The Good News about Jesus Christ

Mark 1:1-15

Key Verse:1:1 “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.”

Thank God for an opportunity to study the gospel of Mark from this week. Mark’s gospel is known as the earliest written among the four gospels along with Matthew, Luke, and John. The author John Mark was not one of the Twelve, but lived in the same times as Jesus and supported Jesus’ ministry behind the scenes. Later he joined the first mission trip with Paul until he departed from him to join Barnabas before their second mission trip started. (Ac 12:25, 15:39) Four gospel books describe Jesus, each with a different focus. Matthew describes Jesus as the King of the Jews, the promised Messiah. Mark emphasizes Jesus as the servant of God. Luke, who was a Greek, describes Jesus as the light for the gentiles. John regards Jesus as the Son of God. So, the key verse of Mark’s gospel is known as 10:45, which says, “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many*.” Mark focuses on Jesus’ ministry in the area of Galilee, while other gospels include Jesus’ teaching and ministry in Jerusalem. As a result, compared to other gospels Mark is shorter than others.

We studied Mark’s gospel a few years ago. But this year we have a special goal and purpose for Mark’s gospel study. Through Mark’s gospel study may we have the eyes and the heart of Jesus. Amen! Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to achieve our goal. Amen!

First, the good news about Jesus (1-8) The gospel starts with the word ‘*beginning*’. “***The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God***.” The word ‘gospel’ means ‘good news’. This verse teaches us the content of the gospel. The good news is Jesus Christ. Why is Jesus Christ the good news? This is because Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Messiah in Hebrew is Christ in Greek. Messiah means ‘the anointed’ In the ancient day kings, priests, and prophets were anointed. Jesus was anointed by God to fulfill all of these roles. The fact that Jesus is the promised Messiah reveals God’s faithfulness. From the book of Genesis to Malachi, God had promised to send a Messiah, who would save men from their sin and deaths. As he had promised, God sent Jesus. Even though man sinned against God and forgot about him, God did not forget us but kept his promise by sending Jesus as the Messiah.

God sent the Messiah not from one of human beings, but from one of his parts. Jesus is the Son of God. The fact that the Son of God came to this world as the Messiah manifested the grace and truth of God. John 1:14 says about incarnation in this, “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*.” Last Tuesday Rev. Franklin Graham, the son of Rev. Billy Graham, visited St. Louis for a mission tour. My brother-in-law and I attended the tour to see Franklin in person and hear his message. We were happy to see him in person because he is the son of Rev. Billy Graham. How more blessed we are when we see the Son of God face to face than to see a mere person! The presence of Jesus and his incarnation proves that God is with us and loves us regardless of our situation.

Mark proves that Jesus is the promised Messiah by quoting Isaiah 40:3. Look at verses 2-3. “***As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way--- “a vice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’***” Around 700 years before Jesus was born, prophet Isaiah prophesied the appearance of John the Baptist who would come to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. The prophet Malachi also prophesied about John the Baptist. (Mal 4:5-6) How did John the Baptist prepare the way for Jesus? Look at verses 4. “***And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin***.” John prepared the way for Jesus by preaching the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Baptism was not new to the Jews. At that time the converts of the Gentiles were baptized. But John proclaimed the baptism of repentance for the sons of Abraham. Luke’s gospel describes John’s message well. “*You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance...The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire*.” (Lk 3:7-9) Repentance is not a mere change of your thought and mind, but deliberate turning from sin to God. Repentance is to grieve over our sin and change our direction from sin to God. It requires our decision, action, and it produces visible result. So John said, “*Produce fruit in keeping with repentance*.”

How did the people respond to John’s message? Verse 5 says that **the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.** The state of Kentucky is known as one of the most peaceful and safe states in US. But in the 19th century Kentucky was the den of gamblers, alcoholics, prostitutes, and other kinds of criminals. When the message of repentance by missionaries were delivered to them, thousands and thousands came for the baptism of repentance. Today we need such a spiritual revival.

Verse 6 shows how John lived as a forerunner of Jesus. Look at verse 6. “***John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey***.” These days some popular pastors and evangelists fly by their private jets and live in a multi-million dollar mansion. They deliver the prosperity gospel, which is not gospel at all. Unlike them, John lived in the desert and ate simple food. He lived a mission-centered life, not a pleasure-seeking life. His message was also simple, but powerful. His goal was to glorify the name of Jesus who would come after him as a king and Lord. Look at 7-8. “***And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.***” (7-8) Through John we learn how to live as people of God and what to preach as messengers of God.

Second, the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news. (9-15) Verses 9-15 teaches us how Jesus was baptized and tested. Look at verses 9-11. “***At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.***” Jesus was baptized by John. Jesus did not need to be baptized because he is the sinless Son of God. Still, he was baptized because he wanted to obey the will of God the Father. According to Matthew 3:13-15, when Jesus came to be baptized, John the Baptist tried to deter him, saying, “*I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.”* *Then John consented*. Jesus was baptized by John to fulfill all righteousness, which means to fulfill God’s will as the Son of God.

Jesus’ obedience pleased God the Father. When he was baptized, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove. And the Father pronounced Jesus as his son, “*You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*” This was the inauguration ceremony for the Messiah and the coronation ceremony as the Son of God. For this occasion, the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, worked together.

Right after this glorious and beautiful coronation, Jesus was sent into the desert to be tested. He stayed in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. Matthew and Luke’s gospel explain Jesus’ temptation in detail. (Mt 4:1-11, Lk 4:1-13) Satan tempted Jesus with three questions. Jesus defeated all temptations by obeying the word of God. When Satan learned that he could not overcome Jesus, he left. Jesus was with wild animals, and angels attended him. (13) Then, why was Jesus tempted and tested by Satan? This was for us to overcome Satan’s temptation and test. Hebrews 2:18 says, “*Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempte*d.” Jesus was tempted and tested for us. The Son of God took a human form and became one of us. He shared our humanity and feelings. (He 2:14) 2 Corinthians 5:22 says, “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*.” This is the reason why Jesus is the good news of great joy for all people. He took our place and went ahead of us.

What did Jesus do first as the Messiah? He preached the kingdom of God. Look at verses 14-15. “***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 has come near. Repent and believe the good news!***” At that time John the Baptist was imprisoned because he rebuked the sin of King Herod who took his brother’s wife. He said, “It is not right for you to have your brother’s wife.”(Mk 6:18) Instead of repentance, however, king Herod put John in prison. Jesus did not work for his release. Instead, he preached the good news of God. His message was about repentance and the kingdom of God. Repentance and the kingdom of God is an inseparable relationship like a needle and thread. Without repentance, there is no kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is considered as a paradise, the perfect and eternal dwelling place for human beings. The kingdom of God is not only a place but also a state. Jesus said in Luke 17:21 that the kingdom of God is not here or there, but it is in your minds. The kingdom of God does not come from abundant material possession or world-wide fame. It does not come from physical satisfaction. The divorce news of the richest people in the world proves this. The kingdom of God come from a right relationship with God. When God rules, we are in his kingdom. True happiness and blessing come from repentance and the forgiveness of sin. When our sins are forgiven, we experience the kingdom of God. When our relationship with God and with others are restored, we have true peace. This is the reason why Jesus said, “*the time has come, the kingdom of God has come near.*” He didn’t say that the kingdom of God is yours, but is near or has come near. Now the time of decision has come. The choice is ours. The kingdom of God depends on our choice and our decision.

At the end of the Rev. Franklin Graham’s message, there was an altar call. The time for decision came. He asked anyone whose sins want to be forgiven and who has decided to live a new life to stand up. His call was meant for new believers. Many stood up from their seats. My brother-in-law and I stood up. I didn’t know why my brother-in-law stood up. I stood up because I needed an assurance of forgiveness of my sin which I had committed long ago against my girlfriends. Anyway, after that moment peace came into my heart again. I could be free from the accusations of Satan. When John the Baptist called for repentance, many people responded because they all needed Jesus. We all need Jesus to forgive our sins and bring us back to his kingdom. We all need the good news for our peace, assurance, and confidence for our salvation. The time for decision has come! The choice is ours. Let us repent our sins and believe the good news. Let us share the good news of Jesus with our neighbors and students on campus as a voice of one calling.

As we studied the book of Joel, our God is God who restores. Even though the sin of Israel devastated their land and hearts, God was willing to restore them. When God restores them, the paradise is back. The desolate Israel like a wasteful desert is inhabited again. God will give us a new heart and new spirit so that we can see God’s vision and participate in the great work of God for world salvation in our generation. Amen! May God give us the eyes and the heart of Jesus! Amen!