

Answering the Most Important Call

There are many calls from our Lord in his holy Word. There is the call to love, the call to obey, and the call to serve. There are also calls of humility, patience, and self-control. But today, we are going to look at the most important call of all: Repent and believe.

Listen to Mark 1:14-15: **“After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’”**

Did you hear the call? **“Repent and believe the good news!”** Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: This is the most important call you can answer in your life. No other call comes close. No other call carries greater implications. It literally is the difference between those in heaven who answered the call and those in hell who did not. That’s no exaggeration. In fact, this call is so important that you can go to every single book of the Bible in Holy Scripture, and you will hear or see this call. Name the book, and the call to repent and believe is there.

After John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee to proclaim the same message John proclaimed prior to being imprisoned. Listen to John’s message in Matthew 3:1-2: **“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”** Now listen to Jesus’ message in Mark 1:15, **“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”** This is not a coincidence. The words **“after John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee”** are not a mere timeframe. They are an important transition. They are a passing of the baton, if you will. John is in prison, but the call to repent must continue. It’s Jesus’ turn. It’s that important.

This passing of the baton from John the Baptist to Jesus is important because now the One to whom all the Old Testament testified and to whom John himself testified is on the scene. Every prophecy and every promise of God has led to this moment (to Mark 1:14-15), and everything that Jesus says and does from this point on in Mark 1:14-15 will have eternal significance.

There are two words in the Greek for “time.” There is the word *“chronos,”* where we get our English word “chronology.” *“Chronos”* refers to an order of events. But when Jesus said, **“The time has come,”** in Mark 1:15, the word he used was *“kairos,”* which refers to an important moment in history, a historic event.

How historic was this moment in Mark 1:14-15? It was so historic that everything that follows Mark 1:14-15 is the good news that Jesus proclaims to those who repent and believe. It is the perfect life he would live for sinners. It is the innocent death he would die on the cross for sinners. And it is the victory he would win over sin by his resurrection from the dead. Mark 1:14-15 is the moment that led to all of these other historic events. That led to our salvation! And the blessings of Jesus’ perfect life, innocent death, and triumphant resurrection, brothers and sisters in Christ, are received one way, and only one way: Repent and believe.

The call to repent and believe is not just a call from John the Baptist or Pastor Dan. It is a call from the holy Son of God himself – from the One who is the source of good news, from the One who is the center and substance of God’s kingdom, from the one who is directly speaking to you in Mark 1:15. Yes, take this as your “*kairos*” moment. That’s how important this time of grace is that God is giving you today, how important repentance is, how important the good news of salvation is, how important Jesus is.

But I sometimes think when repentance is preached, we pastors tend to talk about repentance in generalities, and when we do that, we do God’s people a disservice. (Because again, I want to emphasize to you that this moment in Mark 1:14-15 is a really big deal to each of us.) So allow me to be specific about repentance. Repentance is two things: It is a “calling out” and a “calling to.” It is a “calling out of sin” and a “calling to the Savior.” So:

- When Jesus cries out “repent,” he is calling out all the self-righteous in this room, all the holier-than-thou attitudes, all the Pharisees in this room who act and talk like they are better than others. And to anyone here who will listen with a humble and contrite heart because you know he’s calling out you, Jesus proclaims good news to you. There is a righteousness that is not your own, but is from God. **“This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe”** (Romans 3:22); **“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”** (Galatians 3:27).
- When Jesus cries out “repent,” he is calling out all the self-reliant in this room, all those who think they are the captain of their own ship, those who trust in their own strength, those in this room who believe they are in control of their own destiny. And to anyone here who will listen with a humble and contrite heart because you know he’s calling out you, Jesus proclaims good news to you. Where **your flesh and heart may fail, God is the strength of your heart and your portion forever** (Psalm 73:26); **his grace is sufficient for you and his power is made perfect in your weakness** (2 Corinthians 12:9); **you can do all things through him who gives you the strength** (Philippians 4:13).
- When Jesus cries out “repent,” he is calling out all the self-absorbed in this room, all who are overly concerned about themselves to the point of ignoring others, those who have an exaggerated opinion of their importance, those in this room who are in constant need for attention. And to anyone here who will listen with a humble and contrite heart because you know he’s calling out you, Jesus proclaims good news to you. **Your sinful nature has been crucified with Christ, and you no longer live, but Christ lives in you; the life you now live, you live by faith in the Son of God, who loved you and gave himself for you** (Galatians 2:20); **Christ love compels you to no longer live for yourself, but for him who died for you and was raised again** (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).
- When Jesus cries out “repent,” he is calling out all the self-gratifiers in this room, all who gorge themselves on the cravings of their sinful nature, those who drink too much, those who look at porn, those in this room who have an insatiable appetite for the things of the world. And to

anyone here who will listen with a humble and contrite heart because you know he's calling out you, Jesus proclaims good news to you. **He reminds you that it was his will, his passion, his joy to endure the cross for your sins and scorn its shame.** (Hebrews 12:2); **there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus** (Romans 8:1).

- And when Jesus cries out "repent," he is calling out all those who suffer self-pity, all who suffer self-pity because self-this and self-that have failed them, those who feel sorry for themselves, those in this room who have convinced themselves that God couldn't possibly love or forgive them. And to anyone here who will listen with a humble and contrite heart because you know he's calling out you, Jesus, once again, proclaims good news to you. **You are more than conquerors through him who loved you;** (Romans 8:37); **nothing will be able to separate you from the love of God that is Christ Jesus your Lord** (Romans 8:39).

I ask humbly, but sincerely, "Have you been listening? Are you humble and contrite? Are you repentant?" Then receive the good news that Jesus has proclaimed to you with a believing heart. The kingdom of God that Jesus says is near is now. Today is the day of salvation! Everything that is God's is yours. Everything he's done for you is yours. Everything he promises you is yours. His life is yours. His death is yours. His resurrection is yours. Forgiveness is yours. Heaven is yours. Do you see what a historic moment this is? May it forever change your life! Amen.