

Pastor Don Nelson

Sermon: September 13, 2009
Beverly ECC, Chicago, IL

“KINGDOM NEWS”
Mark 1:14-15

☞ Why did Jesus come to earth? What was Christ’s fundamental goal? What was His basic purpose?

☑ In 2008 members of a Waukesha church [Trinity, WELS] stopped University of Wisconsin – Madison students and asked this open-ended question: *“Why did Jesus come to earth?”*

The answers ranged from **“To save mankind”** to **“It’s debatable”** to **“I don’t really know”** to **“He didn’t really have a choice, did he? He was just born here”** to **“I don’t think Jesus came to earth.”** No surprises there.

☑ In 2002 Brian Fikkert asked 265 Christian college students in Georgia the same question, *“Why did Jesus come to earth?”*

Ninety-one% answered, **“To die on the cross so we may have eternal life.”** Five percent replied, **“To fulfill Old Testament prophecy.”** Two percent said, **“To obey the Father,”** and another 2% answered, **“To be an example of obedience.”**

These are probably the answers most Christians would give. One only wishes we were better informed!

⊖ Yes, Jesus died and rose again; but though the cross was a crucial means it was not, in and of itself, his chief goal. Jesus did not live just to die!

⊖ Yes, Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (more than 60 prophecies recorded in over 300 passages); but

this was not his number 1 objective. Jesus did not live just to validate Scripture!

⊖ Yes, Jesus obeyed his Father without fail; but while submission was necessary, it was not his overriding purpose. Jesus did not live just to obey!

⊖ Yes, Jesus created a perfect spiritual and moral model; but while this was vital, it was not his top aspiration. Jesus did not live just to set an example!

⊙ Our standard church answers come closer to the mark than, **“He didn’t really have a choice.”** Still, they do not hit the bull’s eye.

So; why did Jesus come to earth?

Christ himself gives the answer, in Scripture.

Let’s take a look at what He said and did.

■ In Luke 4:43, after He is rejected at Nazareth and begins performing miracles elsewhere in Galilee, Jesus announces, **“I must proclaim *the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.*”**

■ Matthew 4:23 ~ After recruiting his first disciples **“Jesus [goes] throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming *the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.*”**

■ Luke 8:1 ~ **“Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming *the good news of the kingdom of God.*”**

■ In Matthew 9:35 we find that **“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming *the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.*”**

▪ And Luke 9:10 and 11 tells how Jesus welcomed the crowds **“and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.”**

What expression do all those passages have in common? **“The kingdom.” “The kingdom of God.”**

Jesus died and rose again, not only because it won our salvation, but also because it was integral to his kingdom mission.

Jesus fulfilled the prophecies, not only because it proved his identity, but also because it was integral to his kingdom mission.

Jesus obeyed God the Father, not only because that is his nature, but also because it was integral to his kingdom mission.

Jesus set a perfect example, not only because the world needed one, but also because it was integral to his kingdom mission.

✪ Jesus came to earth, first and foremost, to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

☞ But what about the other things the Lord said about his purpose? What about {Mt 5:17} **“I have not come to abolish [the Law and the Prophets] but to fulfill them”**; and {LK 5:32} **“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”**; and {Jn 10:10} **“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”**?

I believe these sayings interpret, expand and apply the fundamental revelation of his purpose: **“I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God... because that is why I was sent.”**

☐ Please turn with me to Mark 1:14-15 {p 1,018}.

The Lord is just beginning his public work. Aside from his baptism and his temptation, this is the first mention of his name in Mark’s account.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of this text. Remember: no one who was alive at the time of these events had the benefit of hindsight. Nobody (aside from his mother and his cousin) had a clue about who Jesus of Nazareth really was or what He was going to do.

☞ Christ in introducing himself to the world. What He does here will set the course for his entire ministry. What He says here will lay the groundwork for all his teaching.

Mark 1:14-15 ~ **“After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.”**

And what news did He proclaim? “I have come to die on the cross”? “I have come to fulfill prophecy”? “I have come to obey my Father”? “I have come to set an example?” No!

“‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’”

✦ Listen carefully, and the main points come through loud and clear: ❶ Jesus’ ministry and message are about the kingdom of God; and ❷ the kingdom of God depends on him (it **“has come near”** because He **“has come near”**). Christ Jesus has come to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

This is no ivory tower doctrine without practical application in the real world. The good news of the kingdom has enormous implications for our beliefs, attitudes, relationships, words and deeds.

✠ And it always demands a response from us. What “**good news of God**” did Jesus proclaim? “**The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!**”

Here, at the dawn of his ministry, the Lord dares us to: ❶ “**Repent and**” ❷ “**believe the good news!**”

Even before we understand what it is to be God’s subjects, Jesus says “**Repent and believe.**”

Even before we have a chance to meet our fellow citizens, Jesus says “**Repent and believe.**”

Even before we have an inkling of where this is leading us, Jesus says “**Repent and believe.**”

Christ Jesus challenges us to reject our sin. (That means letting go of everything that has no place in his realm). He also challenges us to believe the good news. (That means trusting the gospel of his kingdom, even when it looks nothing like the kingdom we expected.)

- The magnitude and practical impact of this challenge is seen in the reaction of his early listeners. Soon after Jesus began “**proclaiming the Good news of God**” He returned to his hometown. In Luke 4:14-21 He went to worship, read a text that describes kingdom living in general terms, announced, “**Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing,**” and began to preach.

His sermon provoked harsh criticism. {4:28-29} “**All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and**

took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff.”

☹ What did they find so offensive? We tend to assume it was his claim to be the Messiah, but that was not the case. {Lk 4:22, 21} “**All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips**” *after* He announced, “**Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.**”

Jesus’ claim to be Messiah is not what offended them. Instead, according to verses 22-27, it was his vision of the kingdom, which radically contradicted theirs.

The crowd realized that accepting Jesus would require them to reject not only their sins (many were willing to repent of those), but also their false beliefs about the kingdom. It would require them to embrace a vision that was, in many ways, directly opposed to their dearest convictions.

☞ Why did Jesus come to earth? What was Christ’s fundamental goal? What was His basic purpose?

★ First and foremost, to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus is saying today, as He did nearly the first time nearly 2,000 years ago, “**The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near.**”

Let us “**Repent and believe the good news!**”