

What does Jesus demand?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 October 2019

Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[0 : 00] I went to high school in Aberdeen just a few years ago, up in Aberdeen. And when I started high school, the school was struggling and there were all kinds of problems.

But just as I was starting, a new headteacher had arrived and the word on the playground, in the playground, was that he was going to come and he was going to change things for the better. He was employed as one of those troubleshooter headteachers who came with the specific task of turning a bad school around and making it a good school.

And that's exactly what he did. And it happened before our very eyes. As soon as he arrived, things began to change and things were soon very different.

His coming was good news for the school, even if it didn't seem like good news at the time.

Because he brought a new regime and he came with a new authority and he came with a message and things began to improve and things just got better.

[1 : 06] So he got a grip on school discipline. School discipline then became an actual thing in the school. People were disciplined. He began to sort out the drug problem.

So the school wasn't in the local news every week because of the drugs being sold. The police were less obvious around the school and that they weren't needed in the same way as they were before.

Teachers began to up their game and those who didn't soon began to somehow mysteriously disappear. We always did wonder what happened to poor old Mr Firth.

Never been seen since. Academic standards in the school began to rise. Because his coming was revolutionary for the whole school community.

And especially for the people who were part of it. And so I wasn't surprised recently to discover that that head teacher was honoured in the Queen's Birthday List.

[2 : 03] He was given a CBE for services to secondary education in Scotland. Because St Macar Academy was never the same again.

The arrival of the new head teacher with a new authority with a clear message transformed the whole school community. Now as we look at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, we see that Jesus comes and Jesus makes an impact as soon as he starts moving and working and operating in this world.

Because Jesus is God's chosen King. Mark's told us that. And so the arrival of the King is nothing short of revolutionary for our world.

And so today in Mark chapter 1, what we see is that as soon as Jesus comes, he hits the ground running. He exercises his kingly authority. He comes with a message.

He demands that people follow him. And they do. And so things are never the same. And so the question for us today is, are we going to follow Jesus Christ by joining his revolution?

[3 : 14] The revolution that is the kingdom of God established on this whole earth as God is rescuing individual people like you and me.

And as God is restoring this broken creation, turn it into perfection. So what I'd like us to do is to look at three points as we work our way through these verses.

First of all, we see the King's work, which is proclaiming the good news of God. Secondly, we see the King's message, which is the time has come. The kingdom of God is near.

Repent and believe the good news. And then thirdly, we see the King's call, which is follow me. So the King's work, the King's message, and the King's call. First of all, the King's work.

The King's work is proclaiming the good news of God. So verse 14, what's the first thing that Jesus does? Jesus went into Galilee, we read, proclaiming the good news of God.

[4 : 12] So Jesus didn't begin with a miracle just to gather a crowd of people. First of all, he starts by proclaiming the good news of God. And this comes all through chapter 1.

So if you just glance down, verse 21 and 22, what's he doing? He goes into the synagogue and he teaches. Then verse 27, the people are amazed. Why?

Because of his teaching. It's teaching with authority. And then verse 38, we read that Jesus wants to go to nearby villages. So he can preach there because he says, that is why I have come.

So he came with the good news of God. He came with a message. Now good news or gospel refers to history making, life changing news.

Good news that Mark is referring to here is the good news that something has happened in human history and it impacts everything for everyone.

[5 : 14] Now news is different from advice, isn't it? So just imagine your house is on fire. Advice might tell you how to avoid the fire or what to do if a fire comes.

But you don't want advice if your house is on fire. What you want is the news that your house is burning down. And if you don't get out of your house, you will die and your house will crumble.

So Jesus came proclaiming the good news of God. Good news about himself. And so that's why his arrival into this world means that we need to hear what Jesus is saying about himself and we need to respond to him.

So if you're unfamiliar with Christianity, then you should never think that Christianity is simply good advice about how to live your life. Or that Christianity is somehow a set of rules of rights and wrongs.

And if you obey these rules and do them, then somehow your life will be better and you will feel more fulfilled as a person. Now Christianity is news about Jesus.

[6 : 27] News that we need to pay attention to because it's news that revolutionizes this world. And revolutionizes our lives and turns our lives upside down.

It changes us. Just as you heard Ying say how the message of Jesus changed her. So it's news that we can't ignore. And it's this good news of Jesus that sets Christianity apart from every other belief or religion or worldview.

Because if you think about it, every other religion, every other belief is basically about giving advice. Advice about living your life.

This is how you get a better life. This is how you feel more fulfilled. This is what makes you a better person if you follow all this list of things that you need to do. And if you follow these things, your life will go well.

And then hopefully, if you've been good enough, your life will go well in the afterlife. And you'll be blessed then because of your good life now by following rules. And yet, Christianity stands out as being totally different.

[7 : 36] Because Christianity is news that we must respond to. Good news about Jesus. News about what has actually happened in the history of our world.

In fact, every other religious finder says, Here's how you should live a good life. Here is a set of things that you must do.

And if you listen to my teaching, if you follow my laws, if you obey my rules, then you'll have a good life. And then salvation will come to you.

And yet, along comes Jesus. And what does Jesus say? Follow me. He's a person who calls us to follow him. And so the king's work, we see, is proclaiming the good news of God.

News that's far too important to miss. Because it comes from God's chosen king. And that's what differentiates Jesus from every other religious finder or leader.

[8 : 36] He is claiming to be the son of God. So he comes with a different authority than a mere human being. Who's no different from you or from me.

And because Jesus is proclaiming good news, and because Mark wants us to hear this good news, that's really why we're starting Christchurch Glasgow.

It's because we believe this is the best news that the world could ever hear. And so we want to proclaim this good news to people outside who know little or nothing about Jesus Christ.

Because they need to hear about him. There are loads of people in the city of Glasgow who know little or nothing about Jesus. And yet his coming is good news that our world needs.

And his good news that our individual lives need as well. And so his coming is good news. Good news for you. Good news for our world. Would you say that the coming of Jesus is good news?

[9 : 36] Has this good news impacted you? Have you done something about this good news? It's too important to miss. So that's our first point. The king's work is proclaiming the good news of God.

Second point is the king's message. It's there in verse 15. Let's just read it again. The time has come, he said. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news.

So Jesus has got a message to declare. So let's just break it down into four. First of all, the time has come. So God had promised his people Israel that he would send his Messiah, his chosen king, who would come into the world, who would establish his reign and bring his kingdom.

And so that's what the people in Jesus' day were waiting for, for God's Messiah king to come. And now Jesus is saying the time has come. So what we're talking about here is the definitive moment in human history.

The time when Jesus Christ walked upon this earth. Just over 2,000 years ago. Just over 2,000 miles away from where you're seated today. Jesus arrived.

[10 : 46] And so all the waiting and all the expectation and all the promise that came with God's chosen king entering into the world is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ.

So Jesus, the king of God's kingdom, had arrived and God's reign began to spread throughout the earth. So this is, Mark's saying to us, this is a massive announcement.

You don't get bigger news than this. Just think of the anticipation that you get in our country at the news of or the birth of a royal baby.

So just say, Wills and Kate, remember, their first child. He was in line to the throne, future king. Prince George was born.

And there was all sorts of fuss, this great announcement. Because the expectation in this tiny baby. And because of his future. And so here, what we see in the coming of Jesus, is that this great time of expectation has arrived.

[11 : 50] God is moving things on in his great purpose that is for all creation. So the time has come. Second, the kingdom of God has come near.

Now when we tend to speak of a kingdom, we tend to think of a geographical area over which a sovereign rules, like the United Kingdom.

So, United Kingdom. Kingdom is obviously different from Union. So European Union. United Kingdom. What do you want to live in? A kingdom.

I don't mean to be political at all, but you get the point. A kingdom is an area, but it's also something over which there is a rule.

And so, when the kingdom of God is being described here, it's describing an activity. God's rule and God's reign over this world.

[12 : 48] And so when Jesus says that the kingdom of God has come near, this reign was going to be seen in the words and in the actions of Jesus. So things wouldn't be the same again now that Jesus had arrived.

Just like in my school in Aberdeen, St. Matthew Academy, things weren't the same again when this new headteacher had come. In other words, Jesus' coming set in motion, the outworking of the kingdom of God in this world, on this earth, until the day that this kingdom would come in all its fullness.

And God will wind everything up and bring in his perfect new creation. And so Jesus came to bring the kingdom of God, exercising God's rule in this world.

And that's why when you read on in Mark's gospel, you see Jesus speak and you see Jesus act with power and with authority in every single move that he makes.

And so if we read on, we see that Jesus heals the sick. Jesus subdues demons. Jesus controls nature. Jesus works miracles. Jesus raises the dead. Jesus forgives sins.

[14 : 00] Because he's bringing in God's kingdom. And all of this is good news. And so Jesus is doing this work of healing. He's reversing the effects of sin in order to restore our broken world.

And as he restores our broken world, what he does is he calls people into his kingdom, his revolution, to be part of it by following him. So that's how the kingdom of God came near in Jesus. It came when he walked the earth. And so in one sense, the kingdom has already come. It arrived in Jesus. It has come near. But in another sense, the kingdom of God is not yet.

It's not yet here in all its fullness. Because this world is not as it should be. But the kingdom will come in the future. And that's why this message demands a response.

Because our lives must be lived under the authority of the king. So how does that happen? Well, Jesus goes on and he says, repent and leave the good news.

[15:07] What does repent mean? Repent means to turn around or to reverse course. So it's more than simply saying, I'm sorry. And then carrying on as before.

Repenting is like a complete U-turn. A complete change of direction. And it's a change in your mind. Your mindset. Which then works itself out in your behavior.

In your thinking. And in your actions. It's to turn away from a lifestyle. Where we live to please ourselves. And where we do what we want to do. And it's to turn to Jesus.

And live under his authority as king. Which means loving the things that Jesus loves. And hating the things that Jesus hates. And so it's to acknowledge Jesus as king.

And to admit that we are a royal subject. Who is responsible to the king. He has the right to have authority over my life.

[16:06] And so along with this command to repent. Is the command to believe the good news. Believing the good news means accepting the message about Jesus Christ.

So repentance is accompanied by believing in Jesus. So the news that King Jesus has come. And he is extending God's reign throughout the earth. Means that we must believe in him.

And that is the most sane and sensible decision. That any human being could ever make. Is to believe in Jesus Christ. The one that God has sent.

And that means to turn away from our own agenda. For life. And to follow him. Because if Jesus has come. To bring in a kingdom.

In which he is going to put everything right. And renew the entire world. Then it would be foolish and stupid. To try and live for a different kingdom. Because we are going to be on the losing side.

[17:06] And ultimately we are going to lose out. If we reject Jesus as King. Things won't end well for us. Because if Jesus has come to put everything right.

On this grand cosmic scale. Then he has come to put everything right. In your life and mine. And if we are honest with ourselves. We know deep down inside.

That our lives just aren't right. We are not maybe as bad as we could be. But we know we are not really. As we should be either. There is a good line from Tolkien's.

The Lord of the Rings. It says. The hands of the King are healing hands. And thus shall the rightful King be known. So when we come under the kingship of Jesus.

By repenting. And believing the good news about him. Then we get caught up in this revolution. This process of healing. Whereby Jesus is renewing the world.

[18:09] And renewing our lives. And so Mark wants to show us. And so Mark wants to show us. That Jesus is the rightful King. Through his words. And through his actions. And so that's why we can trust this message.

And of genuine. And substantial hope for our future. And for the future of our world. And isn't this the message that our world needs to hear. That there is hope for our lives.

For you and for me. And that there is hope for our broken and twisted. And sick and fractured world. There is. And the only hope is Jesus Christ.

Because he's the King. He's a good King. He's got healing hands. And he's going to sort everything out. And that's fantastic. So first. The King's work. Second.

The King's message. Third. The King's call. The King's call is to follow me. Because he's the King. He's come to gather people into his kingdom. And so as Jesus calls people to follow him.

[19:08] What we get in verses 16 to 20. Is an illustration really. Of what it means to repent. And believe the good news. So let's just read those verses again. As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee.

He saw Simon and his brother Andrew. Casting a net into the lake. For they were fishermen. Come. Follow me. Jesus said. And I will send you out to fish for people. At once they left their nets.

And followed him. When he had gone a little further. He saw James. Son of Zebedee. And his brother John. In a boat. Preparing their nets. Without delay. He called them. And they left their father Zebedee.

In the boat. With the hired men. And followed him. So four fishermen. Leave everything. And follow Jesus. And fishing was big business.

In the first century. It was the main food. If you like. Rather than meat. People would eat fish. In the Greco-Roman world. And apparently. Fishing was a thriving business.

[20 : 09] On the Sea of Galilee. And so in James and John's case. They were actually businessmen. As well as fishermen. Because they had people working. For them. And with them. And so what Jesus is doing here. Is calling them to something radical. Because he's calling them to leave their families. To leave their careers. And to follow him. I guess now. These days. We do leave our families. And go off. And do our own thing in the world. But back then. To leave your family. Was a big deal. Back then. The career was set for you. Today. Probably. It's easy. To shift and change. Your career. And do something different. And essentially. Jesus is calling them. To leave everything. Whatever they held onto. Most dearly in life. Jesus says. Give that up. And follow me. Because.

[21 : 04] Following Jesus. Means giving Jesus. Priority. Over your family. Over your career. Over your wealth. Over your relationships. Over everything.

That's what it means to follow Jesus. In the simplest. Than the starkest. Terms. And notice what these fishermen did. They obeyed. Immediately. So they just dropped everything. And followed Jesus. And so the challenge for us. Is exactly. The same. It's no different for us. Than it was for them. Even though we can't see Jesus. Like they could. For us. Following Jesus. Might not mean. Giving up your career. Or your family. But it might. Because following Jesus.

Is going. To be. To be. Disruptive. One of you noticed that. When Yang shared her testimony. Following Jesus. Was a disruptive thing. For her family.

[22 : 01] Because following Jesus. Does bring. Great upheaval. In our families. With our lives. In our jobs. And it's not that these fishermen. Didn't fish again.

And it's not that they. Didn't see their families again. And so following Jesus. Doesn't mean. Kiss goodbye. To everything else. You hold on to in life. But it means.

That every other. Attachment. In life. Must be. Subordinate. To. Jesus Christ. Because when we follow Jesus. We've got no idea.

Where he is going to take us. Where he'll lead us. We've got no idea. About what we'll go through. On the way. And yet that's what it means. To follow Jesus. Jesus.

And so if. You're here this afternoon. And you wouldn't call yourself. A Christian. Then. What is stopping you. Submitting. To Jesus. As.

[22 : 54] King. Could it be. That there's something. In your life. That you don't want. To give up. And you know. That if you are. Going to follow him. You'll need to give.

That thing. Up. Because that thing. Is ultimately. More valuable. To you. Than Jesus is. And yet. If he's king. Then. We don't want. To be guilty. Of treason. Do we? That's why. The message. Is always. Repent. And believe. The good news. But if you.

Would call yourself. A Christian. And you. Have bowed. The knee. To Jesus. As king. And you do. Want to follow him. Then are you. Following Jesus. In every area.

Of your life. Or to put it another way. Where in your life. Where in my life. Do we rebel. Against. The rule. Of Jesus.

[23 : 47] Who's the king. Is it in our work life. Is it in our social life. Is it in our love life. Our family life. Our financial life. John Stott.

An older minister. Who's dead now. But. He told of a former prime minister. In the UK. Lord Melbourne. And he heard a challenging sermon. At church. And this is what he said.

He said. Things have come to. A pretty pass. When religion. Is allowed to invade. A man's private life. And then John Stott. Commented. This is precisely. What Christ wants to do.

He wants to interfere. In our private life. Our home life. Our business life. And be. Lord. Of all. So following Jesus. Means he's got to be. Lord of all.

Or else he isn't really. Lord at all. But the call to follow Jesus. Isn't just. About what we give up. And lay down for him. Twinned with the call.

[24 : 43] Is the responsibility. To call others. To follow Jesus too. Jesus says. Follow me. And I will send you out. To fish for people. Or I will make you fishers of men.

Jesus wants to call people. Into his kingdom. To then send them out. To bring other people. Into his kingdom. And in the Old Testament. Fishing was often.

Described as something. That God did. And God's fishing. Always takes place. In the context of judgment. And so Jesus. Summoning of people. To be fishers.

Of other people. Is a call. To gather people. Into. God's kingdom. So that they will be safe. From God's. Judgment. And so there's an urgency. Here. About what Jesus is doing. Therefore. There's an urgency. About what we. As his church. Are doing too. Because.

[25 : 36] The work he calls his disciples. To do here. Is the work he calls us. To do. That's well. That's why. Jesus said. The kingdom of God. Has come here. Repent. And believe. The good news. Okay.

So close. Jesus came. With authority. Because he's king. He came. With a message. Which is good news. And he calls us.

To follow him. And so the only. Right response. To Jesus. Is. To repent. And believe. The good news. That's how we. Follow him. But you might be thinking.

Well. You don't know my life. You don't understand. My situation. You're not aware. Of the circumstances. That I'm wrestling with. Right now. How can I possibly.

Follow Jesus. Not knowing. What will happen. In the future. Or where he. Will lead me. Well it's interesting. Because Jesus doesn't ask us.

[26 : 31] To do anything. That he himself. Hasn't already done. Because when he called. The fishermen. To leave. Their present life. To leave. Their father. That's exactly.

What Jesus did. When he. Came to earth. Jesus left. His father. In the glory. Of heaven. So he could. Enter into this world. In order to die.

And when he died. On the cross. He lost. His father. That's why he cried out. My God. My God. Why have you. Forsaken me. Jesus experienced.

The judgment. Of God. On the cross. Because of. Our sin. So he was. Forsaken. By his father. So that we. Never be.

Forsaken. By God. And that's why. Following. Jesus. Leads us. Into. God's kingdom. Where everything. Will be. Put right.

[27 : 28] So if Jesus Christ. Has gone through. The ultimate suffering. So we don't have to. Means that we. Can keep. Following. Jesus. No matter. What happens.

Because if he has. Rescued us. From the very worst. That could possibly happen. And he's with us. In everything else. As well. I know. That could happen. It's been cleaned.

It's been cleaned. I know. Peace out. I know. There's didn't even. I've got. That could happen. Now. You know. You know. Come. You know. There's been cleaned you. This guy. I know. There's been meeting you.

You know. And why. That's it. And why. You know. I know.