direction of not saying anything about Jesus.

We're told to keep our faith quiet. We're not to impose our religion on others.
Church is private and not to be shared in public.

Don't wear a cross to work as that might offend someone.

Brit Hume is a TV journalist. When Tiger Woods's life and career collapsed amid the revelations that he had many sexual affairs with other women and his marriage was coming apart, Hume said on TV that Tiger Woods should become a Christian because Jesus offers forgiveness and redemption. He said, "Tiger, turn to the Christian faith and you can make a total recovery and be a great example to the world" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgMr_Zc3OtA).

The outcry was fast and vicious against what he said.

He took a beating in the media and public eye. It's that kind of reaction that can make us quiet. We can end up swimming with fish whose mouths are shut when it comes to our faith.

But Jesus says repent and turn to a different direction. You are called just like the disciples to share the Good News about Jesus with others.

Because the time is right. The time has come. The time is now!

Jesus is here, and He rules. He is the kingdom of God.

You have been forgiven by His death and resurrection! You have a new life! So repent and believe.

Find those areas in life that are leading you away from Jesus, Don't do a 360 and turn back to your sins, make a 180-degree turn away from them, and turn to Him. Believe in Jesus!

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline

The Right Time for Turning

Mark 1:14-20

- I. The time has come. Repent and believe
- II. Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God.
- III. Repent and believe with confessing and fishing.