

## THE MESSAGE OF THE SERVANT

Mark 1:14-15

**14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,**

**15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."**

Intro: Jesus Christ was prepared for His earthly ministry in three special ways. He was prepared spiritually, emotionally and physically. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for the work He had been sent to do, v. 10. He received the vocal approval of His heavenly Father, v. 11. He was put to the test in the flesh, as He fasted forty days and faced Satan in the wilderness, v. 12-13.

The passage we have read today shows Jesus at the beginning of His Galilean ministry. These two verses showcase the theme of the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

When Jesus appears in the Gospel of Mark, He comes preaching the Word of God. He appears with a message of good news for all who will hear Him. It is the message the Master preached that I want us to focus on today.

Even though His message was delivered 2,000 years ago, it is still relevant and powerful today. Even though He died on the cross, His message lives on. His message has been preached countless times down through the ages. His message is still being preached all over this world. It is a message as fresh as today's headlines. It is a message that is more relevant than what is happening in Washington, Hollywood, Baghdad or Moscow. It is a message that must be preached and it is a message that needs to be heard.

Let's look at The Message Of The Servant. I want to point out some facts about His message that I hope will speak to our hearts. Regardless of where you may be in your spiritual journey today, you need this message.

If you are lost, this message can point you to salvation. If you have grown cold, this message can lead you to the fires of revival. If you are in need, this message can offer you hope. Let Him speak to your heart as we examine The Message Of The Servant.

### **I. THE FRAMEWORK OF HIS MESSAGE (Mark 1:14)**

Let's consider first of all, as we look at verse 14, the time and place where Jesus begins His message. Mark is giving us just a summary of Jesus' ministry. Actually between verse 13 and verse 14, almost a year has gone by since the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist and the temptation in the wilderness that followed it. If you want to know what happens during that time you have to read the gospel of John. He is the only gospel writer who tells us about it. He tells us that Jesus ministered in the southern parts of Israel in Judea. It was during those early days of ministry that Jesus went to the wedding at Cana and turned the water to wine. He met with Nicodemus and shared told him that he must be born again. And he traveled through Samaria and offered living water to the woman at the well. It was during those early days of ministry that Jesus began to gain in popularity, as the people left John the Baptist to follow Jesus.

Now we see that Jesus moved from Judaea to Galilee. Verse 14 tells us that Jesus came into Galilee **"after John was put into prison."** Mark tells us later in chapter 6 that John the Baptist was arrested because he dared to preach the truth. Herod, the Roman appointed king of Galilee, had married a woman named Herodias, who was his brother Philip's wife. John rebuked Herod and called his actions a sin. Herod arrested John and threw him into prison.

This is highly significant, because the Lord Jesus, as He moves from Judea to Galilee, He's not escaping from danger, He's moving into the danger zone. Jesus is actually going into the very region over which the man who had arrested John was ruling. Jesus chose the road of suffering because it was the road that would lead to the cross.

When John was arrested for preaching the truth Jesus went to the same street corner and preached the same message! Remember that John came as the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. John came to announce the coming of the Lord. He came to prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus. And his fate foreshadows the destiny of Jesus.

So the arrest of John the Baptist for Mark indicates the time when Jesus had to begin His message. Literally the phrase **"put in prison"** comes from a word which means to give over, deliver up, or to betray. Mark uses this word in many verses, in Mark 9:31 Jesus says, **"The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."** Again in Mark 10:33-34 Jesus predicts His death and resurrection saying, **"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; 34 and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."** Both the words "betrayed" and "deliver" are the same word Mark uses to describe the imprisonment of John the Baptist.

Now that's significant, I believe. It is used by Mark of how Christ, the Suffering Servant Himself, would be delivered up. Paul also uses this word to describe how God delivered up His own Son. In Romans 8:32, **"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"** Paul also uses it to describe how Jesus gave Himself up in Galatians 2:20, **"I have been 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 for me."** Paul uses it again in Ephesians 5:2 of Christ delivering Himself up: **"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."** And again in Ephesians 5:25 he says: **"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."**

So John the Baptist was delivered up, as Christ would be delivered up, as the Father delivered up His Son, as Christ delivered Himself up. And if we are followers of Jesus, what does all this mean for us?

In Mark 13 Jesus tells us plainly what it means for us, (Mark 13:11-13):

**11 But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is**

**given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.**

**12 Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.**

**13 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.**

The servants of God will be delivered up and betrayed. It happened to John. It happened to Jesus, and it should not surprise us that it will happen to us as well. That's what it means to be a follower of Jesus and a servant of God.

## **II. THE FOCUS OF HIS MESSAGE**

The end of verse 14 tells us Jesus came "**preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God**," or "proclaiming the gospel of God."

A. Preaching – This word means "to be a herald" or "to proclaim publicly." A herald came with important news from the king. When Jesus came He came declaring the message of God. So what was the work, the task of this Suffering Servant? Put very plainly, so that you can understand: His work was to preach. That was His task.

I do not think preaching will ever be superseded by anything else. For preaching, in its essence, is the revealing of reality. It is letting opening the living Word of God so people see what is actually true. Real preaching is always the proclaiming of the good news of God's kingdom. And it is always relevant because God is always relevant.

B. The Gospel – The word "gospel" means "good news". Jesus came to the people of His day preaching a message of hope and glad tidings.

C. The Kingdom of God – Jesus wasn't just preaching any "good news". He was preaching the "good news" of "the kingdom of God." The Jews knew from the preaching of the Old Testament prophets that God would one day establish His kingdom in this world. Those ancient preachers told of the wonders of that coming day in vivid and glorious terms.

They spoke of a King Who would reign like David and defeat all the enemies of God. They wrote about a King Who would be like Solomon, Who would usher in a time of prosperity and peace. They wrote of a day when the deserts would bloom like the Garden of Eden. They talked of the lion and the lamb lying down together. They looked to a day when food would be bountiful; disease, war and poverty would become extinct. The prophets told of a time when a man of 100 years would still be considered a child. They were looking to a time when all the nations of the world would gather themselves together at Jerusalem and they would all worship the LORD God.

Jesus came preaching a message of hope to a people trapped in despair. Their religion had ceased to have power. Their leaders were corrupt and self-serving. Their nation had long since lost its glory. They were a people trapped in lives of hopeless and desperation. They were hungry for a message of hope.

Just as it was in Jesus' day, we are living in times when people need to know that there is hope. We are living in the midst of hopeless and desperate hour. People are looking for answers and they are looking in all the wrong places.

Hope in our world will not come from the Courthouse, the State House, the Capitol or the White House. Hope will not be found in a bottle, a pill, a rolling paper, or a needle. Hope will not be found in religion, philosophy or social change. Hope will not be found in sex, money or power. The world has looked in all of these for thousands of years and has always come away disappointed and disillusioned.

Hope will be found in one place. Hope is found in the message Jesus preached. Hope is found in the message He handed down to His disciples. Hope is found in the good news of the kingdom of God. God, in His authority, is invading human history to redeem mankind. God's great countdown in history is now over, as if the time for blast-off has come, the rule of God is about to begin on the earth! Now I know that there is a future aspect to that that is yet to be, but what Christ was saying here is: 'God's kingdom has come near you!'. Where had it come? Was there a new throne that Christ was sitting on in Jerusalem? No. Did He restore everything that is promised in the Old Testament Scriptures? No. What is He talking about? He's saying: 'God's kingdom has come near in me, Christ!'. We must preach Christ!

Do you get the picture? The kingdom of God is found in one place and His name is Jesus. Hope is found in His death and resurrection. He can save your soul. He can wash away your sins. He can take you to Heaven when you die. He can give you a new life and new direction in life. He can change you and everything about you. If you need hope, then you need Jesus! That is the message He came to bring to this world!

### **III. THE FORCE OF HIS MESSAGE**

The message preached by Jesus was a message of good news, but it was also a message of urgency. Jesus came to a people who needed help, but help would only come to those who made a choice to follow Him. So, while His message was one of good news and a kingdom, it was also a message of confrontation. He called upon those who heard Him to make a conscious decision to follow Him.

**A. The Time Is Fulfilled, And The Kingdom Of God Is At Hand** – This phrase communicates a sense of urgency. The word “time” has the idea of “a favorable season for action; a golden opportunity.” Jesus was preaching for immediate life change among His hearers. He was calling them to come to Him right now.

The promised “kingdom of God” was “at hand”. They were seeing prophecy fulfilled before their very eyes. They should not delay, but they should turn to Jesus immediately.

There is still a sense of urgency in the Gospel message. God calls people to come to Him today, 2 Cor. 6:2, **"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."**

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are standing on dangerous ground today. You never know when the golden thread of life will break and you will slip out into eternity. You are one heartbeat, one breath away from death today. Do not presume on tomorrow! Do not think that you will have another opportunity. If you are not right with God, the time to get right is now! Not after while, not later, not tomorrow, not even in a few minutes, but now!

Get to God while there is still time! Get to God while the door of salvation still stands open and the invitation to salvation is still being extended to you. Come while you can and be saved!

Jesus was calling lost people to salvation. If they would come to Him, He would save them and bring them into the kingdom of God. They would become the redeemed subjects of God. His kingdom would be established in their hearts.

If you are saved today, the kingdom of God is in you! Jesus has redeemed you out of the bondage of your sins and He had “translated you” into His kingdom, Col. 1:13; Rom. 14:17. Are you in Jesus? If so, rejoice. If not, come to Jesus today. This is your golden opportunity!

**B. Repent And Believe The Gospel** - These two phrases reveal the heart of the Master’s message. To miss either is to miss it all. To bypass one or the other is to miss on the power of God’s salvation.

**Repent** – This word means “to change one’s mind”. In the Bible repentance means “a change of mind that results in a change of action”.

Repentance is not feeling sorry for your sins. Repentance is not turning over a new leaf. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a changed life.

When a person repents of their sin they change their minds regarding the nature of sin. Sin is no longer something to be desired, pursued and held onto. Sin is seen as it really is: dark, dangerous and offensive to God. Sin is no longer something to be enjoyed; it becomes something to be avoided. It is not seen as a source of pleasure, but as a pathway to destruction, death and Hell.

**Believe** – This word means “to place your confidence and trust in.” When the gospel message is received as the truth and believed on with sincerity from the heart, salvation is the result. The message Jesus preached is a simple message. It is a message that is life changing for everyone who hears it and believes it. But, for His message to be effective in your life, you must have both parts. There must be repentance and there must be faith.

Repentance prepares the heart for belief in the Gospel. Repentance deals with the sin question. Repentance shows the willingness of the sinner to turn away from sin. There can be no salvation apart from genuine repentance.

If you are not willing to let go of your sins, you cannot exercise genuine faith in Jesus. Therefore, you cannot be saved. To make a profession without genuine repentance of sin is a dangerous matter. It shows contempt for the Gospel and for the cross of the Lord Jesus. You cannot repent of your sins and believe on Jesus and remain as you were. That is a total impossibility!

Conc: The message of the Servant is a message of hope and salvation! It is a message filled with promise, power and potential. But, it is a message that must be believed! It is a message that must be accepted. It is a message that must be proclaimed in these days!

Have you repented of your sins believed the Gospel message? Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior? Can you sense the urgency of the hour?

Christians can you sense the urgency of this hour? Are you doing what you can to see that the message is shared in these days? Our task is to spread the good

news, to challenge men and women, boys and girls to repent and believe the Gospel!

As I thought about that, I couldn't help think of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who said: 'The world is my parish'. On horseback and whatever else he could get, he went across the whole of the British Isles, and right over to America, preaching the word of God. One of his most famous sayings was: 'Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can'. During his ministry he travelled over 4000 miles a year - before cars and trains and planes! He preached, in his lifetime, approximately 40,000 messages - and maybe that's why his brother Charles wrote in his hymn, JESUS! THE NAME HIGH OVER ALL:

Thou I shall constantly proclaim,  
Though earth and hell oppose;  
Bold to confess Thy glorious Name  
Before a world of foes.

Happy, if with my latest breath  
I may but gasp His name,  
Preach Him to all, and cry in death:  
"Behold, behold the Lamb!".

That's your task, that's your message. And it's mine - the question is: are we doing it?

Is He calling you right now? If He is, please come. Whatever the need, you come. The time is now. Repent and believe the good news!