

Title: The Gospel Changes Everything

Subtitle: The call to listen, follow, and obey

Video URL: <https://youtu.be/Ka9WuAwA2Vk>

In today's Gospel from Mark, we have the first words Jesus spoke as he **“...proclaimed the good news of God, saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe the Gospel of the kingdom!””**¹ The message He proclaimed was positive, timely, life-giving, practical, assuring, and, above all, joyful. In a nutshell, Jesus described his message with a single word translated as “Gospel or Good News.”² The root of the word was used for a messenger who brings news, and the prefix attached to it is a word that means joyful.³ Concisely, Jesus was saying, “I have news that brings joy.” It was a word used in history for life-shaping news. For example, when the Greeks won the great battle of Marathon and the great sea battle of Salamis, they sent heralds, who ran to bring the news to Athens, Sparta, and all the surrounding cities. These evangelists proclaimed the good news. The message they proclaimed said, in effect, “We have fought for you, and we won. Now you're free. Now, you are not going to be slaves to a foreign power; you can breathe a sigh of relief because you are free, and no one is going to enslave you.”⁴ That's the effect the Gospel is meant to have in our lives. The Gospel is something that happened in history and has been done for you that changes everything—your citizenship is now in heaven, and your status is now as a forgiven son and daughter of God.

¹ Mark 1:14-15

² Strong's Concordance, # 2098 euaggelion (yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on), literally, God's good news

³ Strong's Concordance, #2098 from **2097 euaggelízō** (from [2095](#) /eú, "good, well" and *angellō*, "announce")

⁴ Biblehub, Notes on Good News, Homer, Odyssey 14, 152; Cicero, ad Att. 2, 3 and 12; 13, 40

Right there, you see the difference between Christianity and all other religions because the essence of other religions is advice, along with information about what you have to do and what you must accomplish to live free.” But the Good News of the Kingdom of God at hand,” meant that something has been done for you through its King, who is now with you, and through repentance, his rule can be established in you. His rule will bring peace and wholeness. His rule is within your grasp, so “The time has come” to reach out and take hold of it.

Therefore, the Gospel story is about how God’s kingdom interacts with our humanity, and we can see this in the calling of the disciples. As Mark takes us on this journey, he begins with the phrase, “After John was arrested.”⁵ John’s arrest was a massive blow to those who followed him. His arrest by an insecure and vindictive tyrant left a gaping hole that Jesus stepped in and filled with his timely message. Through the darkness of distress and losses in life, the good news was ready to shine.

In his telling of the Good News, Mark pictures Jesus on the move, with not a moment to waste. The word “immediately” is used twice to describe how the disciples respond to the Good News. The exact phrase occurs about 27 times in the whole Gospel. Mark gives us only the essential details needed, and the result is a fast-paced, streamlined account of who Jesus is, what Jesus does, and how people respond.

So, it’s no wonder that when Jesus gives a command to “follow me, and I will make you fish for people,” these four fishermen responded immediately. The Gospel is so powerful and wonderful that it deserves an immediate response. But it

⁵ Mark 1:14

was not just a one-time event; they had to keep listening and following, for that is how the kingdom works.

When God called Jonah, he didn't respond immediately. When the word of the Lord first came to him saying, "Arise, go to the Nineveh, and call out against it,"⁶ he purposely disobeyed and headed off in the opposite direction toward Tarshish. But God still had "a whale of a plan for his life." (Pun intended!). As Jonah's story develops, it shows that his concept of God's kingdom was limited to himself and the Jewish nation. But God wanted his vision to expand to something bigger than his own world. From the beginning of Israel's call, God's promise to Abraham stated, "In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed."⁷

Therefore, Jonah needed to take his own message to heart and repent, which he finally did in the belly of the whale. Then, when the word of the Lord comes to him a second time, he proclaims to Nineveh the message God gave him. But, to his astonishment and dismay, they repent, and "God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them."⁸

When Jonah was angry with God over his decision to withhold judgment, God, in patience and compassion, pleads with him and asks, "Should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left—and also much cattle?"⁹

The inbreaking of God's kingdom will always bring an expanded view of God with his love for all people and nations. When Christ first encountered the disciples, the horizon of their lives was limited by the margins of Galilee. They, like Jonah,

⁶ Jonah 1:2

⁷ Genesis 12:3b "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

⁸ Jonah 3:10

⁹ Jonah 4:10-11

were culturally limited by a vision that only included the Jewish people. But when they began to follow Christ, their little world eventually expanded to include a vision for reaching the world.

John was to become Bishop of Ephesus, Peter went to Rome, and Andrew went as far as the borders of Russia! Their hearts were enlarged to take in the whole world. Once limited to earthly matters and interests, their minds were now occupied by things that would last. They became theologians, thinkers, sociologists, psychologists, and strategists—all because of the Gospel.

Following Christ helps us to keep trivial matters in perspective. Just yesterday, I found myself completely frustrated by a few computer programs that I couldn't get to work. When I shared how bent out of shape I felt with Ellen, my granddaughter, Molly, overheard the conversation. She brought me a Bible and said, "Poppy, read this. It will help you to feel better." I could see in that instance that I needed my heart changed like Jonah.

Being Christ's followers makes us see the world and our problems in a different light. When the four fishermen in our Gospel story immediately said "yes" to the call to follow Christ, their lives took on an exciting adventure. They not only began to be transformed by the message of Christ, but they also began to comprehend the love of Christ for all peoples and nations. So today, when you hear his voice saying, "Come, follow me,"¹⁰ will you listen, follow, and obey? If you do, Good News is ready and waiting to happen. Amen.

¹⁰ Mark 1:17, Matthew 4:19