

## *the now and not-yet gospel of Jesus*

Welcome back.

Before dive into this morning’s text in the gospel of Mark – **Mark 1:14-15** – I want to invite us to *glance back* to something in *the previous verse* – the end of *last week’s text* – that we didn’t spend any time on, but that is worth noticing. Much because it reminds us of the **context** to which Mark wrote his gospel – which **sets us up** for where we are going today.

**Mark 1:12-13**

*“At once the Spirit sent [Jesus] out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.”*

What I want us to notice here is Mark’s reference to Jesus, in the wilderness, being **“with the wild animals”**. As is often the case, I’m sure this is a reference we’ve never been too **caught** by – but for Mark’s original audience – **Christians in Rome in 70 AD** – under the rule of **Emperor Nero** – this reference would have **gripped them powerfully**.

Because, as historians tell us, “At the time Mark was writing his Gospel, Christians were being thrown to wild animals.”

Tacitus, the first-century Roman historian, wrote of Nero’s savagery toward Christians in this decade with these words: **“They were covered with [or dressed up in] the hides of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs’...**

As I’m sure you now can see, this reference to “**wild animals**” in **Mark 1:13** would have **meant a lot** to Mark’s original audience... touching a nerve, triggered their ache, bringing to the front of their minds one of the **core reasons why** they wrestled with **questions** and **doubts** as to the reality and relevance of the gospel for their day.

And we have our own “wild animals”, don’t we?

Stories and experiences of great suffering, injustice and tragedy **that we carry with us – and that we encounter...** Some of which makes Thanksgiving a hard time for a number of us...

Stories and experiences of great suffering, injustice and tragedy **in our day.**

**Across the globe** – in far off nations like Syria, Sudan, Hong Kong & many others. **And right here** – in our country and city, on our streets and maybe in our own families and homes...

Stories and experiences of great suffering, injustice and tragedy – **our own wild animals.**

Every Wednesday morning at Prayerwerks, **I feel this in some way** – as we hear the stories of where IJM is at in the world, or the situations that Darin Reimer and Sanctuary youth are encountering every week on the streets of our own city.

Or I get the phone call of a tragedy among us – like the accidental death of **Abby Barker** last month – a teenager whose family has been with us off and on through the years, or I get the call to pray for **Ryan Turkin** – the adult son of Paul and Jill Turkin

(new to our church and community) – who was in a work accident this last Sunday and had to have his right arm amputated on Monday...

Or I hear the cry of *the three year old who* lives with his mom in our basement suite – and I’m reminded that this young **mom** has lived through a world of fear and trial I can’t even imagine – as a Sudanese refugee who had to flee her country – with her family – when she was only a young teen – because of a genocide that the watching world hardly noticed...

Stories like this can *take our breath away*... As a passing reference to “wild animals” would have for Christians in Rome in 70 AD...

Stories and experiences that *make our hearts break* – and cause us to ache before God – *and cry out to God* – prayers like we hear from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 64:1f) – “*Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down... to make your Name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!*”

Oh God – we need You – to **come into this mess & set things right – in the world and in us...** *May Your kingdom come and Your will be done – on earth as it is in heaven...*

And not just some day – but **NOW** Lord...! **HERE!**

Years ago, I learned a prayer that Jewish rabbi’s pray often, and it stirs in me often. “*May God establish His kingdom in our lifetime.*”

**May God establish His kingdom in our lifetime... here and everywhere...**

So, with this in mind, let’s turn to our text for today...

If you have a Bible with you, crack it open to the gospel of Mark, **chapter 1**, verses **14-15**. But, for the sake of engaging well, I’ll start reading from **verse one**...

(If you don’t have one and want to follow along, there’s a stack on the shelf in the Commons. Feel free to **grab one**. If you don’t own a bible, **keep it**...)

### **Mark 1.1-15**

*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:*

*“I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way”—  
“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.’”*

*And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

*At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, **he saw heaven being torn open** and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”*

*At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels **attended him**.*

*(v.14) After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the gospel!”*

**Let’s pray...**

*“Our Father, who reigns over all –  
Hallowed be Your Name...  
Open our eyes to who You are,  
For You are God and we are not.  
We bow to You today.  
Be glorified in and through us...”*

*May Your kingdom come,  
May Your will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
...on earth as it is in heaven...  
For Your glory, for the sake of the world,  
and our joy in You.  
Amen...”*

Now, I don't know if you realized it, but our text this morning is one of the most significant passages in the whole of the Bible... Because it's where we discover the gospel according to Jesus.

Which might be an odd idea for some of us. I know it has been for me at times.

Isn't the gospel about Jesus – and especially, about the death and resurrection of Jesus – which, at this point in Mark's account, hasn't happened yet! ***How could we say that Jesus – in Mark 1 – proclaims the gospel?***

***But He Does!***

In Mark 1:14, *long before the cross and the empty tomb*, Jesus proclaimed the gospel—as something that was **already** taking place—and inviting women and men to repent, believe and experience the gospel.

***So, what was and is the gospel according to Jesus?***

Now, if you were with us two Sundays ago, we talked at length about the original meaning of this word **gospel**. And for the sake of those who missed it, let me give you the **one-minute version**.

In the Greek culture of Jesus’ day, the word **gospel** referred to a messenger or a herald – coming from a place of battle – declaring the *good* news of a *victory* over enemies – a victory that would change life for all...

The messenger would arrive from the battlefield and proclaim for all to hear, ***“Rejoice! We have a victory! Life can begin again! Because a new King is on the Throne!”***

This is what the **gospel** referred to in Jesus’ day.

And so in **Mark 1.14, we’re** told that Jesus comes into Galilee – proclaiming the gospel!

And **where’s he coming from?**

**He’s coming** from the wilderness (v.12-13 tells us) – where Jesus has had a confrontation with Satan—His enemy. In other words: ***He’s coming from a place of battle!***

***And from the battle – what does He herald or announce?***

***I.e. What is Jesus’ gospel?***

Well, he tells us – **verse 15**... He says,

***“The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near...”***

***Repent and believe the gospel [or the good news]!”***

**“The time has come”.**

**What time?** What’s does He mean?

Well, it’s worth knowing that in koine Greek, there are **two** words for time.

**Chronos and Kairos. And Jesus uses the latter.**

Chronos refers to **clock time**. **Sequential** time.

But **Kairos** refers to **God-time**. And **this** is the word Jesus uses.

He says, “The **kairos** has come”...

Some translate it, **“the appointed time”**.

The time **that God has chosen** to fulfill his purposes in the world.

The time that God has chosen – **before the creation of the world** – to fulfill his purposes in the world...

According to Jesus, **this Time has come!**

Not is coming. Not will someday come. But **has come!**

The verb tense indicates **past and completed action**. So, Jesus *isn’t* referring to something in the future. He’s talking about something that **was taking place** – *then and there* – in the moment that He spoke.

According to Jesus, all of history has been moving towards **this moment**, toward God’s appointed time. **And the Kairos is now here.**

*In Me* – Jesus is saying – history has reached a turning point. We have now crossed a threshold from one era to another.

**In Me – Jesus says – the Kairos has come...”**

***For what?***

Well, Jesus tells us: **for the kingdom of God – to begin to be established on earth... For God to take the Throne and take charge... For God to make His Kingdom come and will be done on earth as it is in heaven...**

Remember the prayer of the rabbi’s,

→ “May God establish His kingdom in our lifetime.”

And the prayer of Isaiah,

→ “Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down...”

***This is the gospel of Jesus:***

***“The Kairos has come. The appointed time is NOW ...  
The kingdom of God has come near.  
Repent and believe in the gospel!”***

***According to Jesus, the gospel is that in His coming, that in Him – God – the Living God of the Universe, the Rescuing God of Israel – has personally stepped into history – conquered the enemy – and is NOW on the Throne - so that life can begin again – in His Kingdom and Reign...***

***According to Jesus, the gospel is that in Him—in His coming—the Living God has entered into human history to begin to establish God’s***



*kingdom, God’s reign, God’s will on earth as it is in heaven (as Jesus invites us to pray...).*

## ***This is the gospel according to Jesus...***

*Not just the hope of life after death through faith in Christ. **Not just** the promise of being forgiven and restored at the end of time through faith in Christ today.*

*No, according to Jesus, the gospel is the incredible news that in Jesus, the Restoring Reign of God is beginning to be revealed on the earth – *and you and I are invited to embrace and experience it...**

*The Kairos has come.*

*The kingdom of God has come near!*

*According to Jesus – **this is the gospel!***

*A gospel that Christians in Rome in AD 70 longed to believe and experience.*

*A gospel that Christians in Victoria in 2019 long to believe and experience.*

*And yet, if we’re honest, a gospel that we often **struggle to believe**, don’t we?*

For all of my faith and experience with Jesus over the years, I have to admit that I **often** have a hard time *believing this* gospel—the **gospel according to Jesus**.

I have a hard time taking the gospel of Jesus *seriously*.

**Why?**

**Because** – like you and like the Christians in Rome in AD 70 – **when I look around, what do I see?**

I see some friends going for chemo treatments, and despite much prayer, only declining...

I see the children of many faithful Christians walk away from Christ.

I see family members on anti-depressants, and so many marriages struggling and failing.

I see drug needles left in the bushes around our church facility, and addicts who are convinced that hope isn't worth it.

I see a booming porn industry and so many who've been ruined by it.

I see greed and indifference and selfishness... **And I see it in me.**

Like many of you, I sometimes have a hard time believing the gospel according to Jesus—that ***the kingdom of God is at hand***—cause often it doesn't seem to line up with reality as I see it.

But that’s one of the reason why we need **Mark 1:14-15** – because in this very account Mark **names this tension**.

And we hear it in the opening words – in **the news** that precedes **Jesus’** good news.

Mark 1.14 **begins** with the words, “**After John was put in prison.**”

*“After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the gospel...”*

*“The time has come. The kairos **is here**. The kingdom of God **is at hand**...*

***Rejoice!** We have a victory! The enemy has been conquered.*

*A new King is on the Throne. Life can begin again...”*

***How can you say this Jesus? How can we believe this?***

*John, your own cousin, God’s prophet, sent to prepare the way for you, is in prison, and you’re out proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is **at hand**?*

*Wouldn’t the kingdom’s presence mean that **John** would be set free, cleared of all charges and those who imprisoned him would be taken to task?*

*Wouldn’t the kingdom’s presence – the reality of the gospel – mean that **Nero** and his **wild animals** are no longer at hand?*

***How can You proclaim the gospel?*** How can You say that **the Kingdom of God is at hand** when all this brokenness continues; when suffering and sin, atrocities and injustice are still so rampant?

It’s a lot easier to believe in the gospel if you define it as “believe in [this and that] and when you die you’ll go to heaven.”

But *the gospel of Jesus*—is hard to believe sometimes.

If you really understand what He’s saying, sometimes it’s hard not to think of Jesus as just a wishful thinker...

And I’m sure that’s what **the Christians in Rome in AD 70** were tempted to believe... That the gospel of Jesus – though maybe true, real, powerful and saving *in Jesus’ day* – was **no longer** true – real – powerful and saving *in their day*.

And I’m sure some of us – maybe all of us – feel this, at times, as well...

Which is **WHY** Mark begins with these words – “*After John was put in prison...*”

*To remind or awaken the Christians in Rome in AD 70 – and us in Victoria in 2019* – that the gospel of Jesus has always like this... That the gospel of Jesus has always been a *now* and *not yet* reality. That even in Jesus’ day—*even in Jesus’ day*—not all wrongs were made right, not all the sick were healed, not all injustice was overturned.

No, the brokenness of the world still remains, *but in the midst of it, God, in Jesus, IS now at hand and at work...*

Which doesn’t **nullify** the gospel, but it does **clarify** it – inviting us to **hold the tension** of the gospel – **embracing the gospel in all of its NOW and NOT YET.**

Because, this is the reality of the gospel in the chapter we find ourselves.

A chapter that makes us **ache** for the Kingdom to come **in its FULLness**, but also **gives us reason to Hope** that it will... Because although the brokenness of the world remains, Jesus and His Kingdom **are now at hand and at work...**

**And here and there, we see it.**

For all the brokenness that is **undeniable**, *that we see and feel all around*—we also are invited to notices signs of *this other reality*. *Glimpses and signs of the reality that Jesus proclaims. Glimpses and signs of the kingdom of God being at hand in Him...*

**Evidence** that what Jesus proclaims **wasn't** and **isn't** just wishful thinking, but **was** and **is** true, real, powerful and saving today.

I **see a friend**, who about five years ago – and for many years before – was broken, an addict and a ruined soul, estranged from everyone, used and abused in ways I don't want to ever imagine.

**But now** clean and sober – and has been for 5 years.

And not just clean and sober, **but alive** – alive and well, body and soul – a young but mature Christian woman – through the **fierce** support of a Christian friend (a former addict herself) and by the **power** of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And now she is mentoring and discipling others – using her story and experience to support others in hard places.

In my friend, I see the kingdom of God – the reality of the gospel – alive and at work today...

I **see a married couple** who had such a hard time conceiving, now raising a child they never thought they could have – *but for the prayers of God’s people*. A sign of the gospel in our midst...

I **see friends – women and men** – who have lived for so long with a deep ache and dream to be married, but have not found the right person or felt able to do so – and yet who have sought and trusted and honored Jesus in this crucible, and are a shining example of faith to me and many others...

In these friends, I see the kingdom of God – the reality of the gospel – alive and at work in our day...

I **see marriages** that were heading to ruin because of sin, **held together and made more beautiful** by the grace and love of Christ and the power of the gospel.

I see **Gerry Brouwer** – who once was lost, but these days, seems *so found* in Jesus to me, that I can’t imagine him ever having been lost. But he was – and Jesus found him... Another sign of the saving power of the gospel today.

I see people like **Darin Reimer** leading Sanctuary Youth, and **Erica Pepevnak** serving to support indigenous youth who are aging out of the foster system – saying yes to costly love – **being a sanctuary** for some of the most vulnerable in our city.

In them, and others like them, I see the reality of the gospel – of Jesus’ kingdom at hand and at work – in our day...

In the grace of God, I see Jesus at work in *so many of us... in the midst of abiding brokenness.*

Honestly, I don’t think you can *make sense* of the **gospels** and the experience of the early church (as told in the book of Acts), and of what God is doing in various parts of the world and in some of us today, ***unless the kingdom of God was and is truly at hand...***

And with that, if I’m honest, I can’t make sense of my *own* story of redemption and restoration ***unless Jesus is speaking the truth... unless the kingdom of God is in some way truly at hand... Unless the day of salvation is in some way truly here.***

In the midst of all that is still broken – in the world and in us...

And **the challenge for us – the call of Jesus** – is to embrace the gospel today in all of its **NOW** and **NOT YET**... To embrace the ***full picture of reality*** and live **in the tension** of the gospel in our times – with true faith – **not letting one reading of reality blind us from the other.**

And I say this as much for me as I do anyone. Because I know that I often find myself ***playing down the now for the not yet...***

And I think this is true of many of us. We’ve tried to hold the tension, but our experience has led us more and more to **give up hope and expectation** for the **NOW** of the gospel, and simply **to expect** the not yet, trusting that **one day** – in the end – Jesus will make it all right...

*Honestly, how often do you hear bad news of disease, injustice, depression, addiction, brokenness and just **throw up your hands in defeat**—as though there’s nothing that can be done.*

*How often have you stood by and watched things crumble, finding your only comfort in the hope that God will make all things right **in the end**?*

And, let it be said, there is something **deeply Christian** about this hope.

And there also can be something **deeply unchristian**...

Because **the gospel of Jesus** invites us not just *live with hope for tomorrow* – but to live in hope and faith *that Jesus is on the Throne already* – and in Him, the Kingdom of God *is at hand!*

*The time has come – Jesus said.*

*The kingdom of God has come near.*

*... Repent and believe the gospel!*

→ Repent...



As we’ve said many times, when spoken by God, repent is never a word of judgment. **It is an invitation – given in grace.**

**God’s invitation** for you and me – to open our eyes to the reality of the gospel, to discover God’s hand reaching out to us, and to respond in faith and let Jesus do His work of restoration in us and through us... *For God’s glory, for the sake of the world, and for our joy in Him...*

This morning Jesus is inviting us  
– *to repent and believe –*  
*and experience His Kingdom...*

### **Benediction:**

This has always been the reality of the gospel,  
*though it is not what is will always be.*