

BELPRES  CHURCH

Sermon Title: Believe the Good News (Equipped and Eager to Share the Good News of Jesus)

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Scripture:

Mark 1:1; 1:14-15

¹ The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Transcript:

All right. Good morning.

Good morning.

Good morning those of you online. Good to see you a little bit or something. I don't know. It's so, you guys don't know this, but well, you do know this. We preach over there and then immediately come over here and preach again. So it's like, "I just finished. What am I doing?" But it's all good. I'm happy to be here and preach this word again.

When I was a kid, I had this red children's Bible that I absolutely loved. And my mom would read these Bible stories to me in this Bible. And she would read a story like Adam and Eve. And she would ask me the question, "Anthony, what does this story mean?" And every time I would give the same answer and that answer was, "It means that Jesus died on the cross." And if the story was David and Goliath, Ruth and Boaz, Jonah and the fish, my answer 100% of the time was, "It means that Jesus died on the cross." Because that was the thing that I most understood about the Bible and Jesus and the cross was that He died for my sins so that I can go to heaven. And I wasn't wrong about that.

However, a few years ago, I was having this conversation with an old friend of mine. And we were talking about the big issues of the day, like war, technological advancements, racism and injustice, you know the things that friends catch up on. And while I was sharing my ideas about how Christians can engage these topics and how we can speak into these issues and learn to navigate them, he responded to me, "Just preach the gospel." And I was stumped because in my understanding was that the gospel was the most important message that Christians had to share with the world. And there was so much big bad news happening in the world yet my answer was that Jesus died on the cross for my sins so that I can go to heaven. And that's not the full story of the gospel.

See, going to heaven is not enough to confront some of the big bad news in the world. And I know you guys have seen the news. I don't have to repeat all of that. There's a lot of bad stuff happening. We see that the nations are separated from God. That we are dead in our trespasses and there's no one righteous. Not even one. And so there's still hope though, because even though we have a lot of access to the big bad news on the world, there's still hope. And this word that we use in Christianity called gospel just means good news. However, it's not just

any kind of good news. In the book of Mark it opens by saying, "This is the beginning of the gospel or good news about Jesus the Messiah, the son of God."

And the word gospel was not originally a religious word at all. Gospel was a word that was used in kingdoms to proclaim the good news to its citizens often announcing the birth of a new king or the reign of a new king or a king's birthday. And so this gospel that Mark is sharing isn't just any good news. It's royal good news. And to use the title Messiah was also politically charged because it meant that Jesus is the one who's going to reign over the whole earth as king from Jerusalem. And so we should read Mark again in a way that we can better understand.

And it says, "The beginning of the royal good news about Jesus, the Messiah, the one who is king of the earth, the son of God." That's how we should be thinking about this good news about Jesus. And so this is the good news that can change the world. We're in this sermon series called More where we're learning how Jesus is calling us to become more than just church attenders, but He's calling us to be disciples. And there's six characteristics of a disciple. The first is that disciples are marked by Jesus' love. And disciples live connected to a multicultural multi generational community. Disciples are equipped and eager to share the good news about Jesus, and they live sacrificially and they're healers of injustice and they obey Jesus as Lord through prayer and scripture. And so my job today is to make you eager and equipped to share this gospel of Jesus.

And like our world today, Jesus lived in a bad news time. He lived in a society that was colonized by the Roman empire which was the biggest baddest kingdom that the world, one of the biggest baddest kingdoms that the world has ever known. And in this context, Jesus gets on the scene and He starts preaching Mark 1:14-15, where He says, "Jesus went to Galilee proclaiming this good news of God. "The time has come," He said, "the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe the good news." And so the gospel as Jesus preached it was the arrival of God's kingdom on earth. And this announcement, this Christian gospel is the announcement of Jesus as king over all creation and in the hearts of every person who believes. This was the main message that Jesus preached. More than anything else He preached the kingdom of God. More than forgiveness, more than justice, believe it or not, more than even love, Jesus proclaimed the kingdom. And here's 20 instances where Jesus preaches this kingdom gospel. And this isn't even all the passages in the New Testament. And certainly not all the foretellings of the kingdom to come in the Old Testament. And so to help you soak this message in, in your all in groups this week, you will be reading some of these scriptures with your all in groups together, just to help you get this into you to sense the urgency of which Jesus preached this gospel. And if you do read them all, if you read them all, you will win a pizza party. And I'll be invited and, that's kind of a joke, but really if you invite me to a pizza party, I will always come.

So kingdom actually means kingdom. In Greek, in Hebrew, no matter the language, it means kingdom. It's not a euphemism. And for American this is hard for us to understand and to accept because we don't like anyone in power longer than eight years. If they're in power that long, longer than that we think they're a tyrant. And the only keepers we actually like are in Disney movies and in video games. And so we have to come to this understanding that this is the essential thing. That if we miss this gospel of the kingdom, we will miss what Jesus was all about. The kingdom of God at the table that every other teaching of Jesus sits on. Love your neighbor as yourself, turn the other cheek, do unto others as you would have them do to you. Those are all play settings on the gospel of the kingdom. That is the kingdom is the table and those were all play settings.

And this is the key story element of scripture. The story element of scripture is God confronting kings and kingdoms like Pharaoh and Egypt or Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. Or it's God working through imperfect Kings and kingdoms like David and Israel. Or He uses queen Esther to save his people. And this story reaches its pinnacle in Jesus of Nazareth and His announcement of the kingdom of God on earth. And it's good news when the God of the Bible reigns as king over the world. And it was this understanding for me that helped me, this kind of understanding of the narrative of scriptures and scouring all those verse that I shared with you that helped me know that the gospel was bigger than just me, Jesus, and how to get to heaven.

And because the gospel is not an escape plan to leave earth, the gospel of the kingdom confronts evil and evil rulers that we're seeing today here, and it tells us to pray thy kingdom come here on earth as it is in heaven. That escape plan gospel we call that something else. We call that the gospel of Star Trek. Beam me up Scotty, that is not what we believe actually. We believe, the Christian hope is not that, we believe in the new heavens and the new earth that Jesus is bringing here. That's what we believe. And so, "The kingdom of God has come near," Jesus says, "repent and believe the good news." Is there anyone else who thinks when you think of the word repent, you think of like the scary people or feeling bad in shame or the scary people like the signs and the fire and the burning? Just me?

Yeah.

No, I think of that when I think of that word, but repentance isn't actually a scary thing. Repentance comes from the Greek word, *metánoia*, which means to change your thinking. Is a picture up there?

Yeah.

Oh, yeah it was up there. But actually, can we go back to that? If we're not marked by Jesus' love, we will look like that. That's why we have to be marked by Jesus' love. And so repentance comes from this Greek word, *metánoia*, which actually means to change your thinking. And so when Jesus is actually saying that the kingdom of God has come near, change your thinking and believe the good news. I spent way too many years as a Christian thinking that repentance was something that I wanted to avoid. When the reality is that repentance is something I need to do daily. And I actually want to do daily. So Jesus begins this message of repent, not to strike fear in us or make us feel shame, but He knew that he was going to be teaching something so radically different than what we were being taught that we would have to require. It would require a rethinking of everything we thought we knew.

Theologians call the kingdom of God this upside down kingdom. And I actually feel like that's inaccurate because we are the ones, if you think about it, who live in an upside down kingdom. We're the ones who live in a kingdom that tells us to sell ourselves for money. That lets our children drive themselves into anxiety and depression for good grades so that they can get a good career hopefully. And we're told that hating our enemies is the natural thing to do for humans. That that's just our human nature. But if we look at the past two years, just look what hating our enemies has done for us. Jesus isn't teaching the kingdom saying that, "Oh, I know that this is against your human nature. So if you try really hard, you'll get it."

Rather, He suggests the kingdom to being the real reality. That's how He taught it. Saying that our systems were the one that were upside down, that our hearts were the ones that needed a right upping.

And so Jesus didn't teach good advice. He wasn't just a good mentor because a lot of his advice is really bad advice, if you think about it. Like turning the other cheek is not good advice unless you want to get knocked out. But if Jesus is trying to teach us a different reality, then maybe He's onto something. Because what if He wants to let us know what human nature is truly meant to be. The way that God intended when He said that humanity was very good back in Genesis. Jesus really means that the upside down world finally experiences a right upping. It's the world as it is to the world as it should be.

And so this kingdom will solve humanities problems. It will do what no other administration can or has accomplished. It's a kingdom where the poor aren't rejected and they're not merely given a sandwich or give them a nice fundraiser. In the kingdom the poor and outcast are seated in places of honor in the great feast with Jesus, He says in Luke 14. But Jesus doesn't just magically make this new write up world happen. He requires you and I to repent, to change our thinking and change our values. And this is why disciples still need the message of the cross in salvation.

Because what I knew so well as a kid that Jesus died on the cross for my sins is still of utmost importance. Because it's our sins that keep us from being able to live these full kingdom lives. Colossians 1:13-14 says, "For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son whom He loves. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Our individual salvation is that we are rescued from satan's grasp, and we are transferred from one kingdom to a better one. And this isn't something that we can earn or work for, like by being good or following the rules. Ephesians 2 tells us that, "For it is by grace you have been saved, and this is not from yourselves it is a gift from God, not by work so that no one can boast." Salvation is a free gift. Meaning that nothing we do can give it to us or get it taken away. Because Jesus has already paid the cost for you.

And everything in our world is making us forget this fact. Because we're told that if we work really hard, we can be at the right grades. If you own a home, if you keep your property up, your HOA won't come after you. And your job measures your performance to see what kind of value you bring to this organization. Even pastor Dudley gets a performance evaluation. And he's the senior pastor here. Can you go figure, right? But not in the gospel. Not in the gospel. Our performance doesn't get evaluated here. And not only are we given salvation, but we're given a new reality. This is what a right up world looks like according to Jesus.

And this isn't easy to believe because when you leave here, everything's going to try to make you earn or think differently than what Jesus is saying. But the Holy Spirit does something in us when we start to live this way. The Holy Spirit does something when we share this good news with other people. And when we begin to anchor ourselves to this gospel of the kingdom and share this news, Jesus says that in Matthew, He says, "The kingdom of heaven, the gospel, is like a mustard seed which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of seeds yet when it grows it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree so that birds come and perch in its branches."

So if we plant the seeds, someone else will water it and the Holy Spirit will make it grow. And if you're going to share this good news with other people, which I think you should, so should I, then I have four things that I want to share that will help. And we will share more than four over the coming weeks but unless you want to be here for 45 minutes, we got to go with four. All right?

First, get to know the king. There's no kingdom without a king. Knowing who God is will help you know if this good news is actually royal good news. So to get to know God, well, you have to get to know His character. Last year we did this sermon series called, about the names of God where we learned all the various names. And I recommend going back checking your notes from that, or rewatching some of those sermons. They're on our website or on BelPres YouTube.

But knowing these names of God will help you understand God's nature. And understanding His nature will help you understand His character.

And Satan wants us to be suspicious of God's character. He wants us to question that. He doesn't want us trusting him and knowing him. But if we draw near to King Jesus, He will draw near to us as well. And so when you get to know someone, you can also represent them. And number two is, be an ambassador. 2 Corinthians tells us, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us." So not only are we disciples, we also gain a new position of ambassadors. Ambassadors are sent places as official representatives to promote a king or a kingdom. So when you become a disciple you get this new position of ambassador of the kingdom of God.

And then number three, get comfortable being uncomfortable. Unless you've been sharing the gospel for years and do it every day, you're likely going to be a little bit afraid the first time you share, and the first few times you share. Sharing the gospel with non-believers is like talking to your high school crush for the first time. You guys remember that? I know you do. But remember before everyone had a cell phone, you would call your crush's house phone and their mom or dad would answer? And then you have to freak out? Just me? Okay. I don't know.

It was anxiety. You'd be so afraid and freaking out. That's what sharing the gospel is going to feel like.

But if you're marked by love, people will respond well. I've never had an experience where someone was angry with me when you're marked by love sharing the gospel. So it's okay to be afraid. Number four, announce and demonstrate. In the book of Matthew, the beginning of Jesus's kingdom ministry is set up in two different ways. Chapter five to seven it's Jesus announcing the kingdom in word. So He preaches the beatitudes and the sermon on the mountain, says all these amazing things. And then chapters eight through nine is Jesus demonstrating the kingdom where He's casting out demons and healing sick people. And these chapters are book ended by the same exact sentence. And it says, "Jesus went through Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news announcing of the kingdom and healing, every disease and sickness demonstrating the kingdom among the people."

So words and deeds show and tell lecture and lab, we have to do both. When we do service or when we heal injustice, we have to avoid saying that, "Oh, we're just doing this because we're good people." Because disciples aren't really good people. We're rescued people. We're redeemed people. And so we need to be specific and actually share the gospel. And sometimes it's easier to do a service project than to say why we do the service project. And Jesus face the similar situation when he was being forced to stay in this town, after performing many miracles.

He responds to these people and He says, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom to other towns as well, because that's why I was sent." Meaning He wasn't just there to do cool stuff. A message must accompany the deeds.

And for BelPres I don't think our willingness to do deeds is the problem. We are a missional church, and when we make announcements for people to sign up for something, you guys fill up a sign up sheet so fast. And if we need to raise money for something, you guys give generously to missions in abundance. Sometimes we have to ask you to stop giving to certain things. That's the kind of church you are and you should continue to be that way. However, we have a question that we need to ask, why do we give? Why do we serve? Do we have a gospel reason why we do those things? 1 Peter 3:15 says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that you have." And I think that's a good challenge for us BelPres, as we sign up, as we give, why? What's the gospel reason for that?

And quick story. When I was, back in the '90s, I had a CD or maybe even a cassette tape of a Christian rap group called The Gospel Gangsters. And they were a rap group from South Central LA, which is not far from where I grew up in Compton. And this group was founded by three men who were former gang members who met Jesus and later met each other at church. And what's even more special is that these men were from rival gangs, like the most intense rival gangs, The Bloods and Crips in LA. And these guys didn't just become music artists, they actually had a ministry where they would preach the gospel back in their old neighborhoods. And here's what one of the members of the group said, he said, "We don't consider ourselves above anybody, but God has given us insight to see the truth. We understand the people's pain. And they know that we're real. I believe in bringing the church to people, not just bringing people to church."

And then another one of the members says, "The Gospel Gangster stand in a position to help because we have seen how the gospel of Christ is real. Our lives were changed from selling crack, drive by shootings, carjacking and illicit sex to a life of peace and joy because of Christ. We want to go back to the hood and let our light shine."

So BelPres, don't become gospel gangsters. That's not the point of this, but however, you should become gospel business people. Gospel land owners. Gospel engineers, gospel executives and board members. People who have a rethinking and a revalue, a kingdom values in those meetings that most people will never be in. That's our position. And so why should we share this gospel? We should share it because it's the good news of God rescuing us from a kingdom of darkness and transferring us to the kingdom of his son. And we don't become religious people, but we become kingdom people.

When we become part of this kingdom, we don't become subjects. We become citizens. And not only are we citizens, but he calls us sons and daughters. And not only that, but He puts us in positions of honor, where we're ambassadors representing Him from the neighborhood to the nations. And we're announcing this reign of king Jesus the Messiah in our every word, in our every deed. And this kingdom is a real government that Jesus is going to bring to pass. And Jesus is going to be king. And He is king. And its good news because this king is all about justice and righteousness. He's slow to anger, and He's abounding in love and He gives power to the weak and He gives strength to the powerless. He's the king that overcame evil, death and sin with His radical love for us on the cross. And when He returns, He's going to make a new heaven and a new earth where everything is going to be right. And He's going to rule this world with truth and grace.

And that's the good news of the kingdom that needs to be announced and demonstrated everywhere. It was announced and demonstrated by Paul, Peter, Priscilla, and Mary, all over the known world at the time. And it's the good news that is announced and demonstrated I know by Alicia. It's the good news that's announced and demonstrated by Pam and will. And this is the same good news that the rest of us who I did not name need to be announcing and demonstrating as well. And we need to announce this all over King County.

We need to announce it in Congo. We need to announce it in the White House. And even in Russia. This gospel is found in the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray. And I want you to pray it with me.

Our father, which art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Belpres, the time has come. The kingdom of God has come near repent and believe. Change your thinking, and believe the good news. Amen?

Amen.

Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Icebreaker Question:

- What is your favorite breakfast food?

Opening Question:

- Looking back, were you able to apply any of the things we talked about last time to your life this week? What did you do? How did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions – Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g. traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?
- Extra for the week: Here's the list of scripture where Jesus teaches about the kingdom (that Anthony shared on Sunday). Choose at least 5 to read together today (or the whole list if you want to) and discuss what we learn about the kingdom from these passages.
 - Matthew 13:44-45
 - Mark 1:14-15
 - Luke 4:43
 - John 3:3; 3:5
 - Acts 1:1-3
 - Matthew 4:23
 - Matthew 5:3
 - Matt 6:31-33
 - Matt 12:28
 - Matt 13:11-12
 - Matt 13:33
 - Matt 13:18-19
 - Matt 13:24
 - Matt 16:19 & 27
 - Matt 23:13
 - Matt 24:13
 - Luke 9:11
 - Luke 12: 32
 - Luke 16:16
 - John 18:36

Sermon Reflection Questions - *Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:*

- Anthony shared four steps to sharing the good news of the gospel of Jesus. Of these, which is the hardest for you, and which comes most easily?
 1. Get to know the King
 2. Be An Ambassador
 3. Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable
 4. Announce and Demonstrate (through word and deed)
- What has it looked like for you lately to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus where you live, work, play or learn?

Closing Question and Application:

- Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing Group Prayer:

- Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.
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