

The Reign Of God

Part II

Mark 1:1-15

Introduction: Sometimes the process of change is slow... but like Rte. 3, it really is getting done!

2 Cor 3:17

- Progression & Growth in Christlikeness
- If we are not changing is Christ in us?
- Do we accept Jesus as Savior w/o accepting Him as Lord -Matt. 7:21-23
- Do we trust Jesus for our afterlife/ and don't trust Him how to tell us how to live in this life?
- If we are not substantially different from the world, we need to asks... "do I really believe in Jesus?"
 - birth, his life, good and holy, cross or raised from the dead!
 - The question is: Do I believe that He knew what He was talking about?! (Rediscover Christ as teacher)
- We need to respond to Jesus teaching the way the crowds responded to Him-- He taught as one who had authority (not Rabbi Hallel, Shamai, Ben-Joseph and I kinda think...) ---
- If we really believe in Jesus we will go to him to handle life's issues and not Dear Abby, Oprah or Dr. Phil...

Buying our new home (a feeling of great joy and great fear)

- This is what the Greeks called kairosona (time of crisis & opportunity)
- We all experience these at a personal level: - graduation -leaving home -wedding
 - Birth/adoption -death
- World wide scale as well: -invention of wheel - fall of Rome - printing press
 - Dec. of Ind. -Hiroshima
- Events like this begin a new age where everything in life changes and is never the same again

The gospel of Mark begins with the Gospel announcement that the greatest time of history has arrived!

I. Gospel- (Gospel meetings, music, 4 books in NT)

A. Gospel literally means Good news

- v. 1 beginning/still ongoing
- v. 2-3 Fulfillment of prophesy
- vv. 2-13 About the coming of the Lord

In Jesus life, death, & resurrection the World has started over- 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

B. Gospel is not a set of ideas, it is a set of events

- God acted to change the world
- This is the good news that we need to spread

Ex. There is a difference b/w News and Good News

C. NT does not talk about Gospel, or Kingdom, the way we do

1. No talk of building or extending the borders

It does say that the kingdom is: •Preached •inherited •sought •awaited •given •shut up
•ceased •promised •prepared •assigned •shared

•Two things done with the Kingdom: received or entered (Mt. 5:12)

2. We don't create it through our efforts-- We announce... Jesus builds the kingdom
Matt. 16:13-18

3. But it is not we who build. He builds the church. No human being builds the church -

-D. Bonhoeffer

in 1933- Whoever intends to build the church is surely well on the way to destroying it; for he will build a temple to idols without wishing or knowing it. We must confess he builds. We must proclaim he builds. We must pray to him that he may build. We do not know his plan. We cannot see whether he is building or pulling down. It may be that the times which by human standards are times of collapse are for him the great times of construction. It may be that from a human point of view great times for the church are actually times of demolition. Is is a great comfort which Christ

gives to his church: you confess, preach and and bear witness to me, and I alone will build where it pleases me. Do not meddle in what is my province. Do what is given to you to do well and you have done enough. But do it well. Pay no heed to view and opinions, don't ask for judgments, don't always be calculating what will happen, don't always be on the lookout for another refuge! Let the church remain the church! But church confess, confess, confess!

D. The Gospel is not a set of doctrines or a project for us to accomplish--

1. It's an announcement about what God has done in our world & life and an invitation
2. The Gospel is an ongoing story about God's activity in the world
 - About God/not us
 - It is not a story that we get, it is a story that gets us
 - It reshapes how we live because it transforms all our beliefs and assumptions about life
3. It is a story that undermines the values of our culture because it announces this world is passing away

II. The implications of all this

A. We need to rethink what the church is about (not a business with customers to market & promote)

1. We need to live out the mission of Jesus
2. The church isn't a business or place where certain things happen, it's a people with a mission-**community**
 - Not to increase our market share
 - Not to be bigger just to be bigger/but to live under the reign of God and invite
3. This is why a number cannot be a vision

A church vision that tries to embrace a diverse people & create community where there is none in the world is a risky proposition

• Our mission is shaped by the model of Jesus and not by church growth experts

B. This raises some question

1. Are we willing to be community & work together if we don't always get our way about how church is done?
 - Traditional service and a contemporary
 - How can we who preach a message of peace and reconciliation buy this kind of consumerism?
 - Church is not about my way or your way... it's not about how we do Sunday morning...
2. Are we more committed to living out the mission of Jesus or what will draw a crowd?
 - The church is not a business, it's a people (with a mission)
3. Are we willing to put the institutional church at risk to serve Jesus and fulfill his mission?
4. What if following Jesus doesn't pay off in church growth?
5. Will we cave into the consumer mentality to compete?
6. Or are we going to commit ourselves to Christ's mission w/o worrying about outcomes?
 - Remember Jesus' ministry ended at cross... he didn't do what worked, he did what God called him to do
 - Jesus trusted God to raise him up
 - Ministry isn't about what we do for God-- it is about what God is doing in us!
7. If we adopt a Kingdom vision we will have to rethink evangelism
 - Not member recruitment, it is inviting people to receive the life and reign of God
 - We should be aggressively evangelistic (tell good news)
 - Reach out to our unchurched friends to invite them to join us under the reign of God
 - We should welcome them into our community

- But we should not define success in raw numbers but in lives transformed into the image of Christ (living out the fruits of the Spirit)
- If we become the largest church in Chelmsford, but do not faithfully live out the life and mission of Jesus we have utterly failed
- If we faithfully live out the life and mission of Jesus, we have succeeded regardless of what happens to our numbers

I believe God longs to bless a church willing to pursue his vision

- It will be costly & take hard work & sacrifice (but rewarding)
- It will require that we abandon consumer mentality, lay aside selfish wants, take up the cross & follow him as a united body (true community)

Ex. Dr. Fred Craddock (Emory Univ.)

- If Chelmsford grows and thrives, it will not be because we were smart or skilled, but it will be because God acted among us

Conclusion: The Gospel is still good news

1. God is near
2. No American rat race
3. Life of God in you
4. God will not disqualify you
5. You can participate in the Kingdom of God
 - a. So, will we welcome and enter the reign of God or do we want to reign over our own lives
 - b. Are we seeking what we want (death) or what God wants (life)?
 - c. Do you want to be a part of what God is doing?

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