
Mark 1: 14-15 – Jesus comes to you ...

There's a certain excitement or anticipation when you've invited friends over, perhaps for a meal or BBQ or drink. There's something wonderful about being able to receive friends into your home, to be able to bless them and share laughter and stories together. You might say that there is a blessing in them making the time to come and you been able to receive them ... perhaps particularly when they arrive with a bunch of flowers, big box of chocolates or a lovely bottle of something to accompany the meal!

As Mark writes the opening chapter of his gospel about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God it is clear that he wants his readers to grasp that sense of Jesus coming to us. Over and over again in the first few verses of this chapter he emphasises the 'coming' of God. Take a moment just to think about that! ... the Lord almighty, the ever loving and everlasting God, the Prince of peace, the wonderful counsellor ... the one we are not worthy even to untie the straps of his sandals or gather up the crumbs under his table ... comes to us. Even while we were lost in our sin, rebellious, broken and immersed in, even contented in, our darkness he comes to us. In the grand narrative (or story) of the Bible this is the crescendo of God demonstrating his love for us.

Mark doesn't stop there though. He seems to want to almost overwhelm us with 'Good news'! Jesus comes announcing the Kingdom of God. There's so much that we could say about this announcement. It's an announcement which appears to be a direct challenge to the Roman Empire or Kingdom - a political challenge. For the Jewish hearer it's an announcement that had been prophesied, which was expected but surely it couldn't coming from someone out of Nazareth - it's a challenge to those who hold the reins of the religious institutions! It's an announcement of a Kingdom that Mark will go on to fill out in his gospel. We'll discover, amongst other things, that this kingdom is like: A mustard seed that grows in a large rambling bush in which the birds best; it's like yeast that unseen works its way through the dough; it's like treasure in a field that you'd sell everything you have in order to buy that field and discover the treasure; it's like a pearl of immeasurable value ... and this Kingdom is forcefully (with great energy) advancing and nothing in creation is able to prevail against it.

Mark doesn't immediately tell us what the Kingdom is like ... although his hearers would probably have a better grasp in their minds than perhaps we do ... but he does tell us how we can gain access to this Kingdom. We become Ambassadors, Princes and Artisans of this Kingdom and King through repentance and belief.

Repentance, to our modern world (perhaps even to us as Christian's), just seems like an old-fashioned Bible bashers word which is used to make people feel guilty. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Repentance is an invitation to us to turn around from selfish-ambition and vain conceit and be embraced by the magnificent beauty, love, friendship, justice and riches that are found in God himself. It is an invitation to lasting unconditional forgiveness. It's the door through which we step to enter Jesus' Kingdom (with its broad horizon and vast boundaries) where we get to join with him in the re-making of all things for his glory and praise ... and we get to start participating in that re-making of all things today ... through simple Jesus like actions and attitudes amongst our families, friends and neighbours. Actions, attitudes and words like: giving generously of what we have; enquiring regularly after a friend or neighbour; offering to pray when someone shares a worry or anxiety. And in these simple actions, attitudes and words we express that we believe Jesus is King of the Kingdom which we now call our eternal home. Amen.