

# Rev Kenny Ferguson - Mark 1

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Date: 06 May 2018

Preacher: Guest Preacher

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now if we can turn again to the chapter we've read together, Gospel according to Mark and chapter 1.

And with the Lord's help let us focus on verses 14 and 15. Mark chapter 1 verses 14 and 15.

Now after John was arrested Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.

There is so much bad news about these days isn't there? You're hardly able to turn your TV on or read a newspaper without some horrendous bit of news being made known, things that are terrible happening in various parts of the world. Bad news. But the meaning of the word Gospel is good news.

Good news. And this first chapter of Mark starts with that statement, the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

[ 1 : 4 2 ] And we see that this man, John the Baptist of whom we read in these verses before our text, he was mentioned by the last prophet in the Old Testament Malachi and chapter 3 in Malachi and verse 1, behold the Lord says, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple and so on. John the Baptist is highlighted as someone whom the Lord is sending in the fullness of times. And when John the Baptist did come, his focus was on Christ Jesus. Once God made known who Jesus Christ the Savior really was, John pointed him out. You see what it says in verse 7 in this Mark chapter 1, he preached saying, after me comes he who is mightier than I, and the strap of whose sandals am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. He is highlighting who this marvelous individual is going to be and what he's going to do. And if you see in the Gospel of John chapter 1 and verse 29,

John the Baptist highlights who Jesus is by saying, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Lamb of God, as if he is explaining, this is the way that the sin of the world is going to be taken away because God has found himself from all eternity one who is like the Lamb of the Old Testament ritual to carry the sin of the people and to be sacrificed in the Rome instead of his chosen people. And now John's ministry comes to an end. It's one of these very short ministries. Somebody likened it to a shooting star ministry. It only lasted a very, very short time. And some ministries only last a short time. Others go on for many years. But the focus of John's ministry, albeit a short ministry, was Christ Jesus. And he continued declaring Christ Jesus and highlighting him to the people until such time as he was arrested.

And he was imprisoned. And you all know the story, the how he objected to King Herod having a woman as his wife. It wasn't legal for him to have. And when she got the opportunity, she requested that John the Baptist be beheaded. And that's what happened. John's life ended in the prison with beheading. But then we see here, after John was arrested, verse 14, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, the gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.

I'd like to say a few words under four headings. First of all, what it says here in verse 15, what Jesus was saying, the time is fulfilled. What does that mean? Secondly, it says that the kingdom of God is at hand. What did that mean? And thirdly, a particular demand or responsibility that lies upon those who hear the gospel, firstly, repent and secondly, believe in the gospel. He's looking for repentance in the experience of those who have heard the gospel. He is requiring faith, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. This is what the apostle Paul said to the Philippian jailer, when the jailer in the midst of the turmoil that hit him in that prison where earthquake had hit and the door had flown open and the jailer said, what shall I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house. So all those who have heard the gospel, this is a requirement that you believe the gospel, that you repent of your sins and believe the gospel. Well, one or two words on each of these four headings. First of all,

Jesus here says, the gospel has come. The time is fulfilled. The time is fulfilled. Jesus is likening the passing of the years almost to a vessel that has been slowly filled because away back in Genesis chapter 3 at verse 15, God had alerted Adam and Eve and Satan that the time was coming when the seed of the woman would come and that he would bruise the head of the serpent.

[ 7 : 50 ] And it's as if with the passing of the years that is being fulfilled. Think of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 7 at verse 14. Isaiah sees down through the centuries and he says, a virgin shall conceive and she shall bear a son and she shall call his name Emmanuel which is God with us. And then in chapter 9 at verse 6 in Isaiah, he anticipates the same individual and he says this unto us a child is born unto us a son is given and his name shall be called wonderful. Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. And then down with the passing of the years on the centuries, it's as if this vessel of promise is slowly being filled. Things are taking place at God's ordering, at God's fulfilling of every detail that goes into the fulfilling of this prophecy regarding the Savior coming into the world. The time has been fulfilled.

You see, God's plan is certainly and absolutely being fulfilled with the passing of every year and the passing of every situation. And when it comes to the very point of Jesus being conceived, Mary has been chosen from all eternity to be the mother of the Messiah and the angel comes and declares this to her. And the question of course immediately comes into her mind, how can this be? Senior have not known a man? And he said the Spirit of God shall upon you, come upon you. And the power of the Holy Ghost shall overcome you and overwhelm you. And that holy thing which you shall bear is none other than the Lord of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, long promised down through the centuries. And of course when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of

Judea, the angels came from heaven and alerted the shepherds. And you remember what they said, unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. See the way the vessel of God's promise is being fulfilled. And when Jesus appears here after John the Baptist was arrested, John the Baptist had fulfilled his very short ministry in a God-glorifying way, then the time came for Jesus to appear. And he proclaimed the gospel of God and said the time is fulfilled. It's as if he is saying here I am, long promised, here I am, long awaited, because many were awaiting him. And he now has come in the fullness of times. And it says the time is fulfilled. Doesn't matter what promise God has given, it will be fulfilled. However unlikely it might seem to being fulfilled, it will be fulfilled. However unlikely. When you think back of the attacks made upon those in the lineage of Christ, for example David, and the attacks made upon him by King Saul, and King Saul sought to slay him at all costs. And there's a sense in which that was the evil one trying to prevent this marvelous promise from being fulfilled. He was trying to prevent Christ coming into the world through the attacks he was making upon those from whom Jesus came according to the flesh. But you see the promise is fulfilled and Jesus here in a marvelous way declares the time is fulfilled. But the second thing he says is this, the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is at hand. Now there was a sense in which the Jews knew about

God and the kingdom of God down through the centuries. The Lord had seen fit to tabernacle among them in the tabernacle in the wilderness. And he had seen fit to come and abide in the temple there in the holy of holies. And there's a sense in which that was his throne. And he was in the midst of his people. And he was their king. And they were his kingdom. But you see, when Jesus says the kingdom of God is at hand or has drawn near you, his focus seemingly is first of all on himself as the king incarnate. He says I am the king. And I have come to inhabit the kingdom in gospel terms. You see in the Old Testament as you all know, it was a system whereby animals were slaughtered and sacrificed. And all of these sacrifices were typical of the real sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blood of these animals all the way through the Old Testament years could not affect the cleansing of one sin. Only in as much as they looked towards the great sacrifice of Christ Jesus and his finished work meant that all the sins of all of his elect people would be taken away. I'm sure you've heard of the story of Finlayman Rowe who was an itinerant preacher here in the 1820s in the island. He came from the mainland. He was a young man, very zealous for the gospel. And he preached on a particular day and he said this, that there is enough power and efficacy in one drop of Christ's blood to remove the sins of his people. And there was an old man there, an older Christian man. And since if he thought to himself, well that's not exactly accurate. And if I see the young preacher again, I'll tell him what I think. And the following day as it happened he saw the young man passing on the road. And he spoke to him and he said, you said yesterday that there was enough power in one drop of Christ's blood to cleanse the sins of his people. The young man said yes, that's what I said. The old man said yes, that is true, but it's the last drop. In other words, he must die. He must die to make atonement for the sins of his people. The drops of blood shed at the scourging, although they were real blood and the blood of Jesus Christ, nevertheless in themselves and off themselves. They weren't effectual.

The Lord Jesus had to suffer unto death, even the cursed death of the cross. And now this is what he says here, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

[17:14] It has come. The King has come. He has come on business. He has come with a particular agenda.

And the agenda that the King has is to work out an eternal salvation for all of his elect people.

I have come. The kingdom has drawn near. What differences exist between the kingdom in Christ Jesus and the kingdom under the Old Testament ritual? Well, I'm going to say this first of all, that the kingdom as it is in Christ Jesus is full of power. The Old Testament ritual in itself had no real efficacy, no real power to take away even one sin.

But when Jesus says the kingdom is at hand, the King has come and with the King has come power.

The power of divinity, power to conquer Satan. As it says immediately before this, that he went to the wilderness for 40 days tempted by Satan. And if you read the account given by the Gospel according to Matthew, you find that he repeatedly blocks the approaches and the temptations of Satan and he defeats them on the field because he is one who has his full of power. And then of course the Jews, when they heard them preaching in the synagogue, they were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes. The King has come and with the King power has come, authority has come.

[ 19 : 19 ] And we see also that with the King light has come. It's as if the Old Testament ritual, it was a veiling of the glory of things. But when Jesus Christ came, with him came light.

He is the light of the world. He is light in himself and he spreads light wherever he comes. This land of Zabulon and Nephilim into which he moved at this particular time in Galilee, they had been lying for a long time in darkness because they had been influenced by the northern areas of Palestine where many people dwelt who were not at all in sympathy with Jehovah, the God of the Israelites. And there were heathen influences creeping into that particular part of the land. But Jesus came and when he came light came. These people saw a great light to scatter their darkness. When Jesus came into your own life, surely you felt his power, surely you felt that the darkness of your ignorance was completely scattered, that you saw things in reality. You saw things from their proper perspective, from the perspective of eternity, from the perspective of a holiness of life that God required. You saw things in the light of God. And that's what Jesus here is saying. The time is fulfilled and the kingdom has come because the King who is full of power and full of light has come. And then also when you think of it, when he came, he is none other than the Prince of life.

With him came life. We mentioned already that the sacrifices in the Old Testament really were symbolic of him. And when the sacrifices were put to death, that was the end of it.

But when Jesus Christ died upon the cross, he only remained under the power of death for a time. And on the third day he rose from the dead conquering the power of the grave and the power of death so that now he lives with the power of an endless life. And when he comes into your experience, he comes with everlasting life, a spiritual life, a godly life, a life that's so different to the life lived by ordinary people in their sinful ways in the world. He gives you to be part and partial of this marvellous life that is never ending. He is the one who comes full of grace and full of truth. He is the one who came mighty to say and he has finished every detail of the work that the Father gave him to do. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Jesus has come. He has come and has finished all aspects of the work that the Father gave him to do. Every detail, every commandment he fulfilled. He gave complete satisfaction to every aspect of God's law. He lived a seamless life, an obedient life, a life that magnified God in every aspect of his life. He came to death and he died the cursed death of the cross, those paying all the debts that his people owed to the law and justice of God. That's good news. That's the best news that you can ever hear in this world. That the King has come and he has finished all that was asked of him. Now, the two things that we are asked to do in response to what Jesus has done. First of all, we are asked to repent. Well, you know that repentance unto life is a saving grace. We cannot repent by our own efforts. It is a grace that God alone plants into our heart and into our lives.

[ 24 : 36 ] The grace of repentance. What does repentance mean? Well, listen to what it says. When a sinner out of a true sense of his or her sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, death with grief and hatred of his sin turned from it unto God with full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience. When the grace of God comes, I am enabled to see sin in its horror as being a rejection of God, a hating of God's law, a breaking of God's law and seeking to do my own thing rather than what God asks of me. Seeking to have myself centre stage in every aspect of my life rather than have God centre stage in every aspect of my life. Sin is horrendous. God hates sin with a perfect hatred. You see how much God hates sin when you read the account of Jesus's suffering on the way to the cross when he was there at Gethsemane and he saw before him this awful cup of wrath that he was obliged to drink even to the very bitter dregs of it and he went and prayed and he said, if it's possible Father, let this cup depart from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done. And he came back and he prayed more earnestly. Isn't that an amazing phrase that he prayed more earnestly? God in our nature, praying more earnestly so that his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the earth. But he saw the darkness of the cross, the horror of it all, but then not my will, but thy will be done. And when those who were going to arrest him arrived, he said, if it is me you seek, let these others go. You're not after the disciples, but you're after me. Take me. And he went to the cross and there he suffered intensely all that our sins deserved. Isn't our heart hard that we can speak about this and hear it said without tears upon our faces? That's the extent to which sin has dulled our minds and our hearts in relation to the nature of sin itself. When we hear of Christ suffering unto death and we still aren't weeping over our sins. Well this is what it's required of us, repent. And it's interesting that this is the first word that John the Baptist used when he started his public ministry also, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We need to repent as individuals, as communities, as nations, that the Lord would render the heavens and come down and pour upon us the spirit of grace and supplications that we might see and look upon him whom we have pierced, that is Christ and mourn for

him. Mourn for him. Isn't that an amazing statement by the prophet Joel in chapter 2 verse 12? He says, turn to me the Lord says, with all your heart and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning and rend your hearts and not your clothing. It's one thing to give an outward expression of the sorrow that we have for our sins and our shortcomings but he says, rend your hearts.

You know our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know them? And if our hearts and our own outlook and affections are the chart that we use to navigate our way through this world, we'll hit the rocks sooner or later. He says, rend your heart. Have my word as your rule of life. Have Christ as your savior and come with true penitence, godly sorrow into his presence and he will receive those who truly come.

That's the first thing he says by way of a requirement in face of all that Jesus Christ has done, repent. And then he says secondly, believe in the gospel, believe in the good news. Now both of these are really bound together, repentance and faith. They're bound together. But what does he mean when he says believe in the good news, in the gospel? What is the good news?

Well the good news is that Jesus Christ has come and that he has worked a salvation through his life of obedience and his sacrificial death and his glorious resurrection and that is the best news that you can ever hear. Are you not willing to receive the good news that God gives?

[ 31 : 07 ] This is what he's saying. Believe it. Believe this news. Trust it, which is really what believing is all about. He spoke this morning about the church coming up from the wilderness, wilderness, leaning upon her beloved. Well she was trusting in him. She was leaning upon him, relying upon him, committing herself to him because she was convinced of who he was and what he was able to do for her and she trusted him at every step of the way.

And that's what this also asks us to do. Believe in the gospel, believe in this good news. Believe in this glorious salvation. Trust the Lord Jesus Christ who is the savior of sinners.

They tell us that there are three particular elements to saving faith. The first one is knowledge that you have heard of the Lord Jesus Christ and all that he has done for perishing sinners, unworthy sinners as we are.

You hear that and you know it. The next thing is not only do you know it but you are in agreement with it. I mean it's not something that you have reservations about but it's something that you really embrace as gospel truth shall we say. And if that is true concerning you there's only one more step for you to take to make you among those who truly believe and that is having known about him and been in agreement with what the gospel is all about you then commit yourself to him. That's the very important step. Commit yourself to this glorious savior who came into the world, who came and who fulfilled every detail that you couldn't fulfill by way of law keeping and who suffered every blow at the hands of evil men and who suffered the undiluted wrath of God poured upon him on a cross of shame. Are you not willing to commit yourself to such a savior who came into the world to save people like us who don't deserve any good thing because of our sin, because of our hard and repentant hearts, because of the way we have just lived for ourselves and done our own thing and left our Bibles closed and not responded to the gospel appeals and messages down through the years we have just left it there as if other things were far more important.

They aren't. This is the most important aspect of life. Will you not receive it and will you not commit yourself to the savior who this evening again is freely offered in the gospel.

[ 34 : 46 ] Jesus came proclaiming the gospel of God and saying the time is fulfilled.

The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel. Ask him for grace to do these things.

Let us pray. Help us, O Lord, this evening to hear what you are saying to us and let us not return to foolishness. This is the warning that the psalmist of old leaves with us and he says, I'll hear what God the Lord does speak. To his folk he'll speak peace and to his saints, but let them not return to foolishness. O Lord, make us wise and to salvation we pray.

Give us to behold your glory and be drawn by the cords of your love that we may be happy to turn away from sin that is so destructive unto our savior who is mighty to save to the uttermost.

Lord, we pray for your blessing to be upon this congregation. Every soul and every situation that they have. Go before us and keep our feet from stumbling and to arise from tears and forgive many every sin in Jesus name. Amen.