

The central message

ODCC 08/03/09 (The central message.doc)

Text: Mark 1:1-15

Introduction

1. I'm preaching on this today because I received some extremely abusive correspondence which also contained some foul language. I find that generally people who behave like that are not thinkers (*brainiac* from Superman comic) they rather respond emotionally.
 - a. It was in response to the idea that God wants us to live in a certain way and this group of people would not have anyone – including God – tell them what to do.
 - b. Someone asked me what I was preaching this weekend and when I told him his mouth literally fell open. Can you preach on something like that today? Life is hard enough without having to submit to dos and don'ts!
2. Repent, for the King of Heaven is at hand was a central theme of the Baptists and Christ's preaching and it says that Jesus came preaching, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.***"
 - a. So this short message laid the foundation for all of Jesus' preaching and teaching and if that is so then we ought to understand what Christ's message is.

The meaning of "repent"

1. The word is used often throughout the Bible and means to feel remorse to the point of shame and changing attitudes and behaviour.
 - a. An example could be of a husband and father who spends too much time away from home with his mates and at the pub. He's a womaniser and frequently is unfaithful. When at home he's impatient, somewhat violent and instils fear in his wife and children's lives. One day he sees himself for what he is. He's filled with remorse; he begs forgiveness from his family, and he positively changes his behaviour and attitude
 - b. That's Biblical repentance although it's even better when the repentant has Godly sorrow and also seeks God's forgiveness and has a positive change in behaviour and attitude to God (2 Cor 7:10).
2. Our text has that meaning. John the Baptist pointed out sin in the Pharisees' hearts and also in King Herod's life so he probably preached on sin in general and as people were convicted they repented and were baptised "unto repentance".
 - a. As you examine Jesus' teaching He never spent too much time condemning sinfulness in people's lives. He was more concerned with relationship. John's gospel says, "*As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*" (1:12)
 - b. Of course, sin does spoil relationship. It is often pointed out that the central character in sin is "I". A well-known tract depicts a throne where God has been dethroned and I rule my life.
 - c. The subject of sin is huge in theology. It has it's own branch called "Harmatology". The Gk word is *Harmatia* and can have different shades of meaning. It literally means "*to miss the mark*" but is expressed better as "*a governing principle or power*".
3. The Gk word for "repentance" is *Metanoeo*. It's made up of two words: *meta* = after, implying change (as in *metamorphose* where there is a change from one stage to another such as a tadpole to a frog). And *nous* = the mind and especially as it reflects the heart.
 - a. It reflects a change or an amendment especially as it concerns our attitudes and actions.

In the context of Christ's sentence

1. Let's look at the other things in our text. Jesus said: "**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.**"
 - a. "The time is fulfilled" – this means "the NOW time". It's a specified period of time in which some specific takes place. One can liken it to a season or a pregnancy.
 - b. Jesus was saying, "This is the beginning of a specified time" Even though Jesus said it 2000 years ago we can still rightly say we are in the NOW time.
 - c. You and I are the now generation!

2. What is this time? It is the time of God's Kingdom. Up to that point in time we might say that the KoG was an "intraKingdom". Think of intranet. "Intra" = *internal, from within*.
- a. But from this point in time the KofG was to be interKingdom. Think of internet. "Inter" = *to put into* and on its own means to bury – put a body INTO the ground. Jesus said, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel.*"
3. He said, "Believe in the gospel." The gospel is the good news that Jesus took the blame and the consequence of our sin upon Himself. He bore the punishment that should have been ours. And now He offers God's forgiveness to us and restores relationship.
 - a. This He offers as a free gift to whoever wants it and receives it. *Illustration:* of man on deathbed who believed he had eternal life because he belonged to a certain church but could never remember a time of actually receiving the gift. If someone offers me a gift and I never take it then it remains with the giver. This man received the gift hours before he died.
 - b. Believing means to put your trust in Christ. But it is much more than, it is faith that is active – it's a faith of the NOW time. Jesus says in Matt 11:12: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force." (similar to a wave and a surfer paddling and catching it and riding it).
 - c. And again, Jesus says, "*Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and all these things will be given to you*" (Mat 6:33). One translation says "*Be mostly concerned about the kingdom and everything else will fall into place.*"

Conclusion

1. Let me try and encapsulate what I've said. This is the central teaching of Jesus whose ministry was mainly about relationship with God.
 - a. Be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.
 - b. Recognise then that you belong to the KoG.
 - c. Let your mind and attitude motivate you – especially as you read God's Word and as you pray – God will guide you.
 - d. Develop an active faith for your own life but also as far as the KoG is concerned.
2. An even shorter conclusion: God wants active not passive followers.