

October 23, 2022

“The Response of the Disciple - Part One”
Mark 1:1-15

FCF: Our casual approach to Jesus

PROPOSITION: (anchor) “God’s kingdom is here!”

(magnet) We need to rightly respond to this news.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Not knowing who you’re dealing with can lead to a mistaken approach. Case in point, the revelations since the death of Queen Elizabeth. It turns out she had a sense of humor. The story is told of group of American tourists who approached the Queen as she was out walking near her Balmoral estate. Not recognizing the unassuming woman in a headscarf, they asked if she lived nearby. She said “Yes” she had a house quite close by. They asked if she’d ever met the Queen and, without missing a beat, she replied “No” but pointed to her bodyguard and said, “But he has.” Pictures were taken - even by the Queen. One can imagine the laughs later.

Not knowing who you’re dealing with can lead to a mistaken approach. But what of us and Jesus? Do we know who He is, who we are dealing with? This is the second part in a series on discipleship. Last time, we looked at the call of Jesus. Today, the response of the disciple.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Mark 1:1-15](#)**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

The context here is worth knowing. This took place in a hostile environment. Galilee was not a happy place. It was enemy-occupied territory. Everywhere you looked, there were signs of Rome. It was not a happy place or a happy time. John has been arrested, the forerunner of Jesus locked away. Why? Because of drama within King Herod’s court. But beyond even that, because of a deeper resistance, a spiritual war underway, unseen but still quite real.

All this took place in a hostile environment. That’s the context of Jesus’ proclaiming “the gospel of God.” A gospel was news - not ordinary news but life-changing, history-making news. It might be news of a military victory or the birth of a king. A gospel was something for which a herald would be sent so that people would know. What is this gospel? ([READ Mark 1:15a](#)) The purposes of God are being realized. Something long awaited and desperately needed has come. His rule and reign are here. This is the best of news. That’s the burden of this passage, of Jesus’ message and proclamation. “God’s kingdom is here!” We need to rightly respond to this news.

What would that look like? Jesus tells us. There are three parts to this. We are looking at the first two today and the third next week. Jesus calls us first to repent and then to believe.

I. REPENTING

([READ Mark 1:14-15](#)) The first part of our response to Jesus’ call is to repentance. What does this mean? Let me suggest two things - a deep change within and a full turn in your life.

A) A Deep Change

To repent is to change your direction. It is turn back from the way you are going.

1. Beyond the surface

It is a deep change that goes beyond the surface, beyond merely bad feelings. To truly repent is to go down under the waves moving about at the top to the depths of the currents beneath.

2. To the utmost

To repent is to go beyond the surface to the utmost. J. I. Packer put it this way ([READ](#)):

The New Testament word for repentance means changing one's mind so that one's views, values, goals, and ways are changed and one's whole life is lived differently. The change is radical, both inwardly and outwardly; mind and judgment, will and affections, behavior and life-style, motives and purposes, are all involved. Repenting means starting to live a new life.

You get the idea. This is a deep change - an inner transformation leading to outward change.

B) A Full Turn

It is a deep change. And it brings a full turn, a turning in every part of our lives.

1. Renouncing our sin

Repentance demands a renouncing of our sin - every thought, word, or deed that we know to be wrong. And this must be without any compromise ([READ Matthew 5:29-30](#)). Jesus is speaking strongly here. Not that He is calling for self-mutilation but mortification, putting sin to death.

2. Repaying our debts

Repentance means a renouncing of our sin. And, where necessary, a repaying of our debts. For this touches the ground. The Bible speaks of the need for restitution. Here's an example ([READ Luke 19:1-10](#)). Here we see the need to put things right, to repair any damage we have caused.

This is what it means to repent, to rightly respond to Jesus' call.

Illustration:

C. S. Lewis wrote of this in his book, *Mere Christianity*. It's worth reading ([READ](#)):

Now what was the sort of "hole" man had got himself into? He had tried to set up on his own, to behave as if he belonged to himself. In other words, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realising that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor - that is the only way out of a "hole." This process of surrender - this movement full speed astern - is what Christians call repentance. Now repentance is no fun at all. It is something much harder than merely eating humble pie. It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death...

Application:

Here are two thoughts building off of that. First, this process of surrender, this movement full speed astern, has a beginning and an unfolding over a lifetime. Martin Luther said ([READ](#)), "The entire life of believers should be repentance." Our ongoing posture is to be repentance.

That's the first thought. The second is an encouragement. Think with me. To whom are we surrendering? It is not to some petty tyrant but Jesus, the One who so delighted to spend time with tax collectors and sinners that He created a scandal among the religious elite. It is certainly not safe and wise to surrender to just anyone. But it is always safe and wise to surrender to Him.

"God's kingdom is here!" We need to respond to this news with repentance.

II. BELIEVING

(**READ Mark 1:14-15**) The second part of this response to Jesus' call is believing - belief in the Gospel. What does this mean? Like repentance, this belief is ongoing. But what is it?

A) *An Ongoing Trust*

1. Beyond intellectual

It involves an ongoing trust, something beyond intellectual assent. This belief is not merely in certain truths or ideas. Christianity does have content. And this belief begins with that content. But it does not stop there. That is something many of us need to repeatedly wrestle with.

2. Deeply relational

This believing is beyond intellectual. It is something deeply relational. It is not just adherence to specific principles but to a person. To say "I believe in Jesus" is not just to say He existed at some point in history but is a profound statement of trust and reliance in the present moment.

Illustration:

There is huge difference between believing something is true and believing in something or someone. You are all seated. Let's run with that for a moment. Say you believe a chair will hold you up as you look at it. Now compare that to showing that you believe the chair will hold you up by sitting in it. Only the action of sitting in the chair is an expression of belief, of faith.

B) *The Message Itself*

But then there is the message itself. "I believe in Jesus for..." For what? How should we finish that sentence? It's critical that we are clear on this. What is the gospel He proclaimed?

1. Not merely individual salvation

Many Christians answer that question this way. "It is the good news of Jesus' work to restore sinful people to a right relationship with God." That's not wrong. But it doesn't go far enough. As much as that covers, Jesus came to do far more than just secure our individual salvation.

2. But a cosmic transformation

Jesus came to bring about a cosmic transformation. Building off of the Old Testament promises, Jesus' message is the gospel of the kingdom. "The rule and reign of God has come." The good news is that, through the work of Jesus, God has accomplished salvation for us - rescuing us from judgment into relationship with Him and restoring this creation so that we can enjoy this new life with Him forever. That's what Jesus is speaking of in the gospel He proclaims.

And that is the message which we are to believe, to take into the depths of our hearts.

Illustration:

Think of it this way. When Jesus set foot into human history, He sparked a revolution, bringing God's reign to bear on our sad, broken, sin-shattered world. Like King Richard the Lionhearted, returning to England to take back his throne from the evil Prince John, Jesus has come into our world to take back His throne. Like Prince Caspian leading the Narnians in an

insurrection against King Miraz, Jesus sounds the horn and is rallying His troops. This world was made for more. As were we. “Come, follow Me,” He says. What would this look like?

Application:

The story of this world had a good beginning. All was as it was meant and made to be, a world of beauty and harmony. Then sin entered the picture. And our rebellion introduced untold ugliness and disintegration - disease, emptiness, broken relationships, poverty, injustice, racism.

But the King has come to rescue His people and to restore His creation. Ours was a great need. But we have a greater Savior - so great that the priorities of those who follow this King must be both personal evangelism and societal engagement. Equally both. Remember the words of the prophet Micah (**READ Micah 6:8**). Can the Lord our God speak any more clearly to us?

Here’s part of an essay I have given to members of our Cherokee mission teams (**READ**):

It’s not just about individuals gaining forgiveness so that they can secure their destinies in heaven. It is also about God’s Kingly Reign - His Will - coming to bear in all areas of life here and now. It’s not just about saving the soul, but about caring for the body, about healing brokenness and reconciling divisions and conflicts. It’s not just about evangelism, but also about seeing justice overcome injustice, seeing the poor fed, healing divisions of race and social class and seeing brokenness and pain healed with the love and power of Jesus. Wherever there is need and brokenness in our world, the good news is that Jesus has come to begin the process of making it right. Rather than the gospel being about how we get to heaven, it’s more like seeing heaven break into our world.

Name the issues. And see them as He does. Abortion matters to Jesus. Gender confusion, child abuse, sex trafficking matter to Jesus. Racism, pollution, addiction, gun violence matter to Jesus. The implications? For us to be engaged with these issues in a kingdom committed way is every bit as honoring to our King as going to the mission field. Every bit. For He is the King over all.

“God’s kingdom is here!” We need to respond to this news with belief in the gospel.

CONCLUSION:

But isn’t this a bit much? To go this far in our response, to call for repentance and faith, isn’t this all a bit extreme? Well, that all depends on who has come. Reflecting on this, Tim Keller tells the story of a talk he heard in 1971 by a woman named Barbara Boyd (**READ**):

“If the distance between the Earth and the sun, which is 92 million miles, was the thickness of a piece of paper, the diameter of our galaxy would be a stack of papers 310 miles high. And our galaxy is less than a speck of dust in the part of the universe that we can see. And that part of the universe might just be a speck of dust compared to all the universe. And if Jesus is the Son of God who holds all this together with the word of his power, is this the kind of person you ask into your life to be your personal assistant?” Then she asked us all to go outside and for one hour say nothing. “Just think about what this means to you.”

Little wonder that image stuck with him. For she made her point extraordinarily well.

To be a Christian is to be a disciple of Jesus. We cannot divide His followers into stages, grades, or levels. All His followers are disciples. Let me put it this way. To be in relationship with Him demands that we look to and lean upon Him as both our Lord and Savior - not one or the other but both. To rightly respond to the call of Jesus demands both repentance and belief.

Jesus proclaims, “God’s kingdom is here!” We need to rightly respond to this news.

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