# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Good News”**

**Mark 1:14-15**

 **January 10, 2021**

Today we begin our study of Mark’s Gospel, a three-month journey through this second of the four gospels which give us insight into Jesus’ life and teaching and reveal the purpose of his coming. In the two verses from the first chapter that we will explore this morning, Mark gives us, if you will, Jesus’ mission statement. As a church we have a mission statement, a series of three phrases that express our intentionality as a church: we seek to know Christ, to become like Christ, and to share Christ. I invite you to turn with me to Mark 1:14-15 where we read that Jesus’ mission was to preach God’s Good News:

Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God’s Good News. “The time promised by God has come at last!” he announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!”

John the Baptist has been put in prison. As one public ministry comes to an end another one begins, and Jesus’ public ministry is to preach God’s Good News. In these verses, Jesus summarizes for us what this Good News is. First, it is good news that the time promised by God has come at last. For hundreds of years God’s people have waited for the fulfillment of the promises spoken of by the prophets, promises of a Messiah who will free us from the destructive powers of this world and bring us into a new world of God’s love, justice, mercy, and peace. This new world is called the Kingdom of God.

What is the Kingdom of God? We can begin to answer the question by asking generally, “What is a kingdom?” It is a realm ruled by a king. The extent of the realm is defined by the people who are being ruled, and the way in which they are being ruled is defined by the king – he provides benefits for his people and he determines the regulation that the people of his kingdom are to live by. So, we can say that the Kingdom of God exists wherever there are people who are being blessed by God while living according to God’s regulations. Or, to put it a little differently, the Kingdom of God exists wherever God’s will is being done for and by his people. We see this in the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done.” These are parallel phrases.

What Jesus says about this kingdom is that it is near, that is, it has become available. The implication is that in the past the Kingdom of God has been far, that it has been unobtainable, that while it has always existed no one has been able to enter that Kingdom because of sin. “All have sinned and fall short of the Kingdom of God.” So, what has changed? Not us! We still sin and fall short. What has changed is the presence of Jesus. The Kingdom of God is near. Where? Right here, in front of you. Because Jesus is here, a way has opened up for us to enter and become part of the Kingdom of God in spite of our sin. Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father – no one enters the Kingdom of God – but by him. Without him, entry is impossible. With him, all are invited to enter and live abundantly.

We are invited – the offer has been placed before us to consider – but what will it require of us to enter and to begin to live in God’s Kingdom? That is the second part of Jesus’ message: repent and believe. To repent is to turn away from one thing in order to become part of something else. What each of us is invited to turn away from is the kingdom of self where I rule, where I decide what is good for me, where I do whatever it takes to further my interests and to get what I want, where my motto is: “My will be done.” In order to enter the Kingdom of God, we must repent of, turn away from, “My will be done.” Only then can we truly say with Jesus: “Thy will be done.” And, as Jesus will go on to teach his followers, when we live according to “Thy will be done,” then all the things that we thought we were going to have by living in the kingdom of “My will be done,” such as love, joy and peace, will be ours in the Kingdom of God. We repent, turn away from, the kingdom of self and turn to the Kingdom of God, believing the Good News that in God’s Kingdom every good and perfect gift of God is available to us.

We have to trust that what God has for us is better than what the world has for us. The world of self-rule looks inviting, but our heavenly Father knows what’s best and he provides it to us in his Son, Jesus Christ. Repent and believe the Good News.