

Mark 1:14-20

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the good news.”

If you frequent Bible class here you will eventually hear my nerdy rant on locutionary forces. The locutionary forces have to do with the intended meaning of the words we say. And you might say, “Well why don’t you just say what you mean?” Fair enough. But it just simply isn’t how we talk in life.

My classic example for this rant is, Brenda comes to me and says, “The trash is full.”

And I respond, “Thank you for alerting me to that situation. Have a nice day.”

And all the sudden I’m in trouble!?! I don’t get it! She didn’t ask me to do anything, and yet, we all know she did, didn’t she? She said a statement, but we all know she really meant, we know the illocutionary force: “Garen, can you take the trash out? it’s your job.”

And so Jesus shows up and says the Kingdom of God is at hand. Quite the statement. This is a big deal.

What does he mean by it? It's like "the garbage is full" something has happened, something is fulfilled, something more important than a garbage bin, that's for sure, and now it must mean something for me. Or does it?

If I don't think the statement about the garbage applies to me, I might respond to my wife like: "No, I don't believe you, the garbage isn't full, just push it down in there and make more room." Or I might say it is full, sure, "But, that's not my job it doesn't concern me at all, take it out yourself."

Is this how we respond to the news that the kingdom of God is at hand? That it isn't true? "I can worry about that God stuff later, I've got bills to pay and screens to watch." Or do we think, "that kingdom isn't for me, because I don't need it, I can handle things on my own." Or maybe, "It isn't for me, because I am not good enough for it."

Yet here we are in a Church. So I am assuming we might respond as you would hope a husband would to his wife, that yes this statement does mean something for me, somehow.

The next question of course is: What does it mean for me?

And so Jesus answers the questions. He doesn't leave his statement hanging there.

So he answers the questions: All of them, really, in just a few words.

"Repent and believe the Gospel."

In just those few words he informs the people within earshot, and subsequently anyone reading or hearing those words in Mark's Gospel today, that this does matter for them, it does mean something for them. And it tells them how they might receive the benefits of this said kingdom.

I suppose I should clarify, when I say that anyone within earshot is told that this means something for them, well, that only applies to those with sin to repent of. And you and I both know that includes everyone, but have you met a pharisee before? Have we been the pharisee at times? "I don't have regrets, I have nothing to apologize for, nothing to repent of. I don't have sin...."

Careful...

The Kingdom of God is at hand, and it has come for sinners. And if our pride and delusion should grow that "we say we have no sin..." not only have we "deceived ourselves and the truth is not in us..." but then we wave that Kingdom of God by, "don't need it." The trash isn't my job, doesn't apply to me, find someone else to take it out." To wave these statements on because of our pride... well, that leaves you with a whole lot of garbage, doesn't it?

So may we who have ears to hear, repent! Confess our brokenness. And then, what? How do you partake in and receive the Kingdom of God that stands in front of you? With money or power or influence or smarts or enough good works? No.

You receive it, as mentioned, by repenting of your sin, admitting you need a Savior, and *believing* the good news, which is believing that a Savior is there and he is there for you.

Jesus is saying to that crowd, “you need a Savior, and He is standing right here!”

Good news for them!

But he isn't standing, in front of us as he did in galilee. Is the Kingdom of God among us? It sure was there for those he healed and raised from the dead, those are the works of the Kingdom, for sure, the work of God to save. But what about those he didn't heal, who didn't get there in time before he moved on to the next town? Was the kingdom still there for them? Did he still love them?

What did the time being fulfilled mean for them? What good was repenting and believing the Gospel for them? Who had to be carried home by their loved one's to die, not receiving any healing from Jesus.

Was the coming of the Kingdom of God only to give temporary healing to a select few people two thousand years ago? Or did God have a bigger purpose for his Kingdom in mind? One that reigns over all time and space?

And we see that in our text today, the first thing Jesus does in his ministry is not to heal, or to raise the dead, it is to proclaim. To proclaim, that through his Strong Word the Kingdom of God might come to the world.

And if the Kingdom of God is present in the proclamation, the Word, of the Savior, then was it for the person who didn't get the healing, but heard of the Savior? Yes! And is it for you here and now, who hasn't received perfect healing or freedom from all strife, but has heard the Word of the Savior who died and rose that you might receive the fullness of the Kingdom's healing and grace one day? Oh yes, it's for you too.

And we know it, because if the proclamation is for us, the Word is for us, about the One who died and rise, then is also the Work (the dying and rising of that same Savior) for you too? You better believe it. As Jesus himself says today, "believe the good news." And if Jesus didn't die and rise for you, well, then that isn't good news at all. But he did.

His Work was to die as the sacrifice for guilt. His Work was to rise for the life of the world. His work was to proclaim that goodness for the world. And his Church goes out and continues the proclamation, as he bids and calls – fishers of men, right? That by the Work of the Spirit, more might become citizens, through his Word, through his Work, through the waters, might become citizens of the Kingdom that is stronger than death, stronger than the mightiest of this world, the Kingdom that is eternal and gives it's people full healing, full forgiveness, and eternal life!

And while that fullness will come when he calls us home or returns. Jesus was not lying when he said That the kingdom had come when he was standing there. Nor are we lying when we say it is in our midst. The Kingdom of God is whenever, wherever, and however, God is working to save. And when he stood there among them, oh, was he working to save, and even now when his gifts go forth, is he working to save? Yes. When the Mom reads the bible story to the child, the Kingdom of God is at hand, when the spouse forgives the other spouse for not taking the garbage out as a reflection of God's forgiveness, the kingdom of God is at hand. When the prayers are said, when the Gospel proclaimed, where the Lord has promised that where two or more are gathered there I am, when the congregation confesses, repents, and hears the absolution, believes the good news that they are forgiven by God, the Kingdom is at hand, when he says this is my body this is my blood for your forgiveness of sins, when the Spirit works in the waters, the Kingdom is at hand.

Brothers and sisters, the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand. It means something for you. You are not too far gone, and you certainly aren't too good for it, as we confessed. So what does that mean? It means you have a Savior and his Word and his Work is for you. Rejoice!