

What is the Gospel

2018-01-20 - Year B - Epiphany 3 - The Rev. Christopher Klukas

Jeremiah 3:19–4:4; Psalm 130; 1 Corinthians 7:17–24; Mark 1:14–20

Street Interviews: What is the Gospel

- “I have no idea”, “The Bible”, “Gospel Music”, “Hymns for Church”, “I’m not really religious”, “Church”, “A music movement”, “The Gospel is what people choose it to be”, “A book that reflects the beliefs of the Christian faith and is made up of stories from the past”, “sharing news about religion”, “Jesus and stuff”, “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are full of stories and proverbs that Jesus passed down to us”, “The word of God through the Bible”, “A religious book about Christianity that is basically trying to tell you how to be a good person.”
- If you ask Christians in churches, I think you would probably still get diverse answers, though I hope they would be a little closer to the mark.
- I think many might point to Jesus dying for our sins as the Gospel, but Jesus is preaching the “Gospel of God” years before his crucifixion.

The Gospel and the Kingdom of God

- Mark 1:14-15
- The primary content of Jesus’ message, the Gospel, is the Kingdom of God. God’s reign.
 - “The Gospel is the good news of God loving and saving lost mankind through the ministry in word and deed of his Son, Jesus Christ.” (ACNA Catechism, 1)
 - This includes Jesus dying for our sins, but it is bigger than that. It also includes Jesus preaching, healing, performing miracles, loving, and challenging.
 - It is as if an oppressive regime has been in control for as long as we remember, but the true king is now coming back to make things right.
 - The kingdom of God is wherever Jesus is king. This kingdom expands not through the winning of battles, but by winning hearts.
- Another important thing to notice in Jesus preaching is his declaration that “the time is fulfilled.” The greek word here is “Kairos,” the same word that is used as the name of a prison ministry that a number of you are involved in.
 - “Kairos” means an appointed time or season. Jesus is saying that the time has come. Everyone has been waiting for it, the prophets have been pointing to it, and now it is here.
 - Already but not yet. Jesus’ declaration that the Kingdom of God is now here but not yet in its fullness.
 - This explains why the world is still full of brokenness even as we see God demonstrating his power in remarkable ways.

How should we respond to the Gospel?

- v. 15 “Repent and believe in the Gospel”
- “How should you respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ? I should repent of my sins and put faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior and my Lord.” (ACNA Catechism, 11)

- Repent
 - Repentance is about turning. Not just turning away from our sins, but turning to embrace the God from whom we had been estranged.
 - Turning away from sin on its own is not enough. We must be reconciled to God!
 - Baptism: “Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your savior.”
 - Prodigal son: Luke 15:18-20.
- Believe
 - “”pístis” is saving acceptance of Christ’s work as proclaimed in the gospel. This includes believing, obeying, trusting, hoping, and being faithful, but it is primarily faith in Christ.”¹
 - Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. Indiana Jones has to cross over an enormous canyon, and it looks like there is only air between where he is and the other side. He steps out, trusting that something will catch him.
- Immediately
 - We don’t know from this passage whether Jesus had met these men before, but Mark certainly wants to emphasize their immediate response.
 - vv. 18, 20
 - There is no time like the present to respond to God’s call.

Fishers of men

- I mentioned earlier that repentance is not just turning from sin but turning to God. What does that turning to God look like?
- Jesus’ call to these fishermen is a call to follow him, participate in his work, and, ultimately, to carry on his work after his ascension.
- “Rather than being chosen by his disciples as a Rabbi (cf. Matt 8:19) in order to study the Law, Jesus authoritatively summons his own disciples to join him in sharing his life and ministry (1:17; 3:14; 6:7). Theirs was not to learn and transmit his teaching of the Law (cf. Matt 23:8) but to become “fishers of men.””²
- The goal is not so much to convince people through irrefutable arguments that the content of the Bible is true as it is to get people excited about the reign of God and help them to follow Jesus too.
- ““Mission is more than and different from recruitment to our brand of religion; it is the alerting of people to the universal reign of God through Christ.”...Mission is not primarily concerned with church growth. It is primarily concerned with the reign and rule of the Triune God” (Quoted in Surprise the World, Michael Frost, 21)
- So how do we demonstrate the universal reign of God to the world? We do what we see our Father doing. We do the things that we see Jesus doing in the Gospels.

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 854.

² Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (vol. 34A; *Word Biblical Commentary*; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 51.

- Demonstrate kindness, love, compassion, and generosity in a world full of hate.
- “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8).