

Mark: The Words of Eternal Life

The Kingdom Come

Mark 1:9-15

Please rise now for the reading of the word. From the gospel of Mark, chapter one, verses nine through fifteen. Now, as we continue on in this reading of Mark, we talked last week about how Matthew is one who sort of unpacks the gospel in many ways, giving us little stories and insights into the events that take place and that Mark is more like a fast read in a newspaper article or something along those lines. R.T. France, the commentator on both Mark and Matthew, says it this way, and I think this is very helpful. He says the narrative of Mark may be compared to a fast-moving stream, but in Matthew the stream has many pools and lakes where the reader is invited to pause and reflect on the significance of what is happening. And that's true. Mark gets us right to the point. Matthew is much more reflective, and that is nowhere on display more than on the three stories that we're going to read tonight, that Matthew spends a lot of time unpacking. And yet, Mark just gives it to us very quickly. And so, what we'll ask tonight as we're reading through these, how does this develop that collage, that that portrait that Mark is developing of Messiah, the Messiah who's not yet been named. Right. He won't be named until chapter eight. And yet, member Mark is showing us who Messiah is before he tells us who Messiah is. So pay attention to that as we're reading through verses nine through fifteen.

In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open, and the spirit descending on him like a dove, and a voice came from heaven. You are my beloved son. With you I am well pleased. The spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. Now, after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated.

And now, please join me in a prayer as we respond to the reading of the word.

Heavenly father, as we sit at your feet and we hear your words given to us here through the man, the evangelist Mark. Lord, I pray that we would hear not just the human voice, but the divine voice who beckons us to you and the power of the spirit. Lord, I pray that we would not only discern that these are indeed the words of God, but that we would rightly understand them and rightly find ourselves transformed by them. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Well, we have these three short stories, these three vignettes. They're kind of like beats, you know, that's what television producers call those little segments of the story in your TV show where it starts and you maybe get an opening, and then the screen dissolves to black, and then it resolves again. And now you're in a different scene. They call those beats the beats of the

story. Before you tell a story, you have to map out the beats of the story. And it's interesting, isn't it, that with Mark we start off with a long beat and that's the introduction of John the Baptist. And then we have three beats in a row very quickly, with very little detail in them and just moving us from one event to the next.

And so I want to ask tonight, why is it that Mark does it this way? Why does he choose out these events? What's he telling us in each one of the events? Notice that he doesn't say all the things we could say about those events because we, after all, have Matthew. And Matthew tells us a lot more about each one of these things. So I don't want to constantly be comparing the two. And yet I do want to notice. What does Mark leave in, or what does Mark include that Matthew expands upon? Because that's interesting. It tells us something about what Mark is trying to accomplish. So I want to argue this, that in these three sections of text, this kind of quick collage establishing who Jesus is, we learn about his baptism, then his temptations, and then his entry into the northern Kingdom.

Okay. And I want to argue this, that the first one, the baptism, is giving us a drawing our attention rather to the kingdom trigger. Okay. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is very much in the foreground in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and I want to notice how they all have. All of these stories have a role to play in how they introduce the kingdom. So the first one is this the baptism is the kingdom trigger. And then we have the temptations, which is the kingdom triumph. And then we have the entry into Galilee in which we learn about the kingdom tribute. What does this King require of those to whom he has come? So let's start with the Kingdom trigger. Okay, the kingdom trigger. Well, two things are made clear here in this section about Jesus baptism. Notice he doesn't delve into all of the conversation that Jesus has with John the Baptist like Matthew does. John says, why have you come to be baptized? And he says, you must do this in order to fulfill all righteousness. Mark's not concerned with that. As a matter of fact, he just kind of leaves that paradox out there that John is doing a baptism of repentance and that Jesus goes through it. He does include John's words that Jesus is worthy to give a better baptism, and yet he doesn't explain how it is then that Jesus can go and be a part of John's baptism. If his baptism, Jesus baptism is the better one. So we need to keep in mind that Mark is creating a collage of the Messiah who hasn't been named, but he's still just showing us who Messiah is. So what's the significance here? Well, we know from Scripture that the long hope for Israel had always been this we will live in the land for a period of time, but at some point, because of our sin, the Lord is willing. That's how it's presented early on in Deuteronomy thirty and other passages like that, the Lord warns Israel that he is willing, when they when they commit some sort of precipitous sin. And we don't know exactly what that precipitous sin will be. But when their sin reaches such a level that he has to actually do drastic measures, the Lord will then disperse Israel out of the land, sort of doing a reverse conquest. As a matter of fact, the prophets even talk about it as a reverse conquest. You see it in places like, um, the prophets, where they're reflecting back on what it was like in the conquest. You remember in the conquest, it says when you come in, these are the blessings you're going to enjoy in the Promised Land. You will live in houses you didn't build. You're going to enjoy grapes that you didn't plant. You're going to you're going to use fields that that you did not till. Okay. See, that's the promise of the promised land.

It's interesting. In the prophets they will then say, because of your sin, you will build houses, but you won't live in them. You will plant grapes, but you won't eat them. You'll till fields. But you won't get to enjoy the fruit of those fields. You see, it's kind of a reverse conquest. The Lord is now driving out Israel because they've become like the Canaanites, like the Amorites, like the Hittites and the parasites and all of those, all of those people who were living in the land. But here's the hope. And you can find this in Deuteronomy thirty as well.

When you've gone through this drastic discipline, when you've been driven out of the land of your forefathers, the one that was promised to Abraham back in Genesis fifteen, when you're driven out of it, this will be such a stark, uh, you know, stark opposition to what you've been experiencing. It's going to be such a radical experience that you'll finally be shaken from your slumber and you'll remember me, and then you'll turn back to me. That language in the Old Testament of returning to me is laid hold of by the prophets. And they use the language of repentance. That's what returning to me means. You're going to turn away from your sin, from your syncretism, from your worshipping of other gods. Remember, like we talked about with Amos, and you're going to turn towards me and you'll remember me and you'll find me, because you'll be remembering me with all of your heart, right? Quoting Deuteronomy six. This is what Isaiah means when he says this in Isaiah chapter one, where he's establishing the agenda for his whole book, and Isaiah chapter one, verse twenty seven, and he's talking about all of the sin and the wickedness that Jerusalem has fallen into. But then at the end he says this, But Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent by righteousness. But the rebels and the sinners shall be broken together. And those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed. You all know Isaiah's metaphor that he uses for the for the exile. He calls it a crucible. It's going to be like a crucible, which is a which is a stone bowl that can withstand heat and you put within that bowl mixed metals. You know, iron that's mixed with other kinds of impurities. And you heat it up. And what happens? All the impurities bubble up to the top and you scrape off the impurities, and then you heat it up again and all the impurities bubble up to the top and you scrape it off and then you boil it again. He says that's what exile will be. It's not under condemnation for Israel. Rather it is unto discipline. It's unto cleansing, because when the exile comes, the unbelievers will be burned away. But for the remnant, for the righteous remnant, they will return to the land and go back and read Deuteronomy thirty again. And it says, when you come back, this is all the way back in Moses day. As a matter of fact, it's so true to what actually happens that some scholars, critical scholars who don't believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, say, Moses couldn't have written that because it's too true. It fits too well with what actually happened. So if you reject, you know, supernatural prophecy, then you can't believe that Moses actually wrote this because it's too close to what actually happened. It must have been written sometime later.

And when someone says that to you, they say, do you really believe in supernatural prophecy? You go, brother, you don't even know the beginning of what I believe. That's one of the least crazy things I believe. I believe that Jesus rose from the dead, that he reigns in heaven today. He's one day going to come back and give us imperishable bodies. And you want to quibble about supernatural prophecy? That's a small thing in the list of things that I believe as a follower of Jesus Christ. So I want to remind you of this. It's important because this idea that

Moses plants, and that the prophets cultivate that one day, one day Israel will remember, they will return. You will seek me and you'll find me, right? Jeremiah twenty nine. You'll seek me, says the Lord, and you'll find me, because you'll seek me with all of your heart. Deuteronomy six. He's citing it. So everybody is waiting for that repentance. Okay. We even find examples like Daniel and Daniel chapter nine, where he recognizes that the seventy years have come to an end, that Jerusalem is supposed to be restored now, according to Jeremiah. And how does Daniel respond? He responds, as anyone would who's read Deuteronomy thirty and the rest of the Pentateuch. He responds with a prayer of repentance. And what happens? The man from God. The Jibreel Gabriel comes to him and says, it's not going to be seventy. It's going to be seventy times seven. But you see, the whole intertestamental period. Is this waiting for the repentance of the people of God? And here is John the Baptist. You get the significance. Now, John the Baptist out there in the wilderness on the eastern side of the land, right where you would enter in, right where Joshua would have entered in to the land. He's standing there and he's doing a baptism of repentance. And as we read last week, all of Judea and Jerusalem were going out to him. So anyone reading this gospel who understood the Old Testament would say, is this it? Is this the one? Is this the thing that's going to trigger the restoration that the prophets and that Moses have been telling us about for all these years? And so that's the significance. Notice that's what Mark lays hold of that Jesus, the one who is coming to bring the restoration baptism, not the trigger of the kingdom, but the kingdom. Baptism itself, the one who's bringing the better baptism, the better ritual washing, the better water ordeal that washes away our sins comes. And what does he do? He passes through the repentance, baptism alongside the people.

Mark is drawing our attention to the fact that Jesus too, is in solidarity with Israel. It's actually the first hint that we get in Mark of this idea of Jesus bearing sins that he did not commit. He'll do it one day on the cross. But we see him doing it here in the baptism. He doesn't need to go through it, and yet he passes through it, and he shows himself to be the faithful covenant partner. And that's exactly what the Lord tells him as soon as he emerges out of the water. Remember, in our advent series, we talked about the seed and the son, and the servant and the Savior. And remember when we talked about Jesus being the son, we talked about him being the faithful covenant partner. He's the one who stands in for Israel, who was called the firstborn son. Right? Jesus now stands in. And the Lord says this if you could put italics in Greek, you'd say, this one right here. Here is the righteous Israelite. Here's the one who has run the race. Here's the one who has passed through the waters of repentance on behalf of the people in him. And I love it how Mark says it. He says that in you I am well pleased. This is the father speaking directly to the son. And so anyone who is aware of their Hebrew Bibles, who have been raised reading through the Hebrew Bible and memorizing it, because not everyone had access to scrolls in their house, and not all of them could get into the synagogue, much less have access to the scrolls there. So you would memorize it and you would know, as you're reading this that something's getting triggered, something's happening.

Finally, there's this turning point that we've all been waiting for all of these years. Finally, Israel has repented. And instantly Mark then throws us into the next vignette, right. So we start with this Kingdom trigger. Okay. We have we have the setup. We have the prologue in the first

section that we read last week. Now we have the Kingdom trigger. Now what happens? Jesus is now cast out into the wilderness again, following on the Israel theme. He's passed through the waters and now he goes out into the wilderness. And that brings us to the Kingdom triumph. The kingdom triumph. Now, in the other gospels that are called Synoptics, Matthew and Luke, it's interesting to look at the verbs that are attached to or associated with the spirit. Usually it's the spirit leading someone, or the spirit coming upon someone, the spirit descending upon Jesus and leading Jesus. It is interesting. We should note, by the way, that Jesus in his humanity is empowered for his ministry by the spirit, just like we are. Okay. Do you notice that Jesus awaits the spirit in order to go out and do his work? But notice what happens in this next section. The Kingdom triumph where he is sent out into the desert. You know, the language that's used there is actually quite vivid. It's even it's even kind of aggressive. It says that the spirit through Jesus out into the desert. You notice in your English what does it have here in our ESV? It says he drove. He has driven you. Um. Let me go back. Where is it? Right here. The spirit immediately drove him out. The word is actually. Actually, it means to kind of throw out. He is cast out into the desert. Okay, Jesus, having had the spirit come upon him, is instantly sent out to go do the work of the kingdom. Now, in the biblical imagination and what I mean by that, I don't mean that to sound overly literary or something like that. We all have imaginations, right? That we use to understand the world around us. In the biblical imagination, the wilderness is a place of mystery. It's often a place where you go to find God. It's a place that's unwieldy. It's. It's not like the city. You can't know the streets. You can't have a map of it. It's a place where anything seems to go and people go out and they have experiences, particularly spiritual experiences that that weigh on their lives or show them to be who they are or give them some kind of direction. The wilderness is a place where sometimes people go to rest, but oftentimes their rest is disrupted by these spiritual experiences that happen in the wilderness. I think we actually do this in the modern world too, depending on when you were living. You have different places that you consider to be kind of the place of mystery, the place where you go to discover who you really are. You think about how in Moby Dick, the sea operates, right? The ocean, when they're out there, you know, fishing for those, for those whales, when they're whaling. The sea has this kind of unwieldy spiritual nature to it. You go out there and you see who a person really is, whether you're your Pip, who's left behind in the whaling boats just to float out there in the sea by himself in that infinitude. Or you're Ahab, right? Who's driven kind of mad. They're both driven mad in different ways because of the wildness of the wilderness today, actually, in a multitude of sci fi movies and novels, the space outer space is kind of the place of mystery. It's the place where you learn about yourself, where you see yourself. If the see if you see that being used in Moby Dick when it comes to space, think about two thousand and one Space Odyssey or something, right? You go out there and you learn not just about this strange new world, but you learn about yourself and who you are. You see, the wilderness serves that function in the Bible as well. And so Jesus goes out there into the wilderness and he has this Encounter. Now Mark is very quick about it. Notice he doesn't even give us the temptations. He doesn't tell us how Jesus uses Moses law in order to fight against the temptation, which should be also representative to us of how we ought to fight temptation. Draw out the word. Use the word to push against the temptation of sin. We don't get any of that with Mark. As a matter of fact, all that that Mark points out is this Jesus is driven out there by

the spirit. This is a part of his calling. This isn't accidental. He doesn't wander in the wrong direction after his baptism or something like that. He is driven to go do this work. And then, interestingly, Mark also draws our attention to who is out there in the wilderness with him. So we have Satan, we have the wild animals, and we have the angels who are ministering to him. Now, Satan, it's not hard to explain why he's there. Satan, after all, is at the end of the day, the accuser, right? He's the accuser of the brethren. That's what Satan's job is in the Bible. If you want to know, what does Satan do? Yes. He tempts. Yes he tries. Okay. But he gives you trials. Okay. He lies to you. He deceives you. He's the father of lies. But you have to say, is this just a bunch of different random odds and ends that he does? No. All of these things that Satan does every time you find him in the Bible, why is he tempting you? Why is he giving you trials? Why is he deceiving you like he like he twists and deceives God's words when he's talking to Eve in the garden. Why does he do that? Because he's going to accuse you. He wants to show you not to be what you think you are. He wants to accuse you and say you're not worthy of the gospel of salvation. You're not worthy of the redemption that the Lord has in store for you. He's working against God's redemptive plans for his people, just like he does with Job, right? What does he say to the God when he goes before him? He goes, have you considered? God says, have you considered Job? And Satan says he's not as good as you think he is. Let me try him a little bit. I'll show you where he actually puts his hope. You should remember that with temptation as well. Whenever you feel as if you're under spiritual temptation or opposition from spiritual forces, remember it's not. It's not just to make you scared. Like the horror movies say, it's not just to kill you or something like that. Right? Like a ghost or a demon. You know, in the horror movies that we see on films, but rather, what is it? It is to accuse you and to prove to you that you do not have what it takes to be saved. What is he doing with Jesus in the temptations? Each one of them we know from Mark is saying this you can have your kingdom, Jesus, but you don't have to go to the cross. You don't have to have the suffering. You don't have to be hungry. Why are you fasting? Just you can make these stones into bread. Why are you dying on the cross? In order to inherit the world, I'll give you the world. Just bow down before me. Why are you living as a man of sorrows? Acquainted with grief? Why are you a suffering servant? Throw yourself off of the temple. The angels will catch you. Everyone will see your glory. I don't think that the temptations of Jesus end with the temptations in the wilderness. As a matter of fact, later on in his life, we know that the disciples will say things like, Jesus, don't go do that. You're going to get caught. You'll get in trouble. Don't go into Jerusalem. The Pharisees are waiting for you. Remember, even Peter says that. And what does Jesus say to him? Get behind me, Satan. You see, he's still being tempted, even in the words of his friends. So he's been forced out into the wilderness to deal with the temptations that come from the accuser. He has the victory.

Now, interestingly, Mark doesn't actually tell us, like Matthew does, that Jesus has the victory. It's just implied or assumed because immediately the next scene that we see is Jesus marching into Galilee, saying, the kingdom of God is at hand. That tells you that he was victorious. But Mark doesn't even spend time telling us that part. He just moves us through the story. So Jesus, like Israel, has gone out into the wilderness. He's been tempted like Israel. But where Israel failed, Jesus is victorious. Now does raise the question, what about the angels and the wild animals? The angels, I think, is pretty clear. They're ministering. They're caring for him. We could even say, just as Israel had had angels caring for them in the form we see the

results of it in the manna and in the quail and in the Holy Spirit being present with them in the column of smoke and the column of fire, and the great victories that they're given over their enemies, that they were also being cared for by spiritual forces. And Jesus is being cared for, too, and ministered to as he fasts in the wilderness for forty days. What about the wild animals? I pointed out, just because it's not exactly clear, there's two major theories about what the wild. Why are the wild animals mentioned, particularly for an author who's being so specific? He's being so careful. He's got such an economy of language. Why does he leave in the wild animals part? Some have argued. Well, this is an example of the Restoration Kingdom that the prophets talked about, where the lion will lay down with the lamb, or the child will play by the cobra pit, and no one will be afraid, because we're living now in a world where there's not sin, there's not conflict, there's not death, there's not disease, there's not poison, there's not predatory behavior. And so in that case, we would read Mark, uh, verse to keep the text right in front of me so I can remember which one it is. Um, in that case, we'd read Mark chapter, uh, excuse me, verse thirteen, in this way. And he was with the wild animals and the angels, and they were ministering to him. We'd read the text, something like that. The other argument is this, though, is that the wild animals are representative of kind of the forces of judgment, the representative of the forces of deconstruction that are happening in the exile. If you actually even remember in Amos, he talks about the threat of the wild animals coming through the city and coming through the town. He talks about the threat of the lions to the sheep. And they're always out there prowling. They're always out there watching, out looking for people who they can pick off, someone who they can get the weak one in the herd, who's in the back of the herd and being picked away. And here's Jesus being separated from the herd and sent out into the desert to be tempted. And the wild animals are there. And that way, if that's the reading, then we read verse thirteen like this. And he was out there with the wild animals, but the angels were We're ministering to him. It's a slightly different reading, and to be honest, we don't know which one it is. But one thing is clear is that Jesus is out there. He is under the temptation that Israel experienced when she was also in the desert, and yet he is victorious where she fell short.

Now let me say a word about the temptation of Jesus. Just one more word. It's not something that Mark delves into, but it's an idea. It's a part of theology that is instantly, um, almost hyperlinked. In a story like this, it's linked to, we have to think about it because we have to ask this question how is it that Jesus can be tempted? How is it that Jesus receives a temptation? And why is that important? Is that just to show that he's the better Israel? Okay, possibly it could just be that. But we know from other apostolic teachings, for instance, Hebrews chapter four, that it's important for us today that Jesus was tempted in Hebrews chapter four. The author of Hebrews is laying out this argument that we have a high priest who represents us before the Lord and intercedes on our behalf. He is both the high priest and the sacrifice. Okay, he's completely collapsed upon itself. The whole Old Testament Israelite convention of offering sacrifices to for the forgiveness of sins by offering the once and for all sacrifice that doesn't need to be repeated. And like a high priest to be going into the presence of the Lord in the Holy of Holies and interceding on our behalf. But then the author of Hebrews says this interesting thing. He says, we don't have a high priest who is unable to sympathize or empathize with our temptations, with our trials. We have rather a high priest who knows what

it's like to be human and to be tempted. And of course, that's a cause of encouragement for us. But we need to remember something as we're thinking about the temptations of Jesus. Because as the author of Hebrews says, he was tempted just like we are. What? But without sin. So we have to remember when we're talking about the temptations of Jesus, he is experiencing temptations in such a way that he can sympathize with our temptations. And yet we also have to remember something else. He is not tempted as one who has already given into sin. I think it's important to remember this because so often when we talk about temptation, when we call something a temptation, what we mean is I indulged in these ideas for a long time, but I finally stopped after a period of time and I didn't act on them. I was tempted, but I didn't do the thing. But the problem is, when we're tempted by sin, we are tempted as those who have already sinned. We've already tasted of the fruit. So the temptation is a different temptation in a way than that which Jesus experiences, because Jesus doesn't experience it as one who has already given into sin. And yet, with the author of Hebrews, we have to recognize that does not take away in any way from his sympathy with us. He can still entirely sympathize with us, and yet we have to remember that important part. He was tempted, but without sin. So what can we say about Jesus' temptations? We can say this. First of all, as the author of Hebrews points out, we should be encouraged that our High Priest knows what it's like, and yet we need to recognize that he never was never tempted as one like us who has already tasted of sin. But that doesn't take away from the encouragement that we have in his sympathy with us. There's another thing, though, that we also learn from this too, that I think is equally important, particularly in the discourse around the church today, about temptations. If our High Priest can sympathize with every single person in the church, then notice that creates a kind of unity in how we are tempted. What do I mean by that? There is a viewpoint out there that certain temptations are unlike other temptations. Certain temptations are kind of easy ones, you know, like eating too much or something like that. Okay. They're kind of the regular temptations, but that there are other temptations that if you don't have that temptation, then you have no idea what that person is experiencing and you cannot speak into their experience. But notice what it means for us to have one high priest who can sympathize with the entire church in her temptations. That means that regardless of your cultural background, regardless of your ethnic background, regardless of your socioeconomic background, regardless of the kinds of temptations you deal with, we are all still of the same kind of humanity with whom our Savior can sympathize with our temptations. I think this is important. It does mean that even if I haven't experienced a particular temptation, I can still speak to that temptation, to the rights and the wrongs of it. I can counsel, I should do it with humility. I should do it with care and with pastoral love and mercy and with sympathy. And yet I can still speak into it.

Let me give you an example. Jesus, we know this. He is tempted in every way that is common to humanity. And yet, could I say that Jesus was ever tempted to drink and drive? No, he's not tempted to drink and drive. No. Was he was he tempted to maybe disregard the safety of others because of your own selfish gain? I think we can say yes. He's probably tempted in some way, even to step down from the cross, even to bring about his kingdom without going to the cross, right? That's a way of disregarding the salvation of others for his own selfish gain. So he's experienced that temptation, even if he hasn't experienced each particular temptation. So

we want to be careful about saying Jesus is experienced every individual particular temptation you've experienced, and yet recognize that he can still sympathize with every temptation that you find yourself in. Now, I have to admit, there's a bit of a mystery here, isn't there? But that's not because God is concealing from us the truth. It's not because he's veiling from us something that we could otherwise understand. The thing that we are struggling with is the nature of Jesus Christ as being a sinless human being who is both very man and very God. We're struggling with that. And guess what? Even in the new heavens and new earth, you are not going to understand that in its completion, we can gesture at it, we can point at it, we can attach impressive sounding words to it, but at the end of the day, we will not fully understand it because we will not be able to fully understand the mystery of the incarnation. However, it doesn't take away from the fact that you can be encouraged that your King, your High Priest, has been tempted in every way that you have, and yet without sin. So the kingdom trigger of baptism leads just immediately, as Mark even tells us, he's immediately cast out into the desert, and that leads to the kingdom triumph over Satan, sin, and death in the wilderness. And then that leads us now to the next section. Mark jumps over a couple of events. He just says after John had been put away. Okay, Jesus went into Galilee. That's notable. Matthew makes a big deal out of it. Galilee is in the northern Kingdom. Notice, we might expect Jesus to go immediately into Judah and into Jerusalem now to announce his kingdom. It's interesting, isn't it, that he goes to the northern Kingdom first? Matthew makes a big deal about that. The northern kingdom had gone into exile first. And so Jesus goes into to the northern Kingdom first. Notice Mark leaves all of that aside and just focuses in on Jesus message. Having had this victory over temptation in the wilderness, Jesus goes into the northern Kingdom when the time is fulfilled. This idea of the time being fulfilled again evokes pictures and images of the restoration from the Old Testament prophets. The fact this idea that God has a time in mind and when the right time comes, he's going to establish his kingdom. And so Mark tells us, when the time is fulfilled, when the time is ready, Jesus goes about the work of now announcing the kingdom.

Now, this is this is an incredible moment in human history. We can kind of blow past this quickly. There's a variety of reasons why that might be, but notice, this is the first time that the Messiah King, the very God very man, steps into geographic space and declares his kingdom has arrived. This is a turning point in human history. This is this is right there on par with creation in the fall. Right. And the incarnation, it's right there on par with this. All of a sudden now we are hearing for the first time in its fullness, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of the King. And he announces it first in Galilee, a small town in the northern, a small region in the Northern Kingdom, not the most populated area. He goes into the Northern Kingdom, the people who had been in darkness, and he declares to them, the kingdom of God is at hand. Now we do have to pause for a moment and recognize this. When does the kingdom come? That's a hard question to answer. As a matter of fact, if you're interested in if you want to read more on these things, or maybe you're in the covenant theology class and you want to read, what does this look like on the New Testament side? Because we've been talking a lot about Old Testament side in the covenant theology class on Wednesday nights. If you want to read more about it on the New Testament side, I'd recommend a book. It's by a gentleman called named Herman Ridderbos. It's called The Coming of the Kingdom.

Okay. Now, let me warn you, it is dense. It's thick. It's going to take you some time. But if you commit the time to it and you get through it, you will find yourself immeasurably blessed by it. The coming of the kingdom. But let me just go ahead and give you a kind of a synopsis of his first argument, which is in pages one through ninety, where he's developing this question, what is the coming of the kingdom? And he says this finally at the end, we're not exactly sure when the kingdom comes. Is it John the Baptist? Let me go back. Is it the. Is it the prophecies to Zechariah? Is that the coming of the kingdom? Is it the incarnation? Okay. Which we've been talking about for the last month so much. That's an a major event. Is that the coming of the kingdom? Well, or maybe it's the baptism. Maybe it's finally when he gets baptized. That's the coming of the kingdom. Maybe it's when he marches into Galilee. Maybe it's when he dies on the cross. Maybe it's when he rises from the dead. Maybe it's when he ascends into heaven. You might think, well, now we're done. Now he's ascended into heaven. But Jesus himself would say, my work is not finished here. My inauguration work is not finished till the gospel goes out to the nation. So nations. So is it. When the apostles finally spread out over Asia minor and Europe and East Asia and Africa, is that when the gospel kingdom finally comes in?

Herman Ridderbos says it's somewhere in there. But here we have we can say this. We do know when the coming of the kingdom was first announced. And that's as Jesus marches in to Galilee and says, the kingdom of God is at hand, because where the king is, there the kingdom is. Now, this is very important to our theology, this kingdom theology. It's significant to the New Testament, but it's significant to us today because Jesus plants his kingdom in Galilee, in Jerusalem, in Judea. But that kingdom was always meant to have a kind of centrifugal force to it. Or to change. The metaphor is always meant to be like a drop that drops in the middle of a still water and then emanates out through ripples. That kingdom was never meant to stay on the landing beach of Israel and of Judah.

Remember that analogy that I gave you last fall? All Israel and Judah were always meant to be the Omaha Beach, the Idaho beach of D-Day. You were never supposed to stay on the beach. You come in to bring the kingdom, and then you spread out around the face of the earth. Even though the king now reigns and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, that does not mean that his kingdom is gone. He's told us that he said, I will be with you till the end of the age. The kingdom's not gone. We're not waiting for the kingdom to come back. The kingdom is here now. And Jesus tells us, as we talked about this morning, he's the head, but his body is here doing its work all over the face of the earth. The kingdom is advancing through the work of the body of Christ, imbued as he was with the spirit who sends us out, who follows us, who throws us out into the universe, throws us out around the earth to proclaim the kingdom of Jesus Christ. One of the favorite questions that people like to ask ordnance who are getting ordained in presbyteries is, can you give me the difference between the kingdom and the church? I always tell our students a good answer is this. Well, that's a tough question, but I can tell you this - the primary agent of the kingdom on earth is the Church of Jesus Christ. Now we can say, when you're at work as a believer who's in, who's filled with the Holy Spirit, who's a temple of the living God, and you're at work and you are proclaiming both in word and in deed, the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Is the kingdom also present there? In a way, yes, you can say that that is true. And yet always remember the kingdom of God's primary agent on earth is the

Church of Jesus Christ. We are, as our King did, proclaiming the good news of his victory. And we're telling people Jesus has had the victory and the only proper response is repentance and belief. You see, every king requires a tribute. If the king comes into your land and he takes over and he comes up and he subjugates your king, and he puts your king under him, he's going to require a tribute. He's going to require some kind of taxes, some kind of conscription of your young men to fight in his armies with him. That's what Caesar would do if Caesar came into your land. He would look for visible ways in which you can pay him because of his kingship. But notice how Messiah King comes into your land and notice the tribute that he requires of you. He comes in, he says, I'm not looking for taxes. I'm not looking for your property. I'm not looking for you to kind of, you know, sign some kind of book and, and dedicate yourself to a certain kind of thing. What am I asking for? I'm asking for this. Repent and believe. Those are the requirements of King Jesus. Repent and believe. You see, unlike Caesar, unlike human kings who are looking for formalistic obedience, membership in the Kingdom of God is a matter of sincere belief. It's a matter of the heart, which is why it's always a bad idea to try to force the gospel on people at the point of a spear, or at the tip of a knife, or at the barrel of a gun. That's never going to work. Jesus is very clear about that. And by the way, he's perfectly in line with the Old Testament prophets who say, what does the Lord require of you to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength? You cannot force that at the end of a gun. Look what Jesus says. When people hear the gospel and they reject it, what are they? What does he tell his disciples to do in Matthew ten. What does he tell them to do? Does he say, go out then and form a militia? And you go back in that town and you get them to believe, right? Does he say that? No. He says, listen, justice is from the Lord. This is about sincere belief of true hearts that are drawn to the Lord in the power of the spirit, through the persuasion of hearing the gospel.

Now Paul will tell us that repentance and belief is actually a gift from the Emperor himself. When the king comes and says, repent and believe, he's also the one who gives you the ability to believe and to repent. But we don't need to always remember that as the gospel is being proclaimed. It is never like the human kingdoms spread their power and spread their influence. Rather, it is about sincere belief through the proclamation of the gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a matter of the heart. So why do we proclaim it like this? Why are we doing this? Why do we say repent and believe? You hear that a lot around Briarwood. You hear us talking about it? I think almost just about every worship service begins with something along the lines of, as we go in and prepare our hearts for worship, let us go in in a spirit of repentance and renewed faith in the Lord who we are worshiping. Why do we say that? Because our Savior says that we're just following the words of the King. You see, we want to be so present, and we want to be so active in proclaiming the gospel just like our King was. Through both word and deed, we want to be so active in that around the face of the earth, so that when he comes back, when he returns, we want there to be very little work left for him to do. Think about that. You understand that when Jesus comes back to bring about the new heavens and new earth, we want him to arrive here on earth. Now, I know he hasn't been gone, but figuratively. We want him to arrive here on earth and find a society in a world that has been transformed by faith. We want there to be very little left to do. Basically, resurrection, final judgment, new heavens and new earth. That's all that's going to be left to do, because there will be so many followers of Jesus Christ

around the face of the earth, that there will just not be much work done or much work that needs to be done. And that's what we're praying for. Will that necessarily happen? We don't know that. Just like in the Old Testament, we didn't know what it was going to look like when he came the first time. Well, what it look like when he comes the second time? We don't know. But what should we be working for? We should be working for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed all over the face of the earth. And so as we begin this gospel, Mark shoots us right into the action. He gives us the kingdom trigger of Jesus baptism of repentance. He gives us the first kingdom triumph, which is Jesus resisting the temptations and conquering Satan in the midst of the wilderness. And then he gives us insight into the kingdom tribute that we all owe. The message that Jesus taught to the Galileans is the same message for us today. Repent and believe the kingdom is here.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, as we do, reflect on your Kingdom and we now participate in the Kingdom meal. I pray that you would bless us and watch over us. Lord, prepare our hearts to hear, Lord, as we've heard the Word of God, to now respond by being nourished in the Lord's Supper. Spirit, we pray that you would be present in us as we are nourished in this meal. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.