

Sermon 1-18/22 – 2012

God's Kingdom is Near Mark 1:14-20

Dear Ready for the Lord:

Are you ready?

- Are you ready for the big game?
- Are you ready for the big snowfall?
- Are you ready for _____

Are you ready?

There are many events and things to prepare for in life but the greatest event in our lives that we need to be ready for is – The Kingdom of God.

Jesus says: The Kingdom of God is Near!

What is the kingdom of God? What is Jesus talking about? Where is God's kingdom?

God's kingdom is his reign in the lives of his people. God's kingdom is spiritual. Jesus said: **"My kingdom is not of this world."** God's kingdom is not worldly or political.

God's kingdom stands opposed to man's kingdom. Man's kingdom is ruled by the strength of armies. God's kingdom is the rule of his word in the hearts of men and women.

- Luke 17:20-21 The Kingdom of God is within you
- Colossians 3:15-16 The peace of Christ ruling in our hearts

How does this kingdom come to us?

- I Corinthians 12:3 Faith in Jesus by the Holy Spirit

- Romans 14:17 Kingdom of God not a matter of eating or drinking but of righteousness
- Romans 9:16 It does not depend upon man's desire or effort but on God's mercy

Every time we pray the Lord's prayer – **Thy Kingdom come** – What are we praying for?

We pray for Christ to rule in our hearts.

- Galatians 2:20 Christ lives in me
- II Peter 3:18 Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord

We pray for our faith, for our spiritual growth, for godly living. We also pray for others.

- John 10:16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.

We pray that God would send the Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith and to create faith in others.

Do you have a prayer list of unbelievers? Our District has a prayer calendar for 2012. Each month of the year this calendar focus on one mission that our District supports and gives information about the mission that could be used in prayers to God for the expansion of his kingdom.

- January – Urban ministry in Milwaukee and Rev. Chris Ikanih
- February – Chaplains who serve in the County Correctional Facility in Milwaukee
- March – Rev. Gui Kasongo and his group of French African immigrants

- April – Student International ministry within the UW system
- May – Hispanic outreach in Milwaukee and Racine
- June – Deaf ministry
- July – Karenni refugees from Burma in Milwaukee
- August – Hmong pastors serving the immigrants from Laos in Wisconsin
- September – Lutheran schools
- October – SMP training students to become pastors
- November – Brian and Jeanette Keller – missionaries to the Dominican Republic
- December – Middle Eastern and Muslim outreach

We prepare ourselves for God’s kingdom by praying for our faith and others.

We also prepare for the kingdom of God by repenting of our sins.

What is repentance?

- to turn from sin and turn to God
- it begins with inner grief over breaking God’s will
- it is grief over our sin
- it is understanding that we have offended God and hurt our neighbor

The Bible says: **“God...commands all people everywhere to repent for he has set a day when he will judge** the world with justice...” Acts 17:30f

I have sinned and merit God's wrath. But...God in his mercy has forgiven me and I may live a new life in him. II Corinthians 5:17 "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation the old has gone, the new has come."

Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God.

Galilee was populated by many Gentiles in addition to the Jews who lived there. This mixture of Jews and Gentiles had its effect upon the religious life of the people.

The worship of God had departed from the Law of Moses in the Old Testament. The people were living in darkness as Isaiah foretold.

Darkness symbolizes wickedness, ignorance and unbelief. Most of the people in Galilee did not know the way of salvation. But, then Jesus the light of the world, came to Galilee.

This light that Jesus brought into the world needs to be shared.

Jesus called people like you and me to be his messengers of light. The first messengers he called are listed here in Mark 1:16ff.

Simon Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen. They were also the first disciples that Jesus called. Andrew and Simon Peter had no special qualifications to become Jesus' apostles. As fishermen they had no formal education. They were busy at their occupation when Jesus called them. They were casting a net into the lake. Usually such a net would be cast from the shore into the shallow water.

Here these two fishermen are on the shore casting their nets and Jesus calls them to leave behind their occupation. Peter and Andrew knew exactly what Jesus meant when he said he would make them fishers of men.

Think about this for a moment. Is there a parallel between being a fisher of men and a fisher of fish?

- In both a person needs patience and perseverance because you never know what the results will be
- Many times you go fishing and come up empty handed
- How often we may share the Gospel with someone and also seem to come up empty handed.

Andrew and Peter would follow Jesus' instructions and trust him to bring about the results he had in mind. They would use the "net" that he provided.

We call that "net" the Means of Grace – The Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

There is no other power in the whole world that can bring sinners into Christ's kingdom. Only the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses people of all their sins.

Peter and Andrew did not have to ask for time to consider Jesus' invitation. They already knew him as the Messiah and they regarded Jesus' invitation as a special privilege to be seized without delay. So they immediately left their nets and followed him.

Next, Jesus came upon another pair of brothers James and John who were engaged in fishing together with their father, Zebedee. They too, left everything behind and immediately followed Jesus.

Because Jesus preached with authority he was able to call men from their regular occupations and make them his disciples. Who else could

interrupt 4 fishermen at their work and challenge them to leave their nets and follow him?

Jesus did not invent the term **“fishers of men”**. In Jesus’ day it was a common description of philosophers and other teachers who “captured men’s minds” through teaching and persuasion. They would “bait the hook” with their teachings and “catch” disciples.

It is likely that 7 of the disciples were fishermen.

Think of the good qualities of successful fishermen: courage, the ability to work together, patience, energy, stamina, faith and tenacity. These are the same qualities needed for serving the Lord.

Professional fishermen simply could not afford to be quitters or complainers.

The fishermen forsook all to follow him. In the case of James and John they left behind a very lucrative fishing business they had with their father.

We, too, are followers of Jesus! So, what are we going to do with our lives as God’s kingdom draws near? **What are we going to do with our lives for the Lord?**

“Complete with summers and songs and gray skies and tears, you have a life. Did not request one, but you have one. A first day. A final day. And a few thousand in between. You have been given an honest-to-goodness human life.” - Max Lucado

So what are you going to do as the kingdom draws near?

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- Realize that we are God’s possession
- Recognize God’s presence
- Embrace God’s purpose