

The Time Has Come

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[0 : 0 0] My wife's youngest brother and his wife live in the States, and their second child, Mary Jean, is about ten months old. And the big excitement this past couple of weeks, all recorded and published on social media, have been Mary Jean's first words. Mama, dada, hi, and bye. As I was thinking about that, I thought, you could really get by with those four words, really, couldn't you? But anyway, we then accumulate a lot more. So, these are the words, and of course, the proud parents are announcing to the world that Mary Jean is a precocious, young child who's only ten months old, but is already speaking and has quite a vocabulary.

I must say, I did like the honesty of my brother-in-law, who commented in the course of the thread, I have to admit that the first word was mama, as of course it should be. There is something very special, even important about first words. I think we need to bear that in mind when we are confronted with the first words of Jesus recorded by Mark in his gospel. Now, the words in question are not, of course, his very first spoken words. He's a man of thirty years of age. But they are the first words of his public ministry recorded by Mark, and that does, I think, grant to them a particular significance and importance. Well, what are they? What are the first words of Jesus that Mark records for us? Well, we find them in verse 15 of Mark chapter 1. The time has come. The time has come.

I think you'd agree there's a certain gravitas to the words. The time has come. They are words that at one level intrigue. You think, well, what time? What is he talking about? What is the significance of this time that he makes reference to? What do these words of Jesus mean? The time has come. We'll try and answer that question as we explore the opening words of King Jesus as he emerges from relative anonymity into the limelight, or at least a measure of limelight. And as we think of these first words in the passage that we've read from verse 14 of chapter 1, we discover that God is very much center stage in what Mark records. And that is reflected in the manner in which we'll consider our text. Our text this morning is verses 14 and 15, just those two verses that we'll be dealing with this morning. And we'll deal with these two verses under four headings. We'll think about the good news of God, just the words taken textually from the text, the good news of God. But then we'll move on to the time of God. We've already begun by introducing the significance of the words or the seeming significance. We'll see just how significant they are. The good news of God, the time of God, but also the kingdom of God. This is at the heart of the message that Jesus brings. The kingdom of God is near.

And then finally, consider the call of God. The call of God that is directed to the man we meet here in our passage, directed by God through His Son, Jesus. The call of God through His King. So the good news of God the time of God, the kingdom of God, and the call of God. Before we consider the first of these expressions, just notice the timing of Jesus' entry into public ministry. And here I'm thinking of the seemingly inconsequential detail that we have at the very beginning of verse 14.

There we read, after John was put in prison. Certainly it grounds the account in history as it makes reference to a specific event that occurred, John being put in prison. But I think there's more than simply this detail helping to identify the order of events. I think even in this detail there is significant insight into the context in which Jesus is beginning His ministry. Let me just suggest two things. First of all, the backdrop, the backdrop of Jesus' public ministry is this continuing hostility and opposition reflected in John's fate. The one who had prepared the way is bundled into captivity, a reflection of the opposition that there was to all associated with Jesus. Jesus won this battle in the wilderness against

Satan. And yet, as we noticed last week, the battle continues, and John's fate is a reflection of that.

[5 : 5 7] But I think also we see not only this backdrop of hostility and opposition, but we also see, and this we should be very sure of, we see the backdrop of God's overruling hand even in the

opposition. What Mark actually says in verse 14 that we have translated after John was put in prison, but he actually says is after John was handed over. It's implied, and so an entirely reasonable way of translating what Mark says to put after John was put in prison. But what he actually says is after John was handed over. And I think that's significant because it's a verb that will recur time and time again in Mark's gospel, particularly in reference to Jesus as he approaches his own arrest and death, and indeed the early church as it confronts opposition. Time and time again we will read of

Jesus being handed over, of the early believers in the nascent church being handed over. But as we read of these things, we're also reminded that in all of this, in the actions, the evil actions of wicked men, God is overruling and bringing about his purposes. It's never more clearly stated than by Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 and in verse 23. What is it that Peter recognizes concerning Jesus being handed over? We read there, this man, Jesus, was handed over to you by God's set purpose and for knowledge, and you with the help of wicked men put him to death by nailing him to the cross. There's opposition, there's hostility, there's aggression, and yet God is overruling. And so as Jesus begins his public ministry, we read John was handed over by wicked men to wicked men, but we can be sure that in this God has his purposes and God is not mocked, he's not impotent in the face of this hostility. That just to notice as we move on to think of these four aspects of what we discover in these two verses. First of all then, the good news of God. The content of the good news, which is what most interests us, will become clear in a moment as we consider God's time, God's kingdom, and God's call.

But for the moment, I want to simply note that God has good news that he wants to share, and it is God's good news. Then in verse 14, we read, after John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God. The good news of God is actually the only occasion in any of the Gospels where the good news, the gospel, is described in this way, the good news of God. The apostle Paul does use that expression. We can maybe just notice one occasion when he does so, and I think that will instruct us or help us have an insight into what Jesus has in mind when he speaks here, or Mark has in mind as he describes Jesus proclaiming the good news of God. In Romans chapter 1, at the very beginning of Paul's letter to the Romans, let's just notice how he introduces his letter. Paul, a servant of

Christ Jesus called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, the good news of God. The gospel he, that is God, promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Paul there provides this dramatic summary of what this good news of God is concerning his Son, Jesus Christ. This is good news, and it's good news from God. This is good news that has as its source the very heart of God. This good news belongs to God. The good news that Jesus proclaims. The good news owes its origin to God alone. It is God's good news, and it is good news that God is now about to share in and through the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. We all love to hear good news, but the attention that we give to good news and the excitement that good news generates is determined by its source, where the good news is coming from. The importance to us of the source, whoever the person is, how we relate to them, that will determine how much importance we give to the good news, and indeed the credibility of the source. If we have reason to doubt the credibility, then they may have good news, but we won't give it undue importance. So if the weatherman comes on and tells us that he has good news for us, we take it with a pinch of salt, because we wonder, well, I wonder if it will be true. I wonder if that's exactly how things will actually pan out, as he assures us that a heat wave is coming. But if our wee boy comes into the house, I don't have any wee boys anymore, they're all big boys, but if you can imagine your wee boy or your wee girl coming into the house, and they've just finished school, and they burst into the house, and they say, I've got good news, then you're all ears. Because of who it is that has good news, you want to know what the good news is. There's a level of expectation and excitement, because who it is that is announcing that they have good news. Well, the good news that Jesus began to proclaim in Galilee was good news from God himself. Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of

God. This is big, and this is true, and so we do well to sit up and take notice, well, what is this good news? What is the content of the good news? And to discover that, we need to consider the time, God's time. We need to consider God's kingdom that Jesus speaks of, and we also need to

consider God's call. It's all part and parcel of this good news that Jesus was proclaiming in Galilee. [13:11] So that takes us on to the second element, or the second aspect, God's good news, but also God's time. What can we say about God's time? Well, what does Jesus say? This is the words, the first words that we were highlighting at the beginning, the time has come. What do we make of that expression, the time has come? The words are not to be thought of as just a dramatic introduction to the good news, a bit like saying, the time has come for me to tell you the good news. There's more to it than that. The expression is itself a central component of the good news. Jesus is saying at least three things by the use of this expression, the time has come. The first thing that he's saying is maybe very obvious, but it's worth just mentioning, is that this is God's time. God's time has come. What is about to unfold lies at the heart of God's purposes for man. This is God's time. This is the time ordered and established by God in eternity. We see this even in the detail about John the Baptist. God had sent him as the forerunner, and now God removes him from center stage that another, his son, might take that place, all in God's time. This is God's time. But it's not just God's time in a general sense. We can also say that this is God's significant time. Let me just mention or share with you a little bit of Greek, just two Greek words, one of which you'll be able to recognize very easily because it's so similar to English words. In Greek, there are two words for time. In English, we just have the one, time. And the two words in Greek are *chronos*, and you recognize that word from chronology and chronometer. It's one of the words, and the other word is *kairos*. Now, the word *chronos*, the Greek word *chronos* refers to time in the sense of the passage of time or time elapsed, as we would ordinarily speak of time. So, the minister preaches for way too long a time. That's just time. 30 minutes, 40 minutes, 20 minutes, time. Time passes. That's *chronos*. But the word *kairos*, which is also always translated in English with the word time because we only have one word to make use of, is different.

It refers to a significant time, a particular moment or event that is of great significance. I don't know how many of you follow the rugby, but you can imagine the coach of the Argentina rugby team as he is exhorting his team before their semi-final with Australia later today. And he might just say to them, he says, this is your time. He's not talking about the kickoff time. I don't know if you have kickoffs in rugby. I'm not very good at rugby. But that's not what he's talking about. He's saying this is your significant time, your significant moment. This could mark you as a team and engrave your names in history. This is your time. Well, *kairos* has that sense, a significant moment, a significant time. Maybe in English, the nearest that we come to the distinction is between the meaning of historical and historic. If we say that something is historical, we're simply locating it in time. It happened on such a day or in such a year. But if we say something is historic, we know that's different, has a different sense. Well, that captures a little bit the difference in Greek between *kronos* and *kairos*. The point is that here, when Jesus is speaking, when he is proclaiming the good news of God, he says, the *kairos* has come, the significant moment, the significant event, the significant time has arrived. This is God's significant time. This is a time that will mark and define all that follows in history. The coming of Jesus into the world is the time. This is God's significant time. This is God's time of fulfillment. In this expression, the time has come, rests the hope of Israel. All of God's promises scattered like precious stones throughout the Old Testament are on the cusp of fulfillment. Now, these are promises that we can trace to Eden itself, even as we, I think, made reference to last Sunday morning, as God promised that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. And time and time again, throughout history, these promises are found. And what Jesus is saying is that all of those promises, all of those prophecies, all that God has anticipated on behalf of His people, the time has come. This is the time. Every prophet pointed towards this day. Every priest served in the shadow of this coming day. Every king foreshadowed the coming of this king on this day. At this time, the time has come. [19:04] This is the time of the fulfillment of the prophetic hope. The time of messianic deliverance is being ushered in. The Jesus event, His coming, life, death, resurrection, ascension into glory, all encompassed in this time that Jesus announces. The time has come. This is God's good news. His saving time, time has come in Jesus. So we have God's good news. We have God's time, but we also have a God's kingdom, the kingdom of God. What else does Jesus say as He reveals the content of God's good news? Well, He tells us, or He tells those who are listening to Him there in Galilee, the time has come. The kingdom of God is near.

The kingdom of God is near. What does that mean? Well, let me try and answer that question. The kingdom of God, as the expression is found in the Bible, is altogether active in character. It's about

the exercise of kingship. It's not so much about borders and frontiers and palaces and all the trappings of a kingdom, but rather the exercise of kingship, the exercise of authority. It is about God's active rule in His world. So the good news that Jesus is proclaiming has to do with God doing something significant as king. Well, what has God come to do? What has God sent Jesus to do as king?

Well, He has come to rescue His subjects. He has come to do battle with His enemy who holds His people in captivity. The king is on a saving mission. The kingdom of God is about God doing something on behalf of His people, of exercising His authority on our behalf. And this is what Jesus does in His life and death.

in His ministry that is beginning here in Galilee. The kingdom of God is active in character, but we can also say that the kingdom becomes visible in a new way. The question could legitimately be asked, has God not always exercised His active rule in time and space? Is that not the case? Is God not always in control? Has there ever been a time when He has not been in control? Is Jesus here when He says that the kingdom of God is near? Is He conceding that in some way God has been absent, and now He's going to reassert His control? Well, He's not doing that at all. God has ever reigned supreme, but with the coming of Jesus, His reign becomes visible and is exercised in a new way. The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. But then, of course, when we speak of the kingdom of God as part of the content of the good news, we need to think about the way Jesus says the kingdom of God is near. Maybe that last part of the phrase is the most intriguing part of it. The kingdom of God is near. What does that mean?

Well, the kingdom comes near in a person. The word there that is used, the kingdom of God is near, is a word that can have a temporal sense in terms of time, or it can have a spatial sense in terms of something physical, something that is near to. So, not so much time, but location, if that makes sense.

[23 : 01] If we were to understand the word in temporal terms, then the kingdom of God is near. It could be understood as, well, the kingdom of God is imminent. It's about to come, just a little time, and then it will appear. That would be a way of understanding it in that way. But if we understand it as I think we ought in spatial terms, in terms of a physical, actual presence, the kingdom of God is near, then I think we understand what Jesus is saying. Jesus is saying the kingdom of God is here.

It's near to you in myself. You can see me. You can hear me. You can touch me. The kingdom of God is near. It has come near in the person of Jesus. Jesus is saying that in His coming, the kingdom has come. And of course, what more tangible evidence of the presence of the kingdom than the presence of the King, which is precisely what we have with the coming of Jesus. The King has come, and with the coming of the King, the kingdom is present, is near. This is the good news. The King of Heaven has come down to earth to save. Jesus is the bearer of good news, but He also is the good news.

The kingdom of God is near. There's one final aspect of the good news that is dealt with or that we find in these two verses. As we go through Mark, we'll find the content of the good news explained and amplified further. But in our two verses, there's one final aspect, and that is the call of God. We thought of the good news of God. We thought something of the time of God and the kingdom of God. But finally, you have the call of God or the call of God's King in the person of Jesus. The King's appearance and the King's good news demand a response, and the response demanded and required is made clear by Jesus. What does He say? Immediately following His declaration that the kingdom of God is near, He says this, repent and believe the good news. Repent and believe the good news. Repent and believe are two elements of what is required. They're inseparable, but they're distinct. And we can think of each in turn and just say something briefly about both of these things that Jesus presents as the response that we must give to the call of God. First of all, to repent. I think repentance involves a change of mind, a change of heart, and a change of life. And again, all of these things are intertwined, and it's very difficult to try and separate them into distinct categories. The actual Greek verb that is used here in our text is a word, it's a composite word, that joins up two other Greek words which mean literally change and mind. So, to repent has this sense to it, to change your mind. And that is what we do when we repent. We change our mind about ourselves and about Jesus. We change our minds, what we thought about ourselves. We thought we were good. We thought all was well. We thought that our eternal destiny was secure. We thought that we didn't need a Savior. But then we realize that that's not so. We change our minds about ourselves. We see ourselves as sinners in need of forgiveness. But we also change our

minds about Jesus, the one who was of no importance to us, the one who was a peripheral figure in our lives.

We knew about him, but, well, he was of no importance no longer. When we repent, we see that he is the one that we need. He is the one who can forgive us. He is the one we must turn to. We change our minds about ourselves and about Jesus. But also we change our hearts. So, there's a change of heart involved in repentance. Repentance isn't only an intellectual exercise, but involves heart conviction, sadness for our sin, a desire to live a life that is pleasing to God. We know that that's not the life that we're living, but it's the life that we want to live. And so, we turn in repentance, seeking that God would forgive us, but also that he would help us to live that life that we find ourselves incapable of living.

[27 : 56] And, of course, to repent involves a change of life, a change of conduct. True repentance in the Bible is always evidenced by a change of life. And so, the call of God in the light of his good news is to repent, but also to believe. But what are we to believe? Well, what does Jesus say? He says, repent and believe the good news. We are to believe the good news. We are to believe the good news that has been brought by Jesus, that the time has come, that the kingdom of God is near. We are to believe that that is so. And we are to believe the good news concerning Jesus. Now, this is something that will be developed by Mark as the gospel continues. What we read in Romans chapter 1, and it takes us ahead of where Mark is here, where Paul speaks explicitly of the good news of God concerning his Son, Jesus Christ. And we believe that. What we read in the Bible, what we read in the gospels concerning who Jesus is and what he has done, how he died on the cross for sinners, how he was risen from the grave, triumphant. We read these things and we say, that's true. I believe that to be so. Good news concerning Jesus and all that he has done to secure your forgiveness and friendship with God. What does this believing look like? Well, at one level, it is simply a sincere acknowledgement that the message of good news is true. And so we say, yes, I believe that. What I read there in the Bible, what you're saying about Jesus, I believe that. But believing as presented and understood in the Bible also involves trusting. We trust in God's truthfulness and we trust in God's Savior as our Savior.

And so we don't simply declare, I believe that information to be accurate and true. We declare, I am trusting in Jesus as my Savior and as my Lord. I believe that what he did there on the cross, he did for me. And I embrace him and I bow down before him and I repent towards him, confessing my sins, asking that he would be my Savior. We repent and we believe. This is God's call. This is the call of the King. In one sense, the call is about how we are to respond to the good news. But it is also part of the good news. That the call is extended to you, even today, is good news. That you should be given the opportunity to hear and respond to God's good news is good news. It is a wonderful opportunity for you to to grasp and not to make light of. How will you respond to God's call in the light of God's good news, in the light of God's time, in the light of the coming of God's kingdom and the person of his son Jesus and all that he has done for you. How will you respond to his call? Repent and believe the good news. Perhaps you need to do that for the very first time. Perhaps that's something you have never done. Well, the time has come for you. This is your time. This is your significant time to hear and respond to God's call to your life. Repent and believe the good news. Put your trust in Jesus.

But this is a call not only to those who have never repented, who have never put their trust in Jesus. This is a call to us all. Even the manner in which Jesus speaks, the form of verb that he uses, repent and believe, implies a continuing call, a continuing obligation, if you wish, a continuing duty for us to be repenting, to be believing. It's not enough for us to look back and say, well, yes, I remember the day when I repented, when I became a Christian, when I put my trust in Jesus. It's good to be able to do that if that's something you can do and locate in time. Some can, some can't. But here the call is to be those who continually, day by day, repent and believe. It's always necessary for all of us, day by day, to repent. It's always necessary for all of us, day by day, to trust in Jesus, to commend the very day that is beginning to his care and to his keeping. As we continually acknowledge and recognize how far short we fall, how we stand in his continuing or in need of his continuing help, so we are to be ever repenting and ever believing. The good news of God, the time has come. The time, God's significant time has come in the person of Jesus. The kingdom of God is near.

The king has come, and the call that he lays before us, he laid before the fishermen in Galilee, and he lays before each and every one of us today is the same. Repent and believe the good news.

[33 : 33] Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning, and we thank you that you are indeed a God who has good news for us. We thank you that this is not good news that you kept to yourself, but this is good news that in the fullness of time, you have announced and made known so wonderfully in the person of your Son, Jesus. We thank you that in Jesus, the kingdom of God has come near, and we thank you that the call that he extends, the call that he extended there on the shores of Galilee, is one that he continues to extend and does so even today to us, that we would repent and believe the good news. We pray that by your Spirit, you would be ever enabling us to repent and to believe, and we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.