

The Time Is Fulfilled

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Rev. Peter Smith <http://www.stjamesuc.com>

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” That is the surprising and life-changing message of Jesus. The good news of God for the world. The invitation to be part of the kingdom of heaven here on earth that Jesus shares through his words and his life.

And it is the words and life of Jesus which captures the attention of Simon and Andrew, James and John, as Jesus walks on the shore and calls them to follow. Calls them to know what God is doing and to be a part of what God has planned. Calls them and they leave everything, their professions, their family, and begin a new life.

And while our attention is captured by the drama of how the disciples react to Jesus and what they leave behind, the truth is that those words, the gospel that Jesus preaches, is the reason the disciples make such a startling choice. And honestly the gospel of Jesus is not what we expect.

Because when we think of good news or gospel we think of John the Baptist’s blunt message, repent because you need to get ready to experience what God is going to do. And so we try to get ourselves good enough for God and assume that is the way Jesus calls us to live. But the gospel of Jesus is actually something quite different.

Jesus doesn’t say get yourself ready or you will miss what God has planned. No the good news of Jesus is that God is doing the great things now, they are happening at this moment, they are part of your life today. “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of heaven has come near” in other words “The time is now because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

There is no more waiting for the promises to begin because they are taking place this day. There is no more wondering if you will ever know God or all the things you hear about in the Bible because God is here and God is at work in the world even as you listen to these words being spoken.

And remember that’s only the start of the good news. That’s where Jesus begins. By proclaiming, telling, showing, that the kingdom of God, what we hope for and want and long for, is breaking forth into our world. That our hopes have become a reality. That what will be is happening now.

Because the message of Jesus, the gospel isn't that you need to get good enough and then God might forgive you or love you or bless you. The message isn't that you need to study and learn and do this or that before God will notice you or listen to you. No, the gospel is that God hears you, God sees you, and God's grace, mercy, and peace are all around you. And all that happens not because of our goodness but because of God's love for you.

And all of that is happening now. All of that is true this day in this place, at this time for you and for me. For the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God, God's promise and presence, God's plan and way, are right here and right now. We don't have to be good enough for God because God is gracious and merciful and accepts us, treasures us, and calls us to know and experience all the things God is doing.

And because that is taking place, because the kingdom is now, because God is moving in the world we need to answer, we need to respond, we need to get ourselves facing the right way, and that is why Jesus continues the good news with "Repent."

Because let's face it we hear and see what is going on, the wonder of God's love, and one of the first things we realize is that we're not the people we could be or should be. We need to do better and we need to improve. We need to own up to our mistakes and ask for forgiveness. We need to be honest about our lives and forgive others.

And that is why we need to repent. That is why we need to change. Because we need to be more open, more willing, more loving, and more compassionate to fully be a part of what God is doing. So that we can learn and grow and take our place within the kingdom that is happening all around us. And I want to repeat that.

We don't repent and then all of the blessings of God enter our lives. The good news of Jesus is that God love us, forgives us, and offers us new life before we repent. Because when we realize that when we understand that we are loved, forgiven, when we know the grace of God, then we want to be better and we need to be better. So we change, we let God work in us and through us, and by doing that we start to become the people God calls us to be.

And how do you do that? How do you repent, how to you change your life? How do you respond to all God offers? Well Jesus says "believe in the good news." Put your trust and hope in what God is doing and who God is. Focus on the way Jesus opens in his life, death, and resurrection. Allow faith to guide you.

Don't rely on yourself but rely on God. Believe. That is how you become part of this wonderful thing God is bringing about in the world. How we become part of the kingdom of heaven here on earth. How we live as God's people each and every day. We do that by believing and trusting in God. All of that allows us to risk in faith and to step forward and become the followers Jesus calls us to be.

And that brings us back to the call of the disciples. Because understanding the gospel helps us see why Andrew and Simon saw Jesus and answered. That surprising and appealing message is why John and James heard Jesus and answered. Because in that moment those disciples chose to answer, chose to respond, chose to be part of the good news Jesus brings to the world.

They decided that now was the time to change their lives and see the new, greater thing, that God was wanting for them. And we know the incredible transformation that happened to them. They went from being fishermen who worked on the water to being witnesses who worked in the world spreading the good news. For that is the life changing possibility which happens through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And that is the life changing possibility that calls to all of us- for the time is now and the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Because God is here at St. James, in your homes, in your lives. God comes because you are precious and important to God. So there are blessings, love, grace, mercy, and hope for you in your life and for us in our world. Experience those blessing. Know the truth of God for your life. And what realize what that means.

And then grow. Become the better person God knows you can be. Let go of the wrong and embrace the good. Let grace and love, peace and mercy touch you and change you. Be transformed. Be transformed as you begin a life time relationship with God that opens a future you never imagined possible.

And believe that as incredible as that possibility is, as incredible as the good news is, that all of this is only the start of what God is doing when we follow in the way of Jesus Christ and discover the greater things that God has called us to experience and be in the world.