

# Mark 1:5-15

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Preacher: Alex J MacDonald

[ 0 : 00 ]     The professors there and those training for the ministry there, we thank you for those whom you have gifted to be preachers and pastors. We pray that you will be with them to encourage them.

And we think too of other similar institutions, not only in this land but also abroad. We thank you for the training that's done in Peru, in the Evangelical Seminary in Lima. And we think too of the Dumasani Bible Institute in South Africa.

And we praise you that in these places and in many places in the world, people are being trained up to explain your word to others and to give leadership to the Church.

We pray that this may be seen in ever-increasing ways and that your word would go out in full measure and would reap a great harvest among all the communities of the earth.

We praise you that there are great promises in your word concerning all nations of people in this world. That it is through the seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ, that all nations on earth will be blessed.

[ 1 : 05 ]     And we thank you that from time to time we see great evidence of this, not only in countries abroad, but also in people coming to this country from other parts of the world and coming to know the saving grace of the Lord Jesus.

So, Lord, we ask that you would look upon us in mercy this evening. We have to confess that we have sinned against you in many ways. As we look back over a past year, we see errors, mistakes, sins.

And so often we feel burdened by these and sometimes we feel we can't be free of all the trappings of the past and the sin that entangles us. O Lord, cleanse us, wash us, enable us to know that we are forgiven and that we are empowered to be free from sin.

Lord, we pray that you would enable us in the coming days to seek to live more consistently for you and to bring glory to the name of Jesus. We ask these things in his name and for his sake.

Amen. Now let's continue singing to God's praise in that psalm, Psalm 102, on page 134 in your psalm book.

[ 2 : 17 ]     And we're singing verses 21 to the end of the psalm. In Zion will be praised the Lord's exalted name. His praises will be sung within Jerusalem.

When peoples and their kingdoms throng to serve the Lord with cheerful song. So from verse 21 to the end of the psalm, to God's praise. Now let's turn to that passage that we read in Mark's gospel.

Mark chapter 1. And particularly words in verse 15. Mark chapter 1. And verse 15. The time has come, he said.

The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news. Our little granddaughter, Julia, who's just two and a bit, recently caused some consternation and not a little amusement when she suddenly announced with appropriate dramatic gesture, the time has come.

This was not quoting from this passage of scripture. It was in fact quoting from Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll. And not from the book as well.

[ 3 : 36 ] It was from the video, the Disney video of it, where the full line is, The time has come, the Walgoth said, to talk of other things, of shoes and ships and sealing wax, of cabbages and kings.

All, of course, complete nonsense, but very, very amusing nonsense. But nonetheless, there's something in those words that tie in with what Jesus is saying here.

The time has come to talk of other things. Not of nonsense, but to talk of the thing that is the greatest sense that has ever been in the world.

Jesus is saying here, he's announcing, the time has come. A revolution is taking place. In a sense, Jesus is saying to people, we've been talking about other things for too long.

Now the time has come to focus on the really important thing. Now is the time to talk of other things. There is a change coming, and it's starting now.

[ 4 : 44 ] At the end of the old year and at the beginning of the new, we're acutely aware of the passing of time. In fact, we know it's only the change of minutes and hours and another day, but it seems to be significant for us that we're moving on in time.

And it is good to reflect on the passage of time and what God's word has to say to us in a situation like this. It's a good time to heed these words of Jesus.

So often we're acutely aware that the time is passing. We say things like, I can't believe it was only a year ago that I did this or that we saw this person or whatever. Time seems to be passing so quickly.

Jesus' words here are very, very relevant to us at all times, but particularly just now when he says, the time has come. What does he mean by this?

And what do these words have to teach us here tonight? I think there's several emphasis on something new happening here as Jesus makes this announcement.

[ 5 : 45 ] It's quite clear he's making a dramatic announcement. Something new is happening and is about to happen. And the first thing we see is that he's emphasizing a new message.

He's announcing the good news. Now, that expression is used in the Old Testament, the good news, but it's always in the sense of looking forward to something that's going to happen.

And here we have Jesus saying, this is now the good news. And he's announcing it at a time in the history of God's people when there had been a long time of bad news.

There was bad news in the sense that it seemed for so long the Lord had lost interest in the people of Israel. It had been a period of about 400 years since the end of the Old Testament, the last of the Old Testament prophets.

It was as if there had been a silence from the Lord. And through that time the people of God had been through many ups and downs, mainly downs. And even though for a bright period there was a period of independence of the people of Israel under the Maccabees, then again they were brought into sort of bondage into slavery under the Roman Empire.

[ 7 : 10 ] And so in many ways people were living through dark times. It was a dark time spiritually because the spiritual religious leaders of the time were not giving real spiritual leadership.

Instead of emphasizing God's word and what God was promising and what God was going to do, they were emphasizing all their own rules that they had laid as a layer above God's word.

All the laws and interpretations of the laws. And so it was human tradition, man's tradition rather than God's word. So it was a people of darkness and difficulty.

Now the passage we read in the Old Testament in the prophecy of Isaiah links in with this time. Very much so because remember there's the reference there to Galilee of the Nations.

And this is exactly where Jesus begins this great work. And it's called Galilee of the Nations because although it was an area where the Jewish people had moved back to after the time of exile, yet it continued to be an area that was much more influenced by outside influences.

[ 8 : 23 ] Galilee of the Nations and they were very conscious there that they were part of a nation of people who were dominated by other nations politically and culturally.

Dominated politically by the Romans, culturally by the Greek language and literature and so on. But also it was Galilee of the Nations in the sense that there there was much more contact with the other nations and with other peoples.

And so it was very appropriate that it was here that Jesus began his public ministry. But it was against that background that background of difficulty and of darkness that he makes this new start.

And so that word in the passage in Isaiah that we read is so relevant. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. Here as Jesus comes among his own people and makes this great announcement the light is beginning to dawn and people begin to see the light as Jesus works and moves amongst them.

And of course that ties in again with that passage we read in Isaiah unto us a child is born unto us a son is given. He will be called mighty God.

[ 9 : 38 ] Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. Now that of course is referring particularly to the birth of Jesus to the incarnation.

Jesus the eternal son of God taking a human nature. But the purpose of all of that was of course his moving out into the world in ministry in teaching God's word in showing God's truth in showing God's love and eventually in dying to atone for the sins of the world.

But this is where we see this light of that great coming of Jesus beginning to dawn in that area of the country.

And this is the beginning of the good news not only to the people of Israel at that time but the beginning of good news to the world because that's how Mark starts his gospel. It seems a strange kind of start in a way it's almost like it's ungrammatical it's not a proper sentence.

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ the Son of God. But it's like it's a kind of title of the gospel and he's saying this is how it began. This is how the light broke into the darkness.

[ 10 : 55 ] And so it is the coming of good news the gospel or good news coming against that background of bad news of darkness of difficulty.

And again we're reminded of a passage in Isaiah how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news who proclaim salvation who say your God reigns.

That's one of these passages in the Old Testament speaking about good news but it's tied into what immediately follows which is clearly speaking about the Messiah clearly speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ the suffering servant of God who died to atone for the sins of the world.

The Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all. So how desperately the world of that time needed good news and the good news that Jesus Christ came to bring.

And of course how desperately true it is that we today need that same good news. We desperately need good news in our world. There's no doubt about that.

[ 11 : 59 ] And we see there's almost an unhealthy fascination with bad news. so that if something bad happens anywhere in the world it's a thrust before our attention. But things that may be good that are going on in various places get ignored.

But nonetheless we do know that there is a huge amount of bad news. And we know that in our society there's a lot of bad news there's a lot of unhappiness there's a lot of frustration there's a lot of bitterness there's a lot of anger.

And into this situation again there needs to come this good news that Jesus Christ has made known. And that's a challenge to us at the beginning of this new year. To recognize that need that perhaps we have personally but also to recognize this need that the world around us has.

To hear this good news. So the question is then next what is this good news? And that begins to be explained in some of what Jesus says here.

the next thing he emphasizes is a new opportunity. He says the time has come.

[ 13 : 12 ] Now this was a time that was foretold. When he says here the time has come it's literally the time is fulfilled. Or we might say the time has been fulfilled.

It's what's called a perfect tense. It's something that has come to fulfillment. it's come to completion. And of course that's referring back to the fact that all of this was foretold by Isaiah by all the Old Testament prophets and even by John by John the Baptist who came to prepare the way for the Lord.

All of this that has been foretold all of this that has been predicted it is now here. That's what Jesus is saying the time has come. And the word that he uses for time is also interesting because unlike the English language where we just have one word for time, Greek had at least two words for time.

One was the word more similar to our word for time called chronos, from which we get chronological and various words like that that speak of the passage of time.

And that was very much the idea of it as we just think of time, that we would measure time, that time would pass and so on. But there is another word for time in Greek and that's the word used here, it's the word kairos.

[ 14 : 29 ] And this kairos word is, it means the set time or the opportune time or even the time of crisis, the time of decision.

So it's a word that is loaded with meaning and significance. So when Jesus says the time has come, he's saying the opportune time is now here.

There is a new opportunity. Not only, is there a new message, there's a new opportunity. The coming of Jesus Christ changes everything. The period of waiting, the period of expecting, the period of foretelling is now over.

Now is the time for decision. Jesus has come fulfilling all of that. Now, some people at that time did not grasp this.

They didn't grasp that there was a revolution taking place. Or if they did grasp that that's what Jesus was saying, they didn't like it because they wanted things to continue just as they were. Particularly those who were religious leaders who were in charge, they didn't want things taken out of their hands.

[ 15 : 39 ] But some people just didn't grasp it at all. It took so long for the disciples to grasp that this new time was here. This revolutionary time, this time of crisis, this opportune time, this new opportunity was here.

And of course, people still don't grasp that. And I don't just mean people outside in the world, outside of the church, who perhaps don't know anything about the gospel message or don't care about it.

But even people within the Christian church generally. Because many people today, they're still looking for something new.

they perhaps view what's said in the Bible about the Lord Jesus and so on, they would view that as like the basics. And they want something new.

Almost something better than that. They're looking for some new experience. They're looking for some new revelation. They're looking for some new miracle. And this is a great danger in our lives as Christians.

[ 16 : 40 ] We're looking for something to add on to Jesus. Forgetting that this is the great new thing. When Jesus came, that's when the Kairos time started.

This great new opportune time. This time of crisis. And it continues to this day. And it will continue to the end of the world. And it is bound up with Jesus and who he is and what he's done.

And we don't need any extra. The coming of Jesus is the new revelation. It is the new experience. It is the new miracle.

God is not going to do anything more for our salvation. What more could be done than what he has already done in Jesus Christ? In giving his own son not only to come into this world in incarnation.

To live in this world, a world of misery and sin. And be offended constantly by the total neglect of the true worship of God and the true recognition of him as the son of God.

[ 17 : 46 ] And to eventually die on the cross taking the sins of the world on himself. What more could be done than what God has done in this great miracle, this great time when Jesus came and has changed the history of the world forever?

We are still blessed to be living in this Kairos time, this day of gospel opportunity. Here tonight, we are still on mercy's ground as it is called.

If you do not know the Lord Jesus already, this is an opportune time tonight for you. This is opportunity here and now. Because Jesus has come and he has said the time has come.

And he has not yet brought that time to a conclusion. It has come and it has continued from that day to this. And tonight you are invited to come and to trust in him. But as well as a new message and a new opportunity, Jesus also speaks here of a new kingdom.

He says the time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Now we read again in that passage in Isaiah, just one of the many passages in the Old Testament speaking about the coming of this great kingdom of God.

[ 19 : 03 ] In Isaiah chapter 9 verse 7, he will reign, that is the one who is the child born to us who is mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

You see what I said about from that time on and forever. The kingdom in this new sense started there with Jesus and continues on from that day forever.

word. And Jesus says the kingdom of God is near. Now, the word that's used for near here is not perhaps exactly the meaning of our word near, because when we say something is near, it could mean that it's still a distance away.

You know, it's in the near distance rather than the far distance. But this word near is derived from the word, the verb to squeeze. And so it means something that is squeezing you tight.

[ 20 : 12 ] It's something that's pressed up close against you. It's right here basically is what Jesus is saying. The kingdom of God is near. And the reason he said that is because the king was near.

Those people listening then, they were right beside the king. They might not have known it, they might not have recognized it, but Jesus, the king of kings, was right there.

And so the kingdom of God was near to them. And that was the message that he told his disciples to tell to people throughout the Jewish people when he sent them out to preach.

Tell them the kingdom of God is near. Tell them the kingdom of God has come to you. And so there is here a demand for a response to the king.

We know that this is true, the kingdom of God has come near in the sense that Jesus was incarnate, that the eternal son of God took human flesh, took a human nature, lived as a man.

[ 21 : 18 ] So he was near, he was physically near to those people to whom he was speaking. Those people perhaps in Galilee and Nazareth and so on who knew him. But of course, it's not true in that sense now for us, because Jesus has returned to heaven through his death and resurrection and ascension to heaven.

So is this word still relevant to us that the kingdom of God is near to us? Yes it is, because that is what part of the gospel message is, that the Lord Jesus Christ comes near to us tonight in the preaching of the gospel, tonight in his word which speaks to us.

As we read this, it's not just by imagination we can place ourselves there and think, oh how nice it would be to have been there when Jesus spoke these words. No, he is speaking to you and he's here tonight with you and he's challenging you to accept and to believe that the kingdom of God is near you and you must respond because the king is right here beside you and he demands a response of loyalty and allegiance.

So here a new thing is happening because there is a new kingdom. The kingdom of God is near. But fourthly and finally there is a new response demanded because of all of that.

He says the time has come, the kingdom of God is near, repent and believe the good news. Remember what I said about the word *kairos* being as well as an opportune time, a time of opportunity, it's a time of crisis.

[ 22 : 58 ] A time when decisions have to be made and that's what's brought out here. You can't just say that the time has come, all that has been predicted and prophesied in the Old Testament is now fulfilled and that now the kingdom of God is near and the king is here.

You can't say all that and just leave it at that and Jesus didn't. He said because all this is true, because God is here doing a new thing, a new response is demanded, a personal response is demanded.

Repent and believe the good news. Now I'm sure most of you are familiar with the meaning of those words, repent and believe. Repent means to change your mind, to change your direction or to turn.

It means, for instance, to just give it in a picture form, you're heading in one direction and you're heading in the wrong direction. Now if you're doing that, the only way to set things right is to stop, to turn around and head in the right direction.

And that's exactly what this word repent means. It means that you have a wrong attitude to God, you have a wrong attitude to yourself, you have a wrong attitude to sin, you have a wrong attitude to other people.

[ 24 : 16 ] And you need to have a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of direction. That's what the word repent means. And so it's a very powerful word, it's a very challenging word, and of course it's a word that we don't like in our sinful human natures because it is challenging us to admit that we're wrong.

And we need to stop, and we need to turn around, and we need to turn to God. That's what it's saying. It's a word that speaks of the conviction of sin, that we've gone wrong, that we've disobeyed God, that we've left God out of the equation.

We put number one first, that is ourselves. And we have turned from God. And so we need to admit that, we need to recognize that, we need to turn back to him.

But then Jesus links, as so often it is linked in the scripture, he links with the word repent, the word believe. And again, the word believe is a very, very common word in the New Testament, linked with the word faith.

faith. And what it is originally derived from is the idea of being persuaded. Being persuaded that something is true.

[ 25 : 29 ] And so if you believe, you are persuaded that the message is true. You believe that what Jesus is saying, you believe that what the word of God says is true.

You recognize it and admit it as the word of God. you believe in it. You believe it to be true. But it's more than that. More than the believing that the content of this message is true, there is also the emphasis of trust, of personal trust.

Because you see, the message is not just a message, it's a message from a person. It's Jesus Christ making these things known. And he's calling people to believe in him.

You believe in God, believe also in me, Jesus says. Jesus challenges people to believe in him, to trust him. So there's this element of personal trust.

And you know, that does add a different dimension. Because you might be asked to believe something, and you might think, well, that's a very strange thing. But if you know the person who says it to you, then, if you trust them, you will believe the message.

[ 26 : 43 ] Now, the two things go hand in hand, because how can we know Jesus without knowing his message? But faith has both these elements, belief and trust.

But there's an interesting fact here that doesn't really come out in the English translation. And that is, the words that Jesus used here are words of command, they're imperatives.

He says, repent and believe. believe. But they are what's called present continuous tenses. So that doesn't just mean repent and believe at a point of time.

It means be repenting, be believing. It's a continuous tense. And that is significant. Because you see, sometimes we, as Christians, we think, well, we have repented and believed.

We've done it. A particular point where we were converted, we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, so that's it. We just need to forget about that. No. In biblical terms, repentance and faith are things that go on throughout your life.

[ 27 : 48 ] You continue to turn from sin. You continue to need to recognize that you need to turn from sin. And you need to believe. And you need to go on recognizing your need to believe and to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Day after day after day, moment by moment. There's that emphasis in what Jesus says here. So that alerts us to the fact that yes, there is a challenge here.

There's a challenge here to you tonight if you don't already know the Lord Jesus Christ, if you haven't already repented and turned from sin. There's a challenge from you. And not just a challenge which perhaps sounds a kind of very negative sort of thing.

There is an invitation. Come and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's inviting you to do that. There's this invitation, this personal invitation to you.

But not only that, it alerts us to the fact that there is a life of continuous relationship with God that Jesus is initiating us into when we repent and believe the good news.

[ 29 : 01 ] God is and it's brought out, it's developed in these following verses right here. Because the people who believed in him, the people who were showing repentance, who had been baptized by John, who baptized as a sign of repentance, and the people who looked to Jesus as the Messiah, they are now called by him, Simon and his brother Andrew, James and John, and he calls them and says, come, follow me, I will make you fishers of men.

So you see, here we discover the king, the new king, acting as king. He's calling his followers. He's calling those who will serve him.

He's calling those who will work for him. And that's what he's still doing, and he's still doing that here tonight. And at the beginning of this year, again, it's a good time to consider, how am I serving the king?

How am I serving the one who gave himself for me? How am I serving the one who poured out his life unto death for me? How have I served him in this past year? And I'm sure as we all look at it, we think we've been poor, miserable servants in so many ways.

We've failed in so many ways. But don't let that get you down. Don't let that lead you into a kind of spiritual depression and you say, oh, I can't do anything. I have no use. Here's a challenge for us to make a new start.

[ 30 : 26 ] The time has come. The Lord Jesus Christ is king and he's near. And he is still king today as he was then and he ever will be. And he is calling you to follow him.

And he's calling you to serve him and to work for him. And there's this great enterprise that he called his disciples to set out on on that day to become fishers of men.

To draw men, to draw men and women, to draw people of all nations into the kingdom of God. So that they too would recognize the king and love him and work for him.

Because in that they would find life. This is the opportune time. This is the time to take this opportunity, this new start. This is the time to make a real new year resolution.

To say, yes, I'm going to seek to serve the king and I'm going to seek to win other people for him. You see, studies have been done of this, but so often we ignore them.

[ 31 : 24 ] People who become Christians today from no background, from no church background, no knowledge of the gospel, they don't generally speaking become Christians suddenly by having some kind of desire to enter a church and they hear the preaching of the word and they're converted.

They become Christians maybe after hearing the word preached, but they become Christians because somebody befriended them. and invited them to come eventually to church.

And sometimes it takes many years of a relationship with someone to get to that stage where they want to come to church or they want to read God's word or whatever.

And so that's the challenge for us, to begin to become fishers of men. Fishing is one of these exercises where a lot of skill is involved, knowledge of the fish that you're wanting to catch and so on.

And so with us, we must be wise and skillful in the way in which we relate to other people. We mustn't frighten away the fish, but at the same time we must be bold in going out and seeking to win them.

[ 32 : 38 ] So there's a great challenge for us, to work for the king in this new year. So the time has come, the time has come to make the decisions that we know need to be made.

It may be a decision to follow Jesus for the very first time. It may be a decision to follow him more closely, to serve him better. But decisions need to be made and it's a good time to make those decisions, to start out in this new year on the right road, following the right path, following the king, following the Lord Jesus Christ.



Let's pray. Amen. Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for these words of Jesus announcing the coming of a new day.

We thank you for all those who in those days responded to that message. And we thank you for those ever since who have responded, right up to the present time. We thank you that throughout the world today there's a huge number of people, millions of people, who have responded to that message, who have grasped the opportune time and have trusted in Christ.

And we pray for the great work of your people as they seek to labor to make Christ known throughout the world. Bless us in our own small corner, wherever we are, seeking to do the same.

[ 34 : 01 ] And we pray that you would grant us encouragement in this, for you know how prone we are to be downcast, how prone we are to not persevere, how prone we are to give up.

Lord, encourage us. And we pray that you would bless your own word to each one of us tonight in a way that's appropriate to us as individuals. We pray that you would watch over us and all whom we love.

We ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Now we close by singing in Psalm 77 in Sing Psalms. And this is on page 100.

And we're singing there verses 4 to 12. To the tune of Strakathro. In my distress I could not speak.

From sleep you kept my eye. I thought about the former days, the years which have gone by. And then verses 11 and 12. I will recall the Lord's great deeds, your works of long ago.

[ 35 : 05 ] I will meditate on all your acts. Your mighty deeds I will show. So verses 4 to 12. To God's praise. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of you now and forever.

Amen.