

THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD

Mark 1:14-45 (Key verse 14-15)

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There are powerful speeches that inspire many people. I believe everyone knows Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 or the famous Steve Jobs' "Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish" speech at Stanford University in 2005. In 1964, Nelson Mandela finished his speech at the Rivonia Trial as follows: "I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Words can sway people to great extents, but they cannot change the world. Words move people's heart, but it cannot change people fundamentally. There is only one speech that has not only changed billions of people's lives, but the very nature of the world itself. It's the words of Jesus. Jesus' words today are about the reign of God's kingdom which is the good news or the gospel. How does His words make a great impact on people and the world? Let's read verses 14-15 together.

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!"

Jesus begins His messianic ministry in a full-scale, proclaiming "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" When was it that Jesus said this? It was after John the Baptist was put in prison. John would be soon beheaded for his rebuke of Herod the tetrarch who took Herodias, his brother's wife, as his wife. John was a courageous and upright servant of God who stood up against the evil world represented by Herod, but he was overpowered by the world.

People thought John might be the Christ or at least a great prophet, but he apparently looked helpless before Herod under the Roman rule. Jesus begins the ministry under this circumstance. So it is no surprise that people expected Jesus to do something great against Herod and the Roman rule. People were looking for a powerful king. Jesus, however, did not stand up against Herod or stir up the crowd to rise against Rome. Instead He went into Galilee and began to proclaim the good news of God.

Jesus looks coward. There is saying "Actions speak louder than words," but Jesus didn't start the ministry with powerful actions. Instead Jesus proclaimed the good news of God. If this Jesus makes us disappointed, we miss something important.

Let's put it this way: Suppose a king goes out to defend his lands from an invading army. Now there are two scenarios. If the king is defeated by the enemy, he sends back a military commander or advisor with backup troops to prepare the cities for an imminent attack to save his people. The king is defeated in battle, so immediate actions are required. But if the king defeats the enemy, he sends back a messenger with the news: "We have defeated the enemy. Rejoice and live in that victory." Every other religion sends military commanders or advisors to put in place rituals or regulations so fearful people can do actions to try to save themselves. Christianity, however, sends a messenger with the good news, saying "Jesus has won! Let's rejoice in His victory!" (Tim Keller)

The gospel is the good news brought to us by Jesus' victory against the evil. Do you still believe you have to do something to save you? Do you still believe Jesus has to act powerfully to save the world? News is about something that has happened already. The gospel is news. It's what Jesus has already accomplished for our salvation. Jesus did everything for our eternal life. That's why Jesus proclaimed the good news in Galilee is not the act of weakness or compromise. It is Jesus' act of power and authority that would change men and the world fundamentally.

Now the question is where do you stand in all of this? While there is no doubt that Jesus' speech about the good news as declared has changed both the lives of many and the world itself has it changed you? Jesus is not only informing you about God's kingdom or the good news, but is calling you to respond. Jesus is not just a messenger, He is not just giving you some information about the good news. Jesus, as the Lord and the King, is challenging you to respond. How are you to respond to the good news?

If you just hear the good news, it becomes just words. It goes in one ear and out the other. But if you respond to the good news with repentance and faith as Jesus declares in verse 15, it comes into you and it changes you. If you respond to the good news with turning from disobeying God to obeying God, you will experience God's reign over your life. If you respond to the good news with turning from living for yourself to living for God, you will experience what it looks like for the kingdom of God comes near in your life.

This is how the good news comes to us with power, the power that can change you and me fundamentally. The author Mark gives us good examples from verse 16 - how does the good news come to men with power, and how does that power work in them?

First, the good news works with power in calling of four fishermen as God's servants (16-20). In verses 16-20, Jesus calls His first disciples in Galilee to follow Him.

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

The four fishermen were Simon and his brother Andrew (16-18), and James and his brother John (17-20). Jesus told them the good news by saying "Come, follow me. I will make you fishers of men." Jesus demanded them to turn their life purpose and direction from catching fishes which is living for themselves to saving people that is participating in God's salvation work.

How did they respond? At once without delay, they decided to follow Jesus. According to John's record, this was not their first meeting with Jesus (John 1:35-41), but nevertheless what Jesus demanded and their decision are remarkable. When the good news was shared with four fishermen and they responded to it, and it changed the life purpose and direction of four ordinary fishermen. The power of Jesus' words changed these ordinary fishermen into great servants of God.

Jesus says "Come, follow me. I will make you fishers of men." When people hear this voice, they hesitate to respond because they worry about themselves, wondering whether they are ready to follow Jesus. They

forget about Jesus who speaks with power. They concern about their own power and ability, not the power and authority in Jesus. When Jesus says "Come, follow me. I will make you fishers of men," He is willing and able to change you and make you fishers of men. The good news, what God promises becomes your reality when you respond to it with repentance and faith. Jesus doesn't just talk, but He talks with power, and the good news isn't just words but God's power and His authority that can change you into fishers of men.

Second, the good news works with power in restoring and reviving men both body and soul (21-34, 40-45). In verse 21, Jesus went to Capernaum and taught the people at the synagogue (21). Jesus talked with power, and the people were amazed at His teaching (22). Jesus' teaching had a great impact on them. Among them, there was a man who is possessed by an evil spirit. The evil spirit troubled this poor man. The man couldn't live an ordinary life. He was living in misery, but He couldn't do anything. When the evil spirit cried out to Jesus, Jesus didn't overlook the situation. He instantly drove the evil spirit out by saying "Be quiet! Come out of him!" (25) The man was totally helpless, but Jesus spoke with power over the evil spirit. By His words, Jesus delivered the man from his agony and set him free to live as he was originally made to live in image of God.

As the evil spirit tortured the man, sin tortures young men and women. They look fine apparently, but they live with agony and distress due to many challenges or problems in life. Most of all, they live with troubled heart due to unresolving sin problems in them. They need comfort or support for their life challenges or problems, but they need more than comfort for their sin problems. Fortunately, we don't need do anything. Jesus has already accomplished what is required to provide us the ultimate solution. Jesus has won the victory over sin and death, so men's sin problems are resolved already. This is the message of Jesus, that is the good news. We don't have to do anything. All we have to do is to hear the good news and respond to it with repentance and faith. Then the victory of Jesus and the good news will be our reality. The good news will revive our lives and restore our hope in God's kingdom.

Not only the man with an evil spirit, Jesus revived many people with various diseases (32-34) including Simon's mother-in-law (30-31) and a leper (40-45). The power of Jesus' words was not limited to a type of diseases, age or gender. Whoever was brought to Jesus, He healed them all. It's not just healing of their body condition. Jesus gave them a new life and a new hope of God's kingdom in eternity. Jesus' words changed men's life, hope and destiny. Jesus' words changed everything.

Therefore, people must hear the good news. How can they hear the good news? They need a messenger. As a king sends a messenger with news of the victory, people must hear the good news from God's messengers. God sent many messengers with prophecies for people to repent and believe in Him. When the time has come, God sent His One and Only Son Jesus to this world as a messenger. Jesus knew the importance of His mission as God's messenger. As News about Jesus spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee (28), Jesus suddenly became a famous public figure. Literally speaking, everyone was looking for Jesus (37). Jesus, however, knew why He came to this world. Let's read verse 38 together.

³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

Jesus came to this world not to achieve glory, fame or fortune, but to preach the good news of God and the message of God's kingdom to the people who live under the power of sin and death. He traveled different villages and towns to meet people and give them the good news. He

wasn't just giving them the good news. Later He sacrificed His own life on the cross, so the good news of God would spread to the whole world, to the ends of the earth.

In Conclusion, the good news demands our response. If we respond with repentance and faith, the good news will come to us with power and transformation. Thanks to God's messengers in our lives, we heard the good news and was transformed into children of God. What about the people who do not know the good news? The good news must be preached. People need a messenger who can deliver the good news, the good news that Jesus has accomplished everything for the salvation of all people of all nations.