

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Lindale, Texas
3rd Sunday After the Epiphany
January 21, 2018
Mark 1:14-20
The Reverend John P. Carr

More Good News!

Jesus came proclaiming the Good News of God.

John the Baptist had burst on the scene as someone and something quite new. He came not as the prophet but as the messenger.

He came as one who would prepare the people for the arrival of the Messiah. His message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins was so timely, so radical that all the people in the countryside of Judea and Jerusalem went to see him. Many repented and were baptized.

His main mission was not just to awaken the spirits of the people but to prepare them for the arrival of the Messiah. He said, *"I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* The people must have been amazed by this. John was a religious celebrity and he was telling the people that he was nothing, the important one was yet to come. There was someone coming greater than John.

Once the Messiah arrived in the person of Jesus, John baptized him and as Jesus rose out of the waters of Baptism in the River Jordan, He was the Spirit descended on him like a dove and a voice from heaven declaring that Jesus was his Son.

Jesus was sent into the desert by the Holy Spirit and experienced temptations for the next forty days. Through his Baptism and testing,

Jesus was prepared to begin his mission on earth. As John predicted, as Jesus was ascendant in his ministry John was removed from the scene. As John was arrested and put into prison, Jesus began preaching and moved to the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

The message of Jesus was of the *Good News of God*. But what is this Good News he is preaching about? He says that, *“The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News.”*

This is a perplexing statement. I recall as a teenager on my motorcycle riding down a Texas country road seeing some signs posted at intervals. You recall the Burma Shave signs on the fence posts that were usually an admonition to slow down and live. This saying of Jesus reminds me of those signs to change our ways and live. His words are not only hopeful but they provide the solution. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee his signs would read,

- Great news!
- *“The Kingdom of God is Near,”*
- *“Repent and Believe”*
- *“ believe in the Good News!”*

This raises some interesting questions.

- Where is the Kingdom?
- What is the Good News?
- What do I do to get the Good News?

Have you ever thought of that? Where is the Kingdom of God? Is it far or near? What does it mean?

“The Kingdom of God is the rule of God both as a present reality and a future hope.”¹ Jesus was saying that in Him God had arrived and was in control in the present of that day and the future that we are a part of today.

That is Good News! God had arrived as one of us! God has come to talk to us and to save us. That is *the* Good News!

Jesus came to save us from our sins.

But how are we to become the beneficiaries of this Good News? How do we get to know Jesus? John told us and Jesus preached it, *“repent and believe.”*

That is all great news but that was then and this is now, or is it? Are we so different from the people on the shores of the Sea of Galilee? Are we so different from those fishermen who when called by Jesus dropped their nets and immediately followed him? Is that not what we should be of a mind to do when we hear the Good News? We are just like those people. When we *“repent and believe”* we can become members of the family of God and share in and experience his Kingdom.

What then are we to do?

Are we to believe and then go on living our lives secure in the knowledge that Jesus loves us and we love Him? Or are we called to something higher? Jesus called to the fishermen and said to *“come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* That is what we are called to do, to call people to God and make new disciples.

Whether it is;

- teaching a grandchild how to say their prayers and sharing Bible stories with them, or
- being with someone in their time of trial as a Christ like presence,
- or inviting someone to church or a Bible study to experience and learn more about God, in all these things we are becoming, **“fishers of men,** or in our language, fishers of people.”

To paraphrase, Jesus said,

“here I am, God on earth who has come to invite you into my Kingdom and enjoy everlasting life.

Throw away your old way of living and follow me.

And after you follow me, tell others about me and have them come with you and follow too.”

That was the Good News that Jesus spoke that day on the shores of the Sea of Galilee to the simple fishermen. They dropped their nets and followed Jesus. After Jesus had ascended and returned to the Father, they told his story of God who had come to earth to save us and their story spread. From those simple fishermen the message of God’s love has grown from a few followers to billions of followers and we are some of them.

Keep this in mind as you go through you day.

You are somebody,..... you are a follower of Jesus who has heard the Good News.

It is up to you to share this Good News with those you meet.

Amen

1. NIV Study Bible, footnote Matthew 3:2, p. 1444

