

SERMON TITLE- "And The Good News Is . . . "

TEXT- Mark 1:14-15

PREACHED AT- Neighbourhood Church

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We are working through a series on the basic beliefs of our faith.

We are people of the Book- the Bible.

We read the Bible through "lenses"- one of the important lenses is the Gospel. The Bible is a Book that needs to be understood as a whole and in books like this- knowing the ending opens the keys to the beginning. The ending is the Good News or the "Gospel."

As we read the Scriptures this Gospel "lens" explains things we could not otherwise understand. Specifically it explains why the principles of the OT don't just carry over to us in the NT world.

But this begs a very important question- If we need to read the Bible through the lens of the Gospel- then we better really understand what the Gospel is all about.

And The Good News Is . . .

So we'll start at the beginning-

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:14-15

This was the introduction of the 3 years Jesus spent preaching and teaching across the land of Palestine.

#1. Preaching the Good News Was Jesus' Mission

The "Good News" is the Gospel. It is the Greek word from which our word, "evangelical" has emerged. The apostles were called, "The Evangelists."

While He was with them, Jesus would occasionally send His followers out on preaching missions- their assignment- preach the Good News.

#2. Preaching the Good News Is Our Mission

And what is the Good News?

Jesus spelled this out in His very first sermon as well. It was a dramatic statement.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:16-21

Now THAT is Good News. What Jesus has done is declare the arrival of something that the Israelites had been waiting for, for nearly a 1000 years, ever since end of the reigns of David and Solomon.

When you read the stories of David and Solomon, even though they are referred to as the Golden Ages of Israel, you soon realize that things were not great even then.

But from that time forward things became even more difficult. Everything fell apart.

And from that time forward the prophets had a 2 sided message-

1. Repent
2. A new day is coming

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:17-18

Isaiah was one of the most eloquent prophets when it came to describing that new day. And so when Jesus chose His inaugural text, it came from the scroll of Isaiah.

#3. The Good News Is “Good News”

The Good News is- Jesus in introducing that new day the prophets had spoken about- “It’s here now! I’m bringing it!”

You can see why understanding this is a critically important lens through which to read all that had gone before and also what the reality it now.

Jesus has come to bring the New Day!

But there is a very important “lens” that needs to be understood- if we are to understand the Gospel. Lens upon lens.

#4. The Lens Of Suffering

You probably will say, “James, this is so obvious you hardly need to go on about it.”

Indeed it is and that is how lenses work. We just see the world through them and we come to think it is obvious.

But it isn’t actually obvious and understanding our lenses helps us understand our world.

Many cars have a rear view mirror with a “fish eye” feature. It is a very nice feature because it allows us to see a wider view of the world than a simple mirror allows. On these mirrors there is a warning however, “Objects May Appear Farther Than They Are.”

It is obvious why this is the case. In order to get a wider field of vision things need to be made smaller.

The danger, however, if we don’t understand our “lens” is that we will turn into a lane occupied by another vehicle.

We need to understand our lens.

Similarly we need to understand our lens- even if it helps us see our world correctly.

And in reference to the Gospel- understanding the Lens of Suffering gives us that wide view of the world and God’s work in it.

That lens can be summarized by the statement- “the world we live in is a broken system.”

One of our students, Joanna Simpson, gave me a copied of her Master’s thesis to read over- it is about how Paul talks about this huge topic of suffering

It is clear in Jesus’ Isaiah text. There are 4 categories of suffering that Isaiah mentions-

-privation- poverty- food famines beginning today
-sickness- blindness. I am writing this sitting in the hospital
-crime- prisoners- across the hall is a security presence
-burdens- oppression

There are times when all that is invisible to us.
-We don’t see any food famines. If the price of wheat/rice doubles we spend an extra \$2/month- we don’t starve
-When we are healthy we don’t think about it
-When we go about our daily lives- no crime
-When the sun is shining

And Jesus uses Isaiah’s text because it covers a whole lot of ground in describing the suffering of the world.

BUT the Lens of Suffering reveal the world in the bigger picture and that bigger picture is the why Jesus came on His mission to our world.

But the next question is-

#5. But Did Jesus Fix Anything?

There are people who say, “Yes He did. He came and took away all sickness and calamity from God’s people. After all He went about healing people.”

The preachers who preach this tend to become very rich because that is what we would all love to hear.

But the answer is not so simple. In fact that answer is very misleading. It is misleading because there is a reason why they can make such claims.

-we are given the privilege of prayer and prayer changes things!

But it is misleading because we aren’t given a “Get Out Of Jail Free” card when it comes to the troubles of the world. In fact you don’t have to look very far before you see God’s champions struggling with trouble- while those who chase after their own gratification a sleek and healthy.

In fact Jesus gave His followers no such illusions- the world remains broken.

That is the Good News that Jesus came to offer and it is News like that that carries us through life.

So what does it mean when Jesus comes to deliver “The Good News?” It means “Redemption.”

#6. Yes! He Brought “Redemption”

The Good News is far more than a cure, a release from prison, a good meal or an encouragement. When the prophets spoke about the New Day that was coming it was about a redemption that went far beyond all these things to the very core of everything that is wrong with the world.

In fact as long as we’re here the best that we get is a reprieve. But redemption goes far beyond this and it is why Jesus puts out the call to those who followed Him with these words-

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

That’s the call Jesus put out to the crowds who followed Him. Yes, some blind people did get their sight back and 2 people were raised from the dead and some lepers were restored back into society. In fact what Jesus came to offer went far beyond this- to the very core of what it takes to.

And what does that redemption look like? In fact 1000 years before Jesus came to earth, King David wrote a song that captured it all- it is Psalm 23-

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23