

Our Purpose “Gospel Renewal”

Mark 1:14-15

~ Delivered at DHBC on September 7, 2014 (Soli Deo Gloria)

INTRODUCTION

- (SHOW SLIDE) Please open your Bibles to Mark 1.
 - **READ 14-15** - *“¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’”*
- One of the most important questions every person wants answered is, *“What am I here for? What is my purpose in life?”* How you answer that question will determine everything about how you live your life. The same thing applies to a church. We must be able to clearly and succinctly state what we are here for.
 - To that end our church recently wrote and passed a purpose statement. Here it is: (SHOW SLIDE) *“Our purpose is to renew our city and world by demonstrating and declaring the transforming power of the gospel.”*
 - Now we don’t claim this is flawless wording or that it perfectly captures everything. However, we do believe it gets at the core purpose for why we are here and what we are to do.
- So as we embark on our new three-year vision I want to take four weeks to unpack this. I am praying that this series will unite us in our common purpose and that it will focus us on what really matters. But don’t think of this as just the church’s purpose statement. It applies just as much to each individual Christian. So let this series equip you on how to live your lives.
 - Today I want to focus on what I will call, *“gospel renewal.”* The core of the statement is *“the transforming power of the gospel.”* The renewal of our city and world happens *“by”* the transforming power of the gospel.
 - So today I aim to show how the gospel is the power that renews and transforms all things.
- Let’s unpack this in three parts. First, the bad news of our broken world. Second, the good news of a renewed world. And then finally the good news of a transformed people.

THE BAD NEWS OF OUR BROKEN WORLD

- Let’s begin then with (SHOW SLIDE) the bad news of our broken world.
 - You will notice that our statement begins by talking about renewal. Our purpose is *“to renew our city and world.”* The word *“renewal”* assumes that our city and world have been broken. Renewal assumes it has been ruined and damaged. We see this assumption in Jesus’ words.
- Notice that Jesus announces good news. Look at verse 14. **READ 14** – *“Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.”* And then in verse 15 he says to *“Repent and believe the good news!”*
 - Listen: Good news is good precisely because it assumes that a bad situation has changed for the better. We are hoping to hear the good news that the teacher’s strike is over and our kids can go back to school. That

would be good news because it assumes the badness of the current situations where our children are not in school.

- So if we are going to understand what is so good about Jesus' good news, then we must understand the bad news.
- Before we get to Jesus' answer I really don't think you have to be a Christian to agree that the world is broken and does not work the way it should.
 - Despite all our advances in technology, education, and science there is still warfare. ISIS rears terror in the Middle East. The Gaza conflict continues. Let's be transparent here though. There is conflict in our own relationships. This week Heather and I had a bit of a heated disagreement. For my part I confess I was impatient and self-centred. You see it is not just that world is broken. I am broken. I am angry. I am impatient. I am self-centred.
 - So why doesn't the world work the way it's supposed to? It is critical that we be able to answer that question because our solutions will be based on how we understand the problem.
- Jesus makes an astounding claim here. He claims to bring the best news that our planet has ever heard. He claims to bring a solution to every single problem – from our own self-centredness to victory over death itself. As you see in verse 15, Jesus says this good news has everything to do with ***“the kingdom of God.”***
 - What does that mean? It does not make sense to us because we don't know the backstory of bad news that makes Jesus good news about the kingdom so good. It is like a woman from Mongolia arriving in BC to read a news headline that says, ***“Good news: kids start school tomorrow.”*** She would not know why this is good news. She needs to hear the backstory of the bad news to understand why it is such good news.
 - Jesus' proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God assumes you know the backstory but since many of us do not, let's quickly go through it.
- It has everything to do with a King and his kingdom. Graeme Goldsworthy defines the kingdom of God as ***“God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing.”***¹ Genesis 1-2 tells us that in the beginning God created Adam and Eve and placed them in a garden. God is the King. Adam and Eve are God's people. They live in God's place, which is the Garden of Eden. They live under God's good rule.
 - In this kingdom everything is the way it was meant to be. The Old Testament word is 'shalom.' Shalom means peace. When we think of peace we usually mean the absence of war. But shalom is far more than the absence of war. Shalom is complete wholeness and well being.
 - Human beings had shalom with God, shalom with each other, shalom with themselves, and shalom with the natural environment. For one shining moment there really was a Camelot – a kingdom where all was as it was supposed to be.
- But the story takes a dramatic turn in Genesis 3. God's enemy, the serpent, comes to Adam and Eve and tells them a lie. He tells them that they would experience

¹ Cited in Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture – Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*, 21.

greater happiness if they broke away from God's rule and lived for themselves. He suggested that God was not a good king and that life would be better if they became their own kings and queens. And so Adam and Eve rebelled against their Creator and loving King. They committed cosmic treason.

- In that moment of rebellion Adam and Eve broke the world. The shalom they enjoyed was shattered. Their relationship with God was broken. They were cast out of God's presence and fell under judgement for their sinful rebellion. Their relationship with each other was broken. Adam blamed Eve and Eve justified herself. Their relationship with themselves was broken. For the first time they felt shame and darkness invaded human hearts. Finally, their relationship with the natural environment was broken. The earth was cursed and would no longer work like it was supposed to.
 - To sum it all up then, Christianity says that at the root of all our problems, at the root of all human pain, at the root of all that is wrong with the world is the fact that we have all turned away from God. All disease, death, discouragement, and despair arise from a world that is broken by sin.

THE GOOD NEWS OF A RENEWED WORLD

- That is the bad news. But Jesus emphatically states that he has come with good news. So now that we have the backstory let us turn to the second part: **(SHOW SLIDE)** the good news of a renewed world.
 - The essence of Christianity is summarized with one word: gospel. Gospel simply means good news. Christianity is not first of all an ethical system. It is not first of all about how to live your life.
 - It is first of all a message of mind blowing, earth shattering, good news. It is the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ to renew our broken world.
- Look at verse 15 again. What is the good news that Jesus is bringing? It concerns ***"the kingdom of God."*** Let's develop this concept further.
 - Despite Adam and Eve's rebellion, God did not strike them down and reject humanity. Rather, in his grace God made astounding promises. Right away he promises Adam and Eve that he will destroy evil and win people back to himself. He promises to send a superhuman male who will engage in battle with the serpent himself. This superhuman male will be greatly injured in the battle but he will defeat the serpent, destroy evil, and win people back to himself.
 - But there is more. God then promises Abram that he will bless all the nations of the earth through him. Later in Isaiah 65 God promises to renew the entire universe saying, ***"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth."*** In short, God is promising to restore the kingdom of shalom. He is promising to renew all things.

- The rest of the Bible is the story of this one single drama. It is the story of God's kingdom invading enemy occupied territory. It is the story of God reclaiming what was originally His.
 - So the Jews were longing for the future day when God would send His king to the earth. They longed for the day when God's king would step into history, take power, destroy evil, and set up his kingdom of shalom on the earth.
- You can imagine the hype that was generated in Israel when John the Baptist came on the scene and said, ***"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near."***² In other words, ***"It's almost time. The long-awaited day is almost here."***
 - And then something crazy and unexpected happens. A man named Jesus comes out of obscurity and makes this pronouncement in our passage today: ***"the time has come."***
 - The Greek language has two words for "time." The first is ***"chronos"*** which is just time ticking along one second after another. But not all time is equally significant. So Greek has another word for time, which is ***"kairos."*** Kairos is a moment in time that has great significance. Let me put it this way: a pregnant woman goes through nine months of chronos – time passes and she grows. But then one day she feels a deep pain and she says, ***"It's time!"*** This is kairos. Kairos is a decisive moment within time that has tremendous significance.
- And Jesus says, ***"the kairos has come."*** After thousands of years of promises Jesus says, ***"It's time!"*** Jesus says that with his coming God's kingdom has arrived. God's king who will make all things right has arrived.
 - Everywhere Jesus went he was about destroying evil and restoring shalom. You see it when he heals the sick and casts out demons.
 - We see it supremely in Jesus' death and resurrection. At the cross he took our sin upon himself. He took the judgement that we deserve that all who believe in him might not have to face judgement. Through his death Jesus made it possible for rebels like you and I to be restored back to God. In his resurrection he conquered death, which is the great destroyer of shalom.
- Jesus stated that his kingdom will come in two stages. At his first coming he broke the back of sin and evil. He then said he will come a second time to utterly vanquish sin and evil.
 - The book of Revelation describes a fully restored kingdom of shalom. God's people who are everyone who trust in Jesus to rescue them, will gather in God's place which is a new heavens and new earth, and they will live under God's loving rule and blessing forever.
 - Revelation 21 puts it like this: ***"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."***

² Matthew 3:2

- It is right here that I always like to remind you of that great quote at the end of the first *Lord of the Rings* film. All seems lost as Gandalf the great leader has died. Sam Gamgee is in mourning until Gandalf suddenly appears in front of them. He is fully alive. Sam cries, ***“I thought you were dead!”*** Then he asks, ***“Is everything sad going to come untrue?”***
 - And the good news of Christianity is, “yes.” This triumphant “yes” is based on the fact that Jesus has conquered sin, death, and evil at the cross and in his resurrection. The gospel then is nothing less than a cosmic restoration project.
 - God will not allow even one corner of his universe to remain scarred by sin but will bring total renewal to all things. He will not allow Satan even one small victory but will plunder his kingdom down the last brick and rebuild his universe into a glorious home for his people and His praise. All that has been broken will be fixed. All that has been lost will be found. All that has been devastated will be restored. This is the good news of a renewed world.
- So let’s try to succinctly state the good news. To put it in a paragraph author Matt Chandler writes, **(SHOW SLIDE)** ***“the gospel is God’s reconciling work in Christ—that through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, God is making all things new both personally for those who repent and believe, and cosmically as He redeems culture and creation from its subjection to futility.”***³
 - To put it in a shorter sentence, **(SHOW SLIDE)** the good news is all that God has done and will do for us through Jesus Christ.
 - And then to put it in two words, as the New Testament writers so often do, **(SHOW SLIDE)** the gospel is Jesus Christ.
- Jesus brings good news and Jesus is the good news. It is through Jesus Christ that we are brought back to God and transformed into new people. This is why Christians make such a big deal about Jesus. Jesus alone can reconcile us. He alone can change our hearts. He alone can forgive us. He alone has conquered death.
 - So in our purpose statement that single word “gospel” encompasses all that God has done and will do through Jesus Christ to renew all things.

THE GOOD NEWS OF A TRANSFORMED PEOPLE

- So let’s wrap all this up by talking about **(SHOW SLIDE)** the good news of a transformed people.
 - We have seen that God’s kingdom will transform or renew everything in the future. But that renewal also begins now. Notice that Jesus is calling for a response right now. He does not promise the renewal of the kingdom to everyone. This renewal is given to those who respond rightly to his kingdom and in verse 15 you will notice that Jesus says we must ***“repent and believe the good news.”***

³ Matt Chandler, *Creature of the Word*, Location 236.

- This is it. This is why Christianity is such good news. In Christ, God is working to renew all that has been lost - from the universe itself to the dragonish natures within each of us.
 - As Christ does this in us it spreads to others. The gospel has massive social ramifications as in Christ people forgive each other, husbands learn to love their wives as Christ loved the church, employees act ethically and honestly and believers treat others with dignity and respect regardless if they are gay, straight, white, black, Chinese, young, or old.
 - Oh I would like to go on and talk about all the ways the gospel renews our broken world but in reality ever sermon takes one part of our brokenness and shows how the gospel renews it.

CONCLUSION

- Today I must leave it at this. The bad news is that our world is broken. The good news is that in Jesus God's kingdom has arrived and is in the process of renewing all things.
 - As individual Christians and as a church we simply want to be on board with what God is doing. We want to see renewal in our city and world. This is why we say our purpose is to renew our city and world by demonstrating and declaring the transforming power of the gospel.

Keywords: Gospel, Renewal of all things.