

ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING

WORSHIP SERVICE WITH COMMUNION

10.30 AM 1ST SEPTEMBER 2024

Rev Dr Julia Binney leading & Rev Dr Jim Binney preaching

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk.

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New Series: The Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Mark

Theme: The Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-18)

Call to worship: based on Psalm 103:19-22

God has set his throne in heaven;

he rules over us all. He's the King!

Praise the Lord, all who do his bidding and obey his word.

Praise the Lord all his servants who do his will.

Praise the Lord, all creatures, wherever you are—

everything and everyone made by God.

Praise the Lord, King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Hymn MP 366:

Jesus is King and I will extol Him,

Give Him the glory and honour His name.

He reigns on high, enthroned in the heavens,

Word of the Father, exalted for us.

We have a hope that is steadfast and certain,

Gone through the curtain and touching the throne.

We have a Priest who is there interceding,

Pouring His grace on our lives day by day.

We come to Him, our Priest and Apostle,

Clothed in His glory and bearing His name,

Laying our lives with gladness before Him;

Filled with His Spirit we worship the King.

O Holy One, our hearts do adore You;

Thrilled with Your goodness we give You our praise.

Angels in light with worship surround Him,

Jesus, our Saviour, forever the same.

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A PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING:

Heavenly Father, yours is the kingdom:

A kingdom of love, justice and peace.

Lord Jesus Christ, yours is the power:

The power to heal and forgive us.

Holy Spirit, yours is the glory:

The glory to renew and recreate us.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit we praise and worship you and give you thanks for all you are and all you do for us.

Lord, you call us to follow you.

In love and humility we bow down before you and say, 'Lord, where you lead we will follow.' Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: *You are invited to pray in your own heart language*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours

now and for ever and ever. Amen.

Family Time: Seek God's kingdom first

(There will be an offering taken during the following song, and after the song the children will leave us for their own groups)

Hymn BP&W 357:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

And His righteousness,

And all these things shall be added unto you,

Allelu-, alleluia.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu-, alleluia!

Man shall not live by bread alone,

But by every word,

That proceeds from the mouth of God,

Allelu-, alleluia.

Ask and it shall be given unto you,

Seek and ye shall find.

Knock and it shall be opened unto you,

Allelu-, alleluia.

If the Son shall set you free,
Ye shall be free indeed.
Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free,
Hallelu, hallelujah!

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,
He shall direct thy path,
In all thy ways acknowledge Him,
Allelu-, alleluia.

Praise to the Father, praise to the Son,
Praise to the Spirit, too,
And to the Godhead, three in one;
Allelu-, alleluia.

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PRAYER OF DEDICATION

BIBLE READING 1: Psalm 24:1-10

BIBLE READING 2: Mark 1:9-18

HYMN BP&W 74:

You are the king of glory,
You are the Prince of Peace;
You are the Lord of heaven and earth,
You're the Sun of righteousness.

Angels bow down before You,
Worship and adore, for
You have the words of eternal life,
You are Jesus Christ the Lord.

Hosanna to the Son of David!
Hosanna to the King of kings!
Glory in the highest heaven,
For Jesus the Messiah reigns.

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SERMON: THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM (Mark 1:14-18)

This Sunday we begin a new series of studies on **The Kingdom of God**, looking at Mark's interpretation of Jesus' New Order. The Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom of Heaven) is the central theme of Jesus' preaching according to the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). While Matthew (who addresses himself to the Jews) speaks for the most part of the Kingdom of Heaven, Mark and Luke speak of the Kingdom of God which has the same meaning (but was more intelligible to non-Jewish readers). In essence both terms mean exactly the same thing: The 'new order' or 'new way of believing, being and doing' which was at the heart of everything Jesus was and did.

GOSPEL of the
KINGDOM
Exploring the Gospel of
Mark



The Bible speaks of a universe over which God is sovereign. This concept of the Kingdom of God, and the subsequent Kingdom values and principles we're all called to recognise and live by, is one of the greatest themes of the New Testament. A foolish person ignores this but a wise person plumbs the depths of these things and takes them to heart. Over the next few weeks we'll be looking at the teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God as outlined in Mark's Gospel. For Mark the Kingdom (or reign) of God is not some airy-fairy concept awaiting us sometime in the distant future but something to be lived out practically here and now. *'The only way the Kingdom of God is going to be manifest in this world before Christ comes is if we manifest it by the way we live as citizens of heaven and subjects of the king'* ~ R C Sproul

Mark's Gospel is often recommended as a good place to start for anyone wanting to get to grips with the teaching of Jesus. Primarily this is because it is the shortest of the four Gospels and therefore often deemed to be the simplest. This is to do somewhat of a disservice to the author, however, who was clearly deeply concerned to fully comprehend (and convey to the reader) exactly who Jesus was, what he came to do, what he taught... and how all that remained vitally important for the people of his day.

It is widely accepted that (although the first of the Gospels to be written) Mark's Gospel was written at least some 35-45 years after Jesus' died, and that it is more of a 'political' rather than 'historical' document. In other words it is more than simply a historical account of the life and teaching of Jesus. It primarily attempts to unpack and apply the radical, revolutionary, life-changing, society-changing nature of all Jesus stood for in a Palestinian society torn between the pull of secular, materialistic Roman/Herodian society on one hand and the shallow, legalistic religiosity of the Pharisees/Sadducees/Essenes on the other hand. For Mark there had to be another way, a third way, a better way, a more God-centred way, a more compassionate towards others way of living. This way, he believed, was embodied in the life and teaching of Jesus... but it was 35-45 years since Jesus walked this earth, and even professing Christians had seemingly forgotten what this 'new order' or 'new way of believing, being and doing' at the heart of everything Jesus was and did was all about.

For most of Christian history Mark has been the neglected Gospel, superseded in importance by the other three Gospels. Because of the many parallels between Mark's day and today this Gospel is enjoying something of a renaissance. Karl Barth (probably the most significant theologian of the 20th century) used to say that 'theology should be done with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.' Our media today is full of stories advocating either the supposed blessings of materialism on one hand, or the abuses of religion on the other hand (although oftentimes materialism and religion get so muddled up with each other that it is difficult to tell the difference). Mark's Gospel – especially the various references to Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God – are worthy of our consideration today as they *'Challenge readers of every generation to participate in the discipleship adventure as defined by the specific practise of Jesus as Mark narrates it'* ~ Ched Myers.

Since we will be considering each reference Jesus makes to the Kingdom of God chronologically, we begin at the beginning with **The Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14,15)**. Mark tells us that Jesus' public activity of preaching, teaching, and healing began after John the Baptist had been 'handed over' (Greek: *paradothēnai*). 'Arrested' or 'put in prison' is the usual translation but *paradothēnai*, 'handed over' would appear to have been understood in the early church to signal specific action directed by God as part of God's particular plan e.g. Paul speaks of how Jesus was 'handed over to death for our sins' (Romans 4:25) and how on the night Jesus was 'handed over' he shared bread and wine with his disciples (1 Corinthians 11:23). Mark uses it several times of Jesus and here it is used of the handover of prominence from John the Baptist to Jesus. For Mark this is not a random moment. John's arrest is a signal. It marks a significant turning point in the plan and purpose of God: 'After John was handed over... Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel (or good news) of God' (v.14). So, just what was this 'good news' Jesus had to share? Typically, Mark sums it up in three staccato sentences (he wrote in Greek which was clearly not his first language): 'The time promised by God has come at last! The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!' (v.15 NLT).

1. God's Promised Intervention in Our World is Now Here (v.15a). Some manuscripts read 'Jesus came into Galilee preaching *the Gospel of the Kingdom of God*' (v.14 NKJV) suggesting that the Gospel or Good News Jesus introduced was essentially about God's Kingdom being established in a new way on earth. The Bible speaks of a universe over which God is Sovereign (Psalm 103:19) but also of a world in rebellion against God (Genesis 3). Contained within that same Creation Narrative, however, is the promise that in due course God would send a Messiah, a Redeemer, a Saviour who would rescue God's world from the consequences of their sin and restore God's kindly and gracious rule (Genesis 3:15). This would be no 'quick fix' however. Even for God it would take time to sort out

the mess humankind had got itself into. The Patriarchs and Prophets foretold this eventual coming of God's Kingdom upon earth (there are over 350 prophecies that refer to the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament alone). Just *when* Mark thinks this reign of God begins has been one of the disputed questions of biblical interpretation primarily because it is somewhat unclear as to what the phrase 'the kingdom of God *is at hand*' (v.15b NKJV) actually means. A number of prominent scholars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries thought of God's reign as something that 'could emerge gradually in history through human effort assisted by God's grace.' Thus Dr C I Scofield (1843-1921), author of the then very popular *Scofield Reference Bible*, taught that Christians should ignore Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) because its principles and precepts didn't apply to the here and now but to a period when the Kingdom of God would be fully established sometime in the distant future. Others took a very different point of view arguing that Jesus 'proclaimed the Kingdom of God not as something to come in the future but as a matter of present experience... In the ministry of Jesus himself divine power is released in effective conflict with evil' (C H Dodd). I agree with this latter view. Here, Jesus tells us that 'The time promised by God has come at last!' (v.15a). The Kingdom of God has become a present reality manifest in Jesus' own person and ministry, as he himself makes abundantly clear when declaring his Nazareth Manifesto (Luke 4:16-21).

2. **The Reign (or Rule) of God is Upon Us (v.15b).** I prefer 'reign' rather than 'kingdom' for two reasons. Firstly, it avoids introducing a male image that is not in the original Greek where *basileia* can apply equally to the rule of kings and queens. NB. there is already too much patriarchy in today's church (cf. Galatians 3:28). Secondly, 'kingdom' seems primarily a spatial term which has boundaries or borders, whereas Mark uses *basileia* to indicate God's rule and reign over hearts and minds and lives. Mark clearly sees this new era of God's rule and reign as being established in and through the coming of Jesus. The simplest way to understand the Kingdom of God is as the realm where Jesus Christ reigns as King and God's authority is supreme. Jesus sees the rule or reign of God over the hearts and minds of people as being centred in their response to him, to the fact that he is who he is. We see this aptly illustrated in the response Jesus expects from Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John, when he calls them to 'follow me' (vs.16-20). In the previous few verses (vs.9-11) Mark recounts that Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan was accompanied by God the Father's affirmation that although Jesus was fully human he was also fully divine: 'And a voice from heaven said, "You are my dearly loved Son"' (v.11). Although as God the Son '[Jesus] has been given all authority in heaven and on earth' (Matthew 28:18) submission to his rule over our hearts and lives is invited not demanded. 'Follow me' is about engaging with that 'new order' or 'new way of believing, being and doing' which was at the heart of everything Jesus was and did. It is active not passive in that it is linked to active service rather than 'easy believism' – 'Come follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people' (v.17). It is encouraging because 'I will make you' (Greek: *genesthai*) implies a gradual process of training.
3. **Turn Back to God & Embrace God's New Order (v.15c).** According to Mark, in response to this new divine initiative, Jesus called on women and men everywhere to '*Repent* of your sins and *believe* the Good News.' These two words, 'Repent' and 'Believe' are easily and often misunderstood today, even by professing Christians. 'Repent' conjures up a picture of someone wringing their hands, weeping copious tears, in remorse over their many sins, but the actual word in Greek, *metanoia*, literally means 'a change of mind.' To genuinely repent, therefore, is to recognise that we are going in the wrong direction; to stop, turn around, and start going in the right direction. 'Believe' simply means 'to take Jesus at his word, to believe that God is the kind of God that Jesus tells us about, to believe that God so loves the world that he will make any sacrifice to bring us back to himself, to believe that what sounds too good to be true is really true!' (William Barclay). *Repent* and *Believe* are head and tails of the same coin. Here, they simply mean to turn back from 'doing our own thing' (whatever that may be) and embrace the 'new order' or 'new way of believing, being and doing' which was at the heart of everything Jesus was and did.

Song: https://youtu.be/L9HiB_qdPQY?si=9yMhjJtWWf8jZQvD

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold
I'd rather be His than have riches untold

I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

Than to be the king of a vast domain
And be held in sin's dread sway
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.

I'd rather have Jesus than worldly applause
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause
I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame
Yes, I'd rather be true to His holy name.

Than to be the king of a vast domain
And be held in sin's dread sway
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.

SONGWRITERS: RHEA MILLER, GEORGE BEVERLY SHEA.

COMMUNION

Words of Invitation:

Here is the table of the Lord,
we are gathered to his supper,
a foretaste of God's eternal kingdom.
Come, when you are fearful, to be made new in love.
Come, when you are doubtful, to be made strong in faith.
Come, when you are full of regret, and be made whole.
Come, young and old, there is room for all.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION AND THANKSGIVING

INSTITUTION:

'The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread
and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,
"This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
In the same way after supper he took the cup saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until
he comes. *(1 Corinthians 11:23-26)*

DECLARATION:

**Jesus, you are the bread of life. Whoever comes to you will never hunger, and whoever
believes in you will never thirst... Whoever eats of this bread will live forever, and the
bread that you give for the life of the world is your flesh.** *(from John 6:35, 51)*

This is the body of Christ, broken for you.
(take a piece of bread and eat as it is served to you)

DECLARATION:

Jesus, you are the fountain of life. This cup is the new covenant in your blood poured out for us for the forgiveness of sins... We look forward to the day when we will drink it anew with you in the kingdom of our Father. *(from Revelation 21:6; Matthew 26:29)*

This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.

(we drink together once all have been served)

POST COMMUNION PRAYER:

In sharing bread and wine, you have strengthened us, Lord Jesus.

Having eaten, we look to the future.

Maranatha! We long for your coming, O Lord!

We long for the coming of your kingdom, O Lord!

We await the coming of your justice, salvation and peace. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION: Mary Brockington

Our Lord God and Father, we are reminded that your Kingdom is ... Righteousness, Peace and Joy. Yes, we *can* find all of these in our world today, but we know only too well that in much of your creation these qualities are in short supply. So, we pray for places and situations where your righteousness, peace and joy are particularly needed.

We all know of places where there is conflict hatred and, indeed, some of them are very close to the hearts of some of us. We are reminded daily in news bulletins of the war between Ukraine and Russia, the conflicts in the Middle East, the forthcoming elections in the United States. Lord, we bring to you in a moment of silence our own individual, heartfelt concerns for these and other places.

We pray for those who have sought, or are seeking, refuge in our country, and we pray that, as you protect them, you will also speak to the hearts of those who oppose them and their right to a safe home here. We pray particularly for local organizations we know who work to ease their life: [Reading] Refugee Support Group, Reading Red Kitchen and Care4Calais.

We pray for those people in London whose flats have been severely damaged by fire. We pray that they will be found new homes soon. We know that bricks and mortar are not everything and we pray that you will ease the inevitable feelings of loss for what can never be replaced. We also pray that the repair of buildings which still need the replacement of inflammable cladding may proceed speedily.

We think of the Paralympics which have just begun: we thank you for their inclusivity and pray that this may act as an example to show how others too may share in a fuller life.

This week is the beginning of a new school year so we pray for all those who will start school, move to a new class, or move to a new school. May they and their teachers know your peace and calm in this new beginning.

Lord, we pray for your Kingdom to come on earth. Amen

Hymn MP 1282:

Hear the call of the kingdom,
Lift your eyes to the King;

Let His song rise within you
As a fragrant offering
Of how God, rich in mercy,
Came in Christ to redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To be children of light
With the mercy of heaven,
The humility of Christ;
Walking justly before Him,
Loving all that is right,
That the life of Christ may shine through us.
*King of Heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To reach out to the lost
With the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the cross,
Bringing peace and forgiveness
And a hope yet to come:
Let the nations put their trust in us.

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THE BLESSING:

The source of life go with you as you celebrate all he has given you.
The pattern of life guide you as you walk in the ways of his new order.
The giver of life sustain you as you offer him your service.
The resurrection and the life bless you and keep you now and for all eternity.
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE GRACE:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.**

Today we will have refreshments after the service in our Connect Groups

Date for your Diary:

- **Friday 6th September – Prayer Meeting in the Upper Room – 10.30 – 11.30. All welcome**
- **Sunday 8th September – Church Meeting after the service. There will also be a fair trade stall on this Sunday**
- **Wednesday 11th September – Abbey iCaf begins a new term**
- **Saturday 14th September - Ride and Stride at the Church 10.00 am - 3.00 pm**

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