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Sermon Notes

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Christ Begins to Build His Kingdom

Mark 1:12-20

It is fascinating to study how the greatest empire builders of the world got their start.

Alexander the Great was very young, merely 21 years old, when his father Philip of Macedon was assassinated while building a consolidation of Greek city states. Alexander seized the opportunity. He quickly ordered his two potential rivals executed, and immediately moved the army out to conquer southern Greece in lightning campaigns. Then he headed east to conquer the Persian empire with such rapidity and violence it was likened in the Book of Daniel to a leopard with four wings. RUTHLESSNESS and SPEED!

Julius Caesar used political cunning and strategic marriages to influential women to position himself at the head of a powerful army of Roman legions, then used his military genius to conquer all of Gaul (modern-day France) in nine years. He trained his soldiers personally with the meticulous care of a skilled craftsman, and he led boldly from the front of his army. As all worldly conquerors, he was relentlessly ambitious and ruthless to anyone who opposed him.

Genghis Khan was much the same. Clever, ruthless, treacherous, and worldly wise... after his first significant battle against the Tartars, he slaughtered all who were taller than the axle of a wagon wheel; by such ruthlessness he united the Mongol clans into one mighty force that swept out of the Asian steppes to conquer China and then much of the world.

Through treachery, ruthlessness, ambition, pride, viciousness and bloodshed were all these great empires built.

Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords... and it is true that his kingdom conquers all enemies and extends to the ends of the earth and over all lands... but his manner of building his kingdom is radically different.

The power of Christ is absolute... no one could ever have stood before him. Demons trembled before him and instantly obeyed his slightest command. Jesus controlled the weather... the winds and the waves obeyed his word. Jesus controlled nature. Fish swam into the nets of fishermen at his mere thought. What army of mere mortals could ever have withstood him? He could not be killed unless he chose to... for he openly said no one could take his life from him. So if the Romans had mobilized all their world-conquering legions to stop him and they all assembled in the vast plains of some battlefield, Jesus could have stood alone against them all. And if he had willed it and had given the word, "Die!" all of them would have fallen instantly lifeless before his word.

But that is not how the Prince of Peace willed to build his Kingdom. Mark 1 shows an entirely different approach.

In Mark 1, we see the beginning of the building of the only kingdom that will last for all eternity. A kingdom of love... a kingdom of justice... a kingdom of peace... and kingdom where all the subjects will delight in the King and in each other... a kingdom illuminated by the glory of God and in which there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain.

Mark 1 gives us a sense of the beginning conquests of this perfect kingdom of light. 1) Jesus fights Satan's temptation with the Word of God. 2) Then Jesus goes to Galilee and commands sinners to enter his Kingdom through repentance and faith in the GOOD NEWS. 3) Jesus calls servants to follow him and learn from him how to become "fishers of men"... to build his worldwide empire by a kind of spiritual fishing.

More than anything, we will see that Christ expands his Kingdom by the irresistible force of attraction within the people it is conquering, by giving them a sense of God's glory, a fragrance of delight, a foretaste of pure GOODNESS, a glimpse of perfect beauty, a yearning to be close to a perfectly GOOD KING. He advances the kingdom of God by revealing to all people who perfectly good the King of the Kingdom of Heaven really is, and by enabling people to see it and savor it and to long for it. Then resistance melts, they drop the weapons of their rebellion, and run into the welcoming arms of a loving Father rather than crushed by the force of irresistible cruelty and the engines of war. By revealing God as the GOOD NEWS, former enemies become not just friends but adopted sons and daughters. Their warfare is ended forever.

This is how the King builds his eternal Kingdom. But he starts with a courageous battle against his bitterest foe – Satan himself

I. Christ Conquers Satan to Inaugurate His Kingdom

Mark 1:12-13 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, ¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

A. “At once” = “Immediately”: No Time to Waste

B. Compelled by the Spirit

1. Greek is strong... as though Jesus were DRIVEN by the Spirit— cast out of society by the Spirit
2. The anointing of the kings of old resulted in their empowerment, and their transformation, and them knowing WHAT TO DO
3. So David was anointed by Samuel with a horn of oil...

1 Samuel 16:13 and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power.

Very soon after that, David boldly went out and fought Goliath and defeated him in the name of Almighty God, and the nation of

Israel rallied behind David's bold leadership and defeated the Philistines. David built his kingdom that way.

4. Jesus' initial battle is similar, but with a profound difference
5. Like David's man to man combat with Goliath, Jesus went out as our champion to fight our greatest enemy on our behalf. But our enemies were spiritual: Satan, sin, and death.

C. The Desert

1. The site of the battle is the desert of Judea... a wasteland
2. It is a picture of austerity... no food, no drink, no beauty
3. Jesus fasted for forty days, like Moses

D. AT THE END of that Time: The Temptation by Satan

1. Mark tells us no details, so I will not expand on the three temptations listed by Matthew and Luke; just mention them
2. We know from Matthew 1) tempted to use his miraculous power to feed his body by changing stones to bread; 2) tempted to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple and trust that God would send his angels to save his life; 3) tempted to worship Satan so that he could gain the kingdoms of the world
3. We know also that Jesus resisted every temptation successfully by quoting scripture... "It is written... It is written... It is written"
4. Mark's purpose: simply that Jesus was tempted

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.

Hebrews 2:18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted

E. The Beasts Surrounded Him

1. Mark doesn't specify the desert beasts, but Isaiah 30:6 speaks of lions and poisonous snakes which prowl in the desert
2. Perhaps the mention of beasts is to show the power of Jesus over all nature: man was given dominion over all the earth, and Jesus' power over ferocious animals is a picture of it

F. The Angels Attended Him

1. Jesus is the King of angels, but at that moment, they were more powerful than he was... weakened as he was from forty days of fasting
2. Later the angels will serve him again in Gethsemane, when he was close to death, sweating great drops of blood... God dispatched angels to strengthen him

G. The Significance of Christ's Sinlessness

1. If Christ had not conquered all Satan's temptations, he could not have been our Savior
2. For then he would have had to make atonement for his own sins and could not save us from ours

1 Peter 2:22 He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

1 Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

By his sinlessness, Jesus was made fully qualified to be our Savior... able to die as an atoning sacrifice; also able to teach us how to resist temptation ourselves in his pattern and strength

II. Christ Commands Sinners to Enter His Kingdom

Mark 1:14-15 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!"

A. John the Baptist Removed from the Scene

Three phases of John's ministry: Prepare the way, Proclaim the way, Get out of the way... Mark 6 tells us details of his imprisonment

B. Jesus WENT INTO Galilee

1. Jesus made his way up to the northern region of the Jewish lands, to Galilee, his home area
2. The Gospel of John covers Jesus' early ministry in Judea: cleansing the temple, miracles during the Passover Feast, the journey through Samaria including the women at the well recorded in John 4
3. NOW: the next phase of Jesus' ministry would center in Galilee; it is time for Jesus to begin his ministry in earnest

C. Proclaiming "the Good News of God"

1. He begins by the simple, powerful act of preaching
2. Though Jesus would do many astonishing miracles, his preaching of the word of God would have the most significant and eternal impact of anything he ever did
3. The simple verbal proclamation of God's perfect Word transforms souls, changes the world
4. It is vital for the church to continue to be fully committed to this ministry... to the simple proclamation of the gospel
5. We might well wonder, "What can such a simple act do? It's just words... the words are like milk, so simple a child could understand them. The problems of humanity are deep and convoluted and complex; the most brilliant minds and most charismatic leaders all putting their talents together cannot solve these problems—the economic issues, the social challenges, the historical tensions between nations, the complexities of class and race and politics and wealth distribution and disease and famine and natural disasters and on and on and on. And Jesus' strategy for transforming the world is this: verbal proclamation of the gospel message—"The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel." That's it???

6. YES! That's it! What Paul calls the "foolishness of preaching"
7. Churches need to resist the temptation to attract the world by competing with the world—doing entertainment and programs and fun activities like a cruise-ship; or addressing the hot-button topics of the day that all the news outlets are discussing passionately
8. What the church is called to do is to follow Jesus in proclaiming the "GOOD NEWS OF GOD?"
 - a. The "of God" is unclear... is it "The Good New FROM God" or "The Good News ABOUT God"?
 - b. Why not both!! God wants the entire world to know that HE HIMSELF is good

John Piper "God is the Gospel" ... God IS the Good News; all the lesser blessings of the gospel including justification, the forgiveness of our sins, the healing of our souls and bodies, even our resurrection from the dead make way for the real blessing of the gospel... that WE GET GOD! FOREVER!!

Psalm 73:25-26 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalm 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

John Piper: "The critical question: If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven IF GOD WAS NOT THERE?"

His point is GOD IS THE GOSPEL... he's what we get when we enter the Kingdom of God.

Genesis 15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

So here is the GOOD NEWS: though we are members of a wicked, rebellious human race, under the curse of sin and death, and though we have individually sinned against him and deserve his wrath, God is willing – gladly willing – to forgive all of that and pay for our sins himself through his Son and welcome us into his beautiful, radiant, happy home for all eternity.

THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD... that's what Jesus came to proclaim

D. The Time Has Been Fulfilled

1. Jesus began his preaching with an amazing statement

"The time is fulfilled!"

2. What does that mean?
3. God has a perfect time for everything; the lining up of circumstances... nothing accidental
4. From eternity past, God had planned everything that would come to pass... but especially the exact timing of the coming of his only begotten Son, the Savior of the world
5. Galatians 4:4 says it was "The fullness of time": the exact number of days, weeks, months, and years had been measured out from the beginning of time until the right time for Jesus Christ to begin

Mark 1:15 "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand

6. It is also a sense of a limited-time offer... something called the "day of salvation" has dawned

2 Corinthians 6:2 For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

And again:

Hebrews 4:7 "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

So even now you can hear Jesus calling to you... telling you "Today is the day of salvation"! Don't waste this unique moment in history!!

E. The Kingdom of God Has Drawn Near

God enthroned... actively ruling over his universe as king... making laws, governing, judging, marshalling his power with wisdom...
GOD THE KING

1. What does it mean that the "Kingdom of God has drawn near"?
 - a. We sinners have rebelled against the throne of God
 - b. Therefore God was distant from us because of our sins

Psalm 138:6 ... the proud he knows from afar.

- c. By Jesus, the Son of God, entering the world, the Kingdom of God is drawing near
- d. In one sense, that could terrify us sinners!! It could be that the Kingdom of God is drawing near to bring on us the wrath we so justly deserve... like the D-Day invasion at Normandy pouring into Europe to end the Nazi darkness; if you are a Nazi soldier, the coming near of the forces of goodness would bring terror!
- e. But that is not why Jesus came into the world!

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

- f. In Jesus, the Kingdom of God is drawing near in friendship and a warm invitation to accept his mercy and forgiveness

Two commands we must obey!! REPENT and BELIEVE

F. The First Command of the Gospel: Repent

1. Jesus is the King... and he is commanding all people everywhere to repent of our rebellion against God... of our SINS

God is the King of the universe; therefore, he is the LAWGIVER and
JUDGE

These are his laws:

Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength

Love your neighbor as yourself

We see that we have sinned greatly and are rightly under the JUST
condemnation of our pure and holy King

Therefore, Jesus is calling on sinners to REPENT, for the Kingdom of
God is drawing near...

Repent means to THINK DIFFERENTLY and then, to live differently
as a result... to make a massive U-Turn

To acknowledge our sins honestly, to be deeply grieved over our
rebellion and to cast ourselves fully on the mercy of God

G. The Second Command of the Gospel: Believe the Good News

1. Christ calls on people to this one simple work... BELIEVE the
GOOD NEWS
2. To believe in Christ is to believe that he really is the Son of God;
the main idea of the gospel is that the Son of God entered the
world, lived a sinless life, did astonishing miracles proving he was
the Son of God, died in our place on the cross, rose again from the
dead, and that through him all your sins can be forgiven and you be
reconciled to God the King... the good King, the loving King

III. Christ Calls Servants to Build His Kingdom

Mark 1:16-20 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.

A. Calling the Future Apostles

1. These men would eventually become four of the Twelve Apostles
2. These apostles were essential to his worldwide kingdom... essential to the plan of salvation
3. They would be **eyewitnesses** of his life, his amazing words, his mighty works, his atoning death, his bodily resurrection

Ephesians 2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

B. *“The Master Plan of Evangelism”*

1. Robert Coleman’s classic book, explaining Jesus’ plan for expanding the kingdom to the ends of the earth
2. Calling key men to follow him, pouring into them, training them, in in-depth discipleship, resulting in an exponentially growing church
3. Jesus spent quality time with these men... they were with him, they ate with him, spent time with him, saw him in both his interactions with seekers and his conflicts with his enemies, watched him do one miracle after another, learned how he prayed, how he taught
4. These would be Jesus’ first co-laborers with him in the work of the spiritual harvest

C. Four Men Already Prepared: Peter, Andrew, James, John

All four of these men were successful fishermen... skillful at their trade of fishing in the Sea of Galilee; Peter (at least) was a homeowner

It seems impossible that successful fishermen like these men, heads of households, homeowners, important men in the fishing community, would just simply walk away from their nets and their boats – from their livelihood – to follow a stranger

But that's not how it really was... they knew about Jesus from John the Baptist

1. Earlier: All Four Had Been Disciples of John

- a. John's ministry made a powerful impression on each of them... the message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins
- b. John's proclamation concerning Jesus

Mark 1:7-8 "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ..."

John 1:34 I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.

- 2. After John was put in prison, these men returned to their jobs; in the midst of their work... Jesus called them
 - a. Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew were in the middle of casting their nets
 - b. Right away, they leave their nets and follow Jesus!
 - c. Immediately after that, Jesus walks by James and John, in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets... maybe repairing them
 - d. As soon as Jesus calls them, they follow Jesus
 - e. Jesus was recruiting servants to build his kingdom
- 3. Jesus Commands Obedience
 - a. Jesus is not asking them if they'd like to
 - b. He is giving them a royal summons
 - c. If they really believe in Jesus, they will obey
- 4. The Command: "Come Follow Me"

- a. The essence of the training: personal time with Jesus

Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

- b. They would learn to follow his example... watching him, learning from him
- c. Jesus would train them in every area of life and godliness... how to interact with all kinds of people: enemies, the rich, the suffering, the poor, women, children, soldiers, tax collectors, prostitutes, royal officials, beggars... EVERYONE!
- d. AND immediately for our context... how to advance the Kingdom of God through evangelism!!

- 5. The Promise (and the Work): “I Will Make You Fishers of Men”

MORE NEXT WEEK!!

IV. Three Lessons: Temptation, the Kingdom, and Fishing for Men

A. Temptation

1. Every single day, Satan is laying spiritual traps for the people of God
2. Temptation is a hidden magnetic pull, luring us from the pure path of light to the hidden pit of darkness
3. Ephesians 6 speaks of the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”... Jesus wields that sword like the ultimate master
4. Each of us who follow Christ must fight this secret battle with temptation, with him as our EXAMPLE and our CAPTAIN

B. The Kingdom of God

1. Understand the absolute authority of God the King in your life
2. We sinners are all independent-minded, thinking we can be the “master of our fate and the captain of our soul”

3. More and more we need to bow the knees to King Jesus and learn to do nothing but what he commands

C. God IS the Good News

Psalm 73:25-26 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

D. Fishers of Men (more next week!)

1. The relentless call of evangelism...to speak the words of life to a lost person this week
2. This is the way King Jesus wills to build his kingdom! Not by the carnage of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar and Genghis Khan... but with the pull of love, the compulsion of truth, the delight of the pure GOODNESS of God