
Good News: Peace with God

There is no better place to begin our study of “The Christian Basics” than with the Gospel. That is where Jesus Christ began. Our texts from Mark and 2 Corinthians are vital to our understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

¹⁶Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Summary

In our Mark text, we discover that the Gospel is essentially an announcement that, with the coming of Christ, a new Kingdom is being inaugurated. This Kingdom is actually a story, a narrative that, if we believe it, provides the larger story that explains our lives and provides the “script” for everyday living. The problem is that we often believe and live out “competing narratives” scripted by “imposter kings.” The challenge today for all who hear this Kingdom announcement is to repent (turn away from the imposters) and to believe (put our full trust in the true King and Author of our story).

In II Corinthians, we see that, in Christ, everything has been made new; but that all of these gospel blessings are grounded in an amazing act of God, namely, that He has reconciled us to Himself. This reconciliation was necessary because of our sin and His infinite holiness. This great act of God has now become our primary message here and around the world. The most amazing thing of all is the way that God accomplished this reconciliation: His innocent Son became sin that we unworthy sinners might become His sons and daughters! It is only logical now that we worship and serve, with all of our hearts, the God of this amazing grace.

And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?

*Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued? Amazing love!
How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?*

—Charles Wesley, 1738

Discussion Questions

- 1) What are the most common “competing narratives” that allure? Why do we listen to them? What do they promise us? Where do they lead us? From the Westminster Shorter Catechism definition of repentance, what, in your own words, is the fundamental concept in it?

- 2) How is the narrative of God’s Kingdom better than any other “script” that would attempt to define us? The call to follow Jesus is both urgent and radical. How do you see these in the text?

- 3) What is the “key” that “unlocks” this Kingdom to us?

- 4) What is the fundamental problem that naturally disqualifies us for citizenship in the Kingdom of God? Why do many people find this analysis offensive?

- 5) What is reconciliation, and why is it necessary?

- 6) Discuss 2. Cor. 5:21. What are the essential ideas in it?

Related Reading

Knowing God

by J.I. Packer: Chapter 18, The Heard of the Gospel, and chapter 19, Sons of God.

ISBN: 083081650X

Redemption: Accomplished and Applied

by John Murray

ISBN: 0802811434

Notes:

Going Deeper

If we are to be ambassadors of Christ and ministers of reconciliation, how do you plan to fulfill that role this week and next?

What are some specific areas of your life right now that are products of “competing narratives?”