



**Sermon Notes: Cameron Webber,  
“The Good News of the Kingdom”**

**09 February 2025**

**Readings: Mark 1:1-45, Romans 1:16-17**

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**Introduction**

Finally the schools are all back for another year and as things get underway, one staple for the start of a new school year, particularly for the younger kids, is ‘News.’

I don’t know if you’ve been in the classroom as a parent or grandparent when the Kindy kids or the Year 1s get to share some news, but it’s pretty cute. Most of the time they want to share good news. Maybe it’s something that happened over the holidays – a visit to relatives or from relatives, or a special outing. If it’s more ‘show and tell’ they might bring along a Christmas present. Good News indeed.

And today we begin a series called **Good News!** It’s a series about the ‘Goodest’ News ever, a series in which we will look at the first half of Mark’s account of Jesus.

The details of how the sermon series unfolds and how the Bible Study books fit with it are on a flyer in the foyers (also sent out via email a couple of weeks back).

**Good News!** is the short title, with the longer title taken from the first verse of Mark: ‘The beginning of the **good news** about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.’ (Mark 1:1)

That’s the newer NIV translation. In place of ‘good news’ some translations use the old English word **gospel**, which literally means ‘good story.’ The Greek word used by Mark (and other writers in the New Testament) simply means good news. Because of the various ways the word ‘gospel’ is now used (e.g.: ‘a written account of the life of Jesus’, or as shorthand for the entire content of the Christian message) it’s probably better to use the simpler translation of ‘good news’ in the Bible to hear it as the original hearers would have heard it. (*See the Insight from 19 January for a bit more on this.*)

So, let’s pray as we come to look at this Good News about Jesus, this Good News of the Kingdom of God.

**Prayer**

Lord our God, Loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for what Mark wrote down almost 2,000 years ago under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thank you that it is your word to us. Today, and through this term, help us to hear afresh the Good News of Jesus and respond afresh to all he has done for us.

We ask it in his Name. Amen.

**1. The Good News is About Jesus**

The opening line sets the scene... The beginning of the **good news** about **Jesus**. But who is this Jesus? Mark tells us straight away and these opening words function almost as a title for all that is to follow, or at the very least, they set us up for the remainder of the book.

**1a. The Messiah (Christ)**

We are told that this is the beginning of the good news about Jesus the **Messiah**. (1:1)

‘Messiah’ is a Hebrew Word. The Greek translation is ‘Christ’. Different translators make different decisions about which of those two words to drop into our English translations, but whether you have Christ or Messiah, they both mean the same thing - ‘Anointed One.’

Remember the story of the shepherd David being anointed? The prophet Samuel pours oil on his head as a sign that he is being set aside for a special task. It seems to have been a general practice and it is explicitly mentioned for some of the kings that followed.

All of the kings could be referred to as an anointed one, as a messiah, and at the same time the people began looking forward to The Anointed One, The Messiah – promised by God through the prophets - God's special chosen King who would establish God's reign in a greater way than any king before him.

And so, as we have heard, Mark quotes Old Testament prophets and tells us about John the Baptist as the promised Messenger, and hence also shows that Jesus is The Messiah.

Mark tells us that the long expected Christ, the Messiah, the promised Saviour-King has now come. The long waited for Messianic Age has arrived. And there are even hints that the age of the Holy Spirit is dawning.

### **1b. The Son of God**

But that's not all Mark says... This is the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the **Son of God**. (1:1)

Right up front Mark identifies Jesus as the Son of God. You may be aware that the people of Israel were collectively referred to as God's son and that the kings as representatives were sometimes called God's son. But Jesus is uniquely The Son of God, and as we have heard, as he is baptised by John, 'the Spirit descended on him like a dove and a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.' (1:11) [Notice the reference to the Trinity there – Father, Son, Holy Spirit.]

In the first half page, Mark has told us that he is telling us the Good News about Jesus. And at least part of that good news is that, in Jesus, the kingdom of God has come.

## **2. The Good News is that the Kingdom is Near**

Mark opens by telling us this is the beginning of the good news about Jesus and by verses 14 and 15 we hear that, 'Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ...

**The kingdom of God has come near.**

How does a kingdom come near? Can I suggest it is when the king comes.

King Charles was in Australia recently. There was a lot of excitement beforehand and lots of announcements to prepare the way – much like we have in Mark 1. I do remember when Queen Elizabeth visited Australia (one of her visits in the 1980s) and we went out to see the motorcade heading down one of the multi-lane Canberra streets. And, as she came close, I realised that I was not on the right side of the road to get the best view, so I ran across the road to get a better view. I think if I tried something similar today I'd be crash-tackled by security guards!

So what is this Kingdom of God? God's kingdom is where God reigns. Notwithstanding the bigger sense in which God is King of heaven and Earth, in the Old Testament we see his reign, his rule, his kingdom in Israel the nation. Although he granted them human kings, he was their true King.

But now, since Jesus, God's people are no longer a geo-political entity, but a worldwide spiritual reality made up of all those who acknowledge the King – Jesus.

As Christians we live in a country, a state, a local council area and participate in the democratic processes, but our prime allegiance is not to a nation or a political party, but to the King who said, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' (John 18:36)

The good news is that in Jesus, the kingdom of God is near, and what did he say? 'The kingdom of God is near [so] repent and believe the good news' and it's as we do that, that we place ourselves in that Kingdom, under the reign of Jesus The King; The Messiah, The Christ.

We've heard an inauguration address of a president recently, and what Mark gives here is a brief summary of Jesus' inauguration address: 'The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!' (1:15) And that brief inauguration address is teased out in the rest of Mark's account, including here in chapter 1, because Jesus said more than, 'the kingdom is near,' more than 'repent and believe the good news.'

## 2a. Kingdom Words

Have a look at verse 21. 'They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.' (1:21-22) And by verse 27, they ask, 'What is this? A new teaching - and with authority!'

Jesus, the king, - speaks kingdom words – he teaches and preaches with authority. Have a look at verse 38. 'Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues. (1:38-39)

Jesus speaks Kingdom words. He preaches and he teaches. There is some overlap between preaching and teaching. If we were to make some distinction we would say preaching leans towards the proclamation, as in verse 14. 'Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come..." Teaching then gives content and explanation to the proclamation. (What we generally do in a sermon today is a mixture of both.)

This first chapter of Mark is full of references to Jesus' preaching and teaching. His words have authority; people seek him out, so much so that he 'could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.' (1:45)

But Mark doesn't actually give us much, at this stage, of the content of Jesus preaching and teaching, of his authoritative words. We know it's about the kingdom of God coming near. We know it's good news (1:15) and we will be given more details as the book unfolds, but what we mainly have in chapter 1 is action.

## 2b. Kingdom Actions

Jesus doesn't just speak with authority, he acts with authority. He doesn't just deliver Kingdom words, he shows us what the Kingdom is like with **Kingdom actions**.

### 2b (i) casting out evil spirits

And spectacular actions they are. If Jesus' teaching left them amazed in the synagogue in Capernaum what followed really nailed it home...

Verse 23

'Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!"

"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!"

The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching - and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." (1:23-27)

No wonder 'news about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.' (1:28)

Jesus comes with the authority of God and as God's kingdom draws near the tyranny of Satan's kingdom is dismantled. Demons are cast out and Satan's realm is being pushed back - a clear sign that the kingdom of God has come near.

### **2b (ii) healing sickness**

We see the same in the healings that Mark reports, these too, are the actions of the Kingdom of God. In verses 31-32 Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law who was in bed with a fever, and she began to wait on them. The word gets out and by nightfall 'the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. (1:32-34)

And then in verse 40,

'A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. (1:40-42)

It was understood at the time that lotions and potions were not enough to cure leprosy. If it was cured, it was God who had done it, and Jesus cures it with a word. The kingdom of God is indeed near. The King is near.

Remember the time when John the Baptist (when he is in prison) sends his disciples to Jesus to ask, 'Are you the One?' (Matthew 11). Jesus replies, 'The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead raised, good news preached.' He's quoting Isaiah. This is what was expected when The Messiah would come, when God would establish his reign, when his kingdom would come near.

Why is this such good news? It will take the rest of the book to answer because the good news is the whole story about Jesus - his words, his actions, and his death and resurrection, and what it all means as God's action in saving humankind.

### **2c. The King has Come**

God's Kingdom is near, The King has come, but Jesus is not actually called King in Mark until chapter 15 when at his trial Pilate asks, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' (15:2). And then 'the written notice of the charge against him reads: THE KING OF THE JEWS.' (15:26) And then those at the foot of the cross mock him. 'Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' (15:32)

But, paradoxically, it is in not coming down that Jesus is truly the Saviour King. Nowhere more than on the cross, do we see that Jesus is the King, the Messiah.

And then, when with a loud cry, Jesus breathes his last and the curtain of the temple is torn in two, we read that, 'the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"' (15:37-39)

Mark opens his account of Jesus by telling us that he is the Messianic King and the Son of God, and it is the Gentiles involved in his crucifixion, who declare him to be exactly that, right near the end of the book. Even when it is in mocking, they actually speak the truth.

In all his words and actions, Jesus the King, the Messiah, the Christ; Jesus the Son of God, brings the kingdom of God near. And in his death he pays the penalty for our sin so that we can be part of the kingdom he proclaimed. Good News indeed!

### 3. The Good News Requires a Response

But it's not automatic. A response to the good news is needed: 'The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.' (1:15)

Believe the good news - that Jesus is the messianic King, that he is the Son of God, and that in his death he has paid our penalty for our rejection of God, for our sin.

Repent - Turn from self to God. Turn from sin to living with Jesus as King.

#### 3a. from us

And that is a response that is required from us. Notwithstanding the uniqueness of the call to the first disciples, there is a very real sense in which his call to them is made to us... 'Come, follow me.' (1:17) Follow Jesus, not a philosophy of life, not even a theology, but follow the King.

And Peter and Andrew, James and John... 'At once they left their nets and followed him.' (1:18) Have you responded to that call? If you haven't, I encourage you to hear and respond.

#### 3b. from others

And if you have made that response, it's not so we can be a self-satisfied little group. The call goes to all, and as those who have responded we are the agents Jesus uses. As we heard, he called them to follow him and to be 'fishers of men.' If we have responded to the Good News, how can we not share it? Good News, like the kids back at school, Good News is for sharing.

What are you doing to share the good news? What will you do in 2025?

This term there are three opportunities where you can explore the good news – perhaps as someone who hasn't responded, or perhaps as someone wanting to revisit the foundations of your faith. And these opportunities are there for you to share good news – invite a non-church friend to one of the events advertised on the flyer...

## 1. CHRISTIANITY | **EXPLORED**

Over seven interactive sessions, explore Mark's Gospel and find out who Jesus is, what he achieved, and what it means for us today.

Steve will run this course this term in several timeslots:

Monday mornings 10am - commencing 17<sup>th</sup> Feb

Thursday mornings 10am - commencing 20<sup>th</sup> Feb


Thursday afternoons 2pm - commencing 20<sup>th</sup> Feb

If these times do not suit, please see Steve to arrange a mutually convenient alternative time.

2.  Combined Churches  
**ALPHA COURSE**

A video-based course encouraging conversations about life, faith and meaning from a Christian perspective.

Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30pm; 26<sup>th</sup> Feb - 16<sup>th</sup> Apr (plus Sat 12th Apr)  
At the Kiama Scout Hall. [facebook.com/events/563273926107502](https://facebook.com/events/563273926107502)

3.  **With Dr Michael Youssef**  
WIN Entertainment Centre  
Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> March

A big weekend, just up the road, also with a youth event on the Friday night and a kids' event on the Saturday morning. Check out [hopefortheillawarra.com.au](http://hopefortheillawarra.com.au) for all the information.

Plus Everyday Evangelism **training** opportunities in February!

We all want the people around us to know Jesus. But it can be tricky. When it comes to faith, the world has changed rapidly and the people in our lives are in so many different places. Where do we even start? How do we start conversations that point to Jesus with today? How do we share the wonderful life transforming good news of Jesus?

Details for the "Sharing Hope" course are under the 'training tab' on the Hope for the Illawarra website.

I ran across the road to get a better view of the Queen. These are three opportunities for you and/or your friends to get a better view of The King.

Good News is for sharing. It can be hard, but if we can say with Paul, 'I am not ashamed of the good news, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes,' (Romans 1:16) then we need to be praying for opportunities to share, for meaningful chats, for the alertness to make the most of opportunities, for the right words to say; praying for the softening of hearts and the willingness of our friends to Explore Christianity.

Jesus said, 'The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!' And that's as important for people to hear today as it was 2,000 years ago. So may we be those who accept and live and share that Good News.

Amen.