

“The King Has Come”

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Mark 1:14–15 (ESV)

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”¹

The two big events in the life of the church are Christmas and Easter. At Christmas, we remember the birth of Jesus. At Easter, we remember his resurrection from the dead, which means we also remember his death. Jesus, Immanuel, “God with us,” came to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21), and he did this through his death on the cross, when he paid the penalty for the sins of his people. But what happened in between his birth and his death and resurrection?

We’ve been looking at the story of the Bible, and now we’ve come to Jesus. Last week, we talked about the significance of Jesus’ birth. Two weeks from today, in the next sermon in this series, we’ll look at what he did in his death. Today, we’re going to see what he did in his life.

We’re going to take a look at the first chapter of Mark’s Gospel, where we’ll see three things: One, Jesus came to teach about the kingdom of God. Two, he came to live as a perfect citizen of the kingdom of God. In other words, he came to fulfill what Adam and Eve and everyone else couldn’t do. And, three, he came to perform miracles to show what would happen when the kingdom of God came in its fullest. We might say that Mark 1 is all about showing that the kingdom of God is here, and the King has come.

We can understand all of this best by first looking at the two verses that were just read, Mark 1:14-15. We’re told that Jesus proclaimed “the gospel of God.” Now, if you are a Christian, you should have some idea of what the gospel is. The word simply means “good news.” When we talk about the good news of Christianity, we talk about what Jesus has done for his people. (The Greek word, εὐαγγέλιον [*euangelion*] is where we get the word “evangelical.” “Evangelicals” believe and share the gospel.) But what would Mark’s first audience have understood? What would the people Jesus was talking to understand about the word “gospel”?

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

The initial hearers of the word “gospel” would have had two references. One would be related to the Greco-Roman world. The word “gospel” could refer to the “good news” of what the emperor had done, like winning a battle. There is an inscription of a decree made in 9 BC by an official in the eastern part of the Roman empire that says the birthday of the emperor at that time—the emperor reigning over the Roman empire at the time Jesus was born—should be celebrated. This official, Paulus Fabius Maximus, wanted the calendar to be reset to the emperor Augustus’s birthday, in 63 BC.² The inscription claims that Augustus was a “savior.”³ This inscription also says,

Augustus has made war to cease and put everything in peaceful order; and, whereas the birthday of our god [the emperor] signaled the beginning of the gospels for the world because of him, Paulus Fabius Maximus, benefactor of the province, has discovered a way to honor Augustus that was hitherto unknown among the Greeks, namely, to reckon time from the date of his birth.⁴

So here’s the point: Someone living in the Roman empire in the time of Jesus would hear the word “gospel” and think of the “good news” of all that the emperor did.

Yet Jesus proclaims a different message. He’s not gushing about how great Caesar is. He’s saying a king has come, but it’s not Caesar. And he is delivering good news, but it’s far better than news of the Romans defeating an enemy.

Jewish people who heard the word “gospel” would think about something else. After all, when Jesus says “believe in the gospel,” he also says, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.” In fact, Mark begins his book with these words: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark is indicating that his entire book is gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. The Greek word translated as “gospel,”⁵ was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint. And it is used four times in the second part of Isaiah.⁵ Chapters 40-66 of Isaiah look forward to a time when Israel would come out of exile in Babylon and return home; when Jerusalem would expand and be transformed; when sins would be

² John Dickson, *A Doubter’s Guide to the Bible: Inside History’s Bestseller for Believers and Skeptics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 133.

³ M. Eugene Boring, “Gospel, Message,” ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006–2009), 2:630.

⁴ *Oriens Graeci Inscriptiones*, 2:458, quoted in Dickson, *A Doubter’s Guide to the Bible*, 133.

⁵ εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*).

⁵ Isa. 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1.

forgiven; when Gentiles would enter into the city of God and serve as priests; and when the whole earth would be renewed. At the beginning of this section of Isaiah, in chapter 40, we read:

¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

Here we have a message of comfort, of peace, and pardon from sin. Verses 3-5 speak of the message that John the Baptist would deliver, as he prepared the way for the Lord Jesus:

³ A voice cries:
“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Verse 3 of Isaiah 40 is quoted in Mark 1:3. John the Baptist was the voice in the wilderness who prepared the way for the coming Lord, who in Isaiah is God. We know John was preparing for the coming of Jesus, so this is another way of saying that Jesus is God.

Isaiah 40 also has a mention of “good news,” or “gospel.” This is what verses 9-11 say:

⁹ Go on up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of *good news*;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of *good news*;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Behold your God!”
¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
¹¹ He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,

and gently lead those that are with young.

In that passage, the good news is that God is coming to reward his people and care for them the way a shepherd takes care of his flock of sheep. God will gather his people and carry them. In other words, God is coming to bring his people to himself.

Here's another passage from Isaiah that mentions "good news." This is Isaiah 52:7-10:

- ⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings *good news*,
who publishes peace, who brings *good news* of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
⁸ The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;
together they sing for joy;
for eye to eye they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.
⁹ Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,
for the LORD has comforted his people;
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

Notice there that the good news is about salvation. The news is that God reigns, he's returning to his people, and he brings comfort and salvation.⁶

In Isaiah, the good news includes God gathering his covenant people out of spiritual blindness, prison, darkness, and exile (42:6-7; 43:6-7). It includes multiple promises of forgiveness (43:25; 44:22; 52:15; 53:5-6) and salvation (45:17; 46:13; 49:6; 51:5; 61:10). It is a message of grace (55:1-2). It leads to a glorious new Jerusalem (chapter 60); a time of Jubilee (chapter 61); an invitation of the Gentiles to become part of God's people and serve in the temple (56:1-8; 66:18-23); and a new heavens and earth (65:17; 66:22).

When Jesus proclaims the gospel, he is indicating that the time that Isaiah envisioned has begun. He is saying that God is now on the scene, to gather his people and save them. When

⁶ Another mention of "good news" in Isaiah comes in 61:1. It is no surprise that Jesus reads Isaiah 61:1-2 in a synagogue and says "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:16-21). Jesus came to proclaim good news to the poor in spirit. He came to proclaim liberty to those held captive by sin. He came to give sight to the spiritually blind. He came to free those oppressed by sin and Satan, and he came announce the Lord's favor, or grace.

Jesus proclaims that the kingdom of God is at hand, he is indicating that the Son of David, promised long ago (2 Sam. 7:12-16), has arrived. The kingdom and its ruler that Isaiah prophesied (Isa. 9:6-7) have emerged. Even the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 has come to die for his people's sins. According to James Edwards, "For Mark, the advent of Jesus is the beginning of the fulfillment of the 'good news' heralded by Isaiah."⁶

Now, with that in mind, let's look at Mark 1:1: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." We've already talked about the "gospel." When Mark uses "the beginning," he is quickly calling to mind Genesis. In Greek, the two books start in a similar way.⁷ In many ways, the Bible indicates that with Jesus, God is making a fresh start. It's a new beginning.

Jesus is also the "Son of God." In the Old Testament, Israel is sometimes referred to as God's "son" (Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9; Hos. 11:1). The Roman emperor was also known as the "son of God." During the time of Jesus' ministry and death and resurrection, the emperor was Tiberius, the son of Augustus. On a Roman coin, the denarius, there was an image of the emperor. On the coin were the words, "Tiberius Caesar, son of the Divine Augustus." Romans used this coin to promote worship of the emperor, who was supposedly divine.⁸ By saying that the good news is about Jesus, and that Jesus is the Son of God, Mark is telling us that Jesus is true Israel and the true king. He is more powerful than Caesar. He brings salvation that Caesar can't. Caesar could only defeat human enemies, but Jesus will defeat Satan and death.

A few verses later, we see that Jesus is baptized. Let's read verses 9-11:

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

If John the Baptist announced Jesus' coming the way a herald would announce the coming of the king, then Jesus' baptism is his anointing. In the Old Testament, kings were anointed with oil when they became king (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13). Jesus, the true king, is anointed in order to reign.

⁶ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 24.

⁷ Genesis 1:1: "Ἐν ἀρχῇ"; Mark 1:1: "Ἀρχῇ".

⁸ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 525.

But there's more happening than just that. First, notice that the Spirit comes upon Jesus, who is in the water. This is like Genesis 1:2, when "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." Again, this is a new creation. And it's Trinitarian. Here are the three persons of God: The Father's voice announces his approval of his Son; the Son is in the water; and the Spirit comes upon him.

Second, they are at the Jordan river. This has a lot of significance in the history of Israel. The Israelites crossed over the Jordan to enter into the Promised Land (Joshua 3). But in a sense, they were still in the wilderness, because they still had a problem with sin.⁹ Before crossing into the true Promised Land of salvation, people need to come to Jesus and be baptized. They need to be cleansed of their sin, their impurities. Their old life needs to come to an end, and they need to be raised into newness of life in Christ (Rom. 6:4).

Third, when Jesus was baptized, the heavens were "torn open." In the book of Isaiah, the problem is that there is a separation between God and people. Isaiah 59:1-2 says,

- ¹ Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;
- ² but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.

Several verses later we read these words, in verses 12-15:

- ¹² For our transgressions are multiplied before you,
and our sins testify against us;
for our transgressions are with us,
and we know our iniquities:
- ¹³ transgressing, and denying the LORD,
and turning back from following our God,
speaking oppression and revolt,
conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words.
- ¹⁴ Justice is turned back,
and righteousness stands far away;
for truth has stumbled in the public squares,
and uprightness cannot enter.
- ¹⁵ Truth is lacking,

⁹ "The Baptist [John] preached in the wilderness and baptized in the Jordan (1:4-5), for Israel was, so to speak, still wandering in the wilderness like the generation that left Egypt under Moses. They needed to cross the Jordan again, cleansed and purified so that they could enjoy God's saving rule." Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 456.

and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

The LORD saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no justice.

That's what sin is: It's turning one's back from following God. It leads to lying and oppression. Truth is lacking, and there is no justice. And this displeases God.

The question in Isaiah's day, as in our day, is this: How can that separation between God and his people be removed? How can the gap be closed? In Isaiah 63:17, Isaiah asks God, "Return for the sake of your servants." And in verse 19, he says, "We have become like those over whom you have never ruled, like those who are not called by your name."

Then, in the very next verse, Isaiah 64:1, he says, "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down." When Jesus is baptized, the heavens are rent. They are torn open. God punches a hole through the ceiling above us that separates heaven and earth. God breaks into this world in the person of Jesus. And he is the one who is always righteous and just. He never lies (Isa. 53:9; 1 Pet. 2:22). In fact, he *is* truth (John 14:6).

We get a hint of Jesus' righteousness in Mark 1:12-13:

¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

Mark's account of Jesus' temptation is rather brief. If you want to read more about this, you can turn to Matthew 4 or Luke 4. I also gave a sermon about this earlier in the year.¹⁰ Here we see that Jesus was tempted for forty days in the wilderness, just as Israel spent forty years in the wilderness after the exodus out of Egypt and before entering the Promised Land. God tested them in the wilderness and they failed time and again.¹¹ But here Jesus is tempted by Satan. We haven't talked much about Satan in this sermon series. He's a rather shadowy figure in the Bible. But at the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, he is identified as "that ancient serpent" (Rev. 12:9). He was the serpent who tempted Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Of course, they failed. But Jesus doesn't fail. He successfully resists Satan. He does what Adam didn't do and what Israel didn't do.

¹⁰ See "Jesus Was Tempted, But Didn't Sin," January 11, 2015, <http://wbcommunity.org/jesus>.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 8:16 says God brought them into the wilderness to test them.

Then we get this odd comment that he was with the wild animals. What is that all about? What was he doing? What does it mean? Well, remember that back in Genesis 1 (vv. 26, 28), we were told that Adam and Eve were supposed to have dominion over all the animals. In Genesis 2 (v. 19), Adam named all the beasts. I think this is a hint that Jesus succeeded where Adam failed.¹² This shows that Jesus is one of a kind. He does what no other human can do.

And it was after this period of temptation that Jesus preached the gospel. He said, in verse 15, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.” That meant the promises of Isaiah were coming true. God was gathering his people back to himself. The promised King had come.

Now, what did people have to do to become part of this kingdom? “Repent and believe in the gospel” (v. 15)! Repentance is a change of mind, but it’s not just learning a new fact. It’s really a change of life. It’s turning away from one’s current path and turning back to God. It’s turning away from selfishness and to the one true God. There is no such thing as a repentance-free Christianity. There’s no such thing as an unrepentant Christian. Martin Luther brought Christianity back to the Bible during the time of the Protestant Reformation. In 1517, he posted his 95 Theses. The first thesis is: “Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying ‘Repent ye, etc.,’ meant the whole life of the faithful to be an act of repentance.”¹³ The truth is that God doesn’t need to change, but we do. To be reconciled to God, God changes us and transforms us to be more like Jesus. The mark of a Christian is someone who has been converted, or transformed, by God. That doesn’t mean a Christian has been fully changed and is now perfect. It’s a process, one that has ups and downs. But there should be change in a person’s life if they are a Christian.

Jesus was a preacher of repentance, and grace, and the kingdom of God, and several times in Mark 1 he is described as preaching and teaching. He taught in the synagogue in Capernaum (vv. 21-22). The people there “were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.” There simply has never been a better preacher and teacher than Jesus. Spend time reading the Gospels and you will see that for yourself. One of the reasons why Jesus came was to preach. In verse 38, he says, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” What’s funny is that some people who

¹² “That Eden’s temptations are in mind may be suggested by Mark’s comments that after Jesus successfully endured the temptations in the wilderness, ‘he was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to him’ (Mark 1:13). This may be pointed to further by the prophetic vision that humanity was to dwell peaceably with antagonistic animals at the time of the new creation (Isa. 11[:6-9]; 43[:20]; 65[:25]).” G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 418.

¹³ Martin Luther, *The Ninety-Five Theses*, in Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 206.

claim to be Christians don't like preaching. They don't want to be told that something is wrong and they must stop doing that. Such a message sounds too "preachy" to some. But Jesus preached, and he told people to repent. As a preacher, I'm no better than my master. I, too, must preach good news and repentance and faith and grace.

Now, after Jesus begins his preaching, he starts gathering followers to himself. We see this in Mark 1:16-20. In Mark 3, we find out that there are twelve apostles, which means "sent ones," or delegates. Why twelve? One for each tribe of Israel. Jesus did this deliberately to show that he's restoring his people. The Israel of God is Jesus and everyone who is united to him by faith. He came to establish his kingdom on earth.

And Jesus started to do things that were a foretaste of the day when that kingdom would be consummated, or fully set up. That's an important concept: The kingdom of God is "at hand," but it's not fully here. It's "already" but "not yet." We live in that tension. So people can become part of God's kingdom now, and they can be changed from the inside out, but we still live life in bodies that are subject to disease and death. We still live in a world of sin, and we still wrestle with sin. Christians are "already" in the kingdom, but "not yet" the people that they will be when Jesus returns and they live with him in a renewed and restored world.

That's why Jesus healed some people when he walked the earth but he didn't heal everyone. The healings he performed pointed to his authority over disease and evil powers. They were a foreshadowing of what will happen when the kingdom of God comes in its fullness. That's important to say because some people wonder why God doesn't heal everyone right now. The late "anti-theist" Christopher Hitchens wondered, "If Jesus could heal a blind person he happened to meet, then why not heal blindness?"¹⁴ If that's a sincere question, it's not a bad one. But Jesus didn't try to heal all diseases and handicaps. If he wanted to do that, he could. All such conditions exist because they are partial punishments for sin in the world. They're part of the reality of a post-Genesis 3 world. When Jesus comes a second time and when the world is purged of all sin, then all diseases and illnesses and other negative conditions will be swallowed up along with death itself. The miracles that Jesus performed were a foretaste of that coming world. And they also serve as pictures of spiritual healing. Sin is like a disease, like a cancerous tumor that threatens to overtake us, and Jesus heals us of that. These healings show who Jesus is and

¹⁴ Christopher Hitchens, *god Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007), 3. On the cover of the book "god" appears with a lower-case g.

they testify to his power. But the point was never that Jesus would heal everyone in his first coming.

We see in Mark 1 that Jesus heals a man with an unclean spirit. This is what it says in Mark 1:23-27:

²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”

The unclean spirit is a demon. He is a representative of Satan, who has invaded and taken over a man. What’s interesting is this happens in a synagogue, on the Sabbath, showing the reach of Satan’s power. He had control over a center of Jewish worship on their weekly holy day.

Another thing that’s interesting is that the demon knows who Jesus is. He’s the Holy One of God. Earlier, I said that Jesus resisted temptation. The truth is that he never sinned. He’s holy. The demons recognize that God had come to defeat them. And Satan and his demons know a lot of theological facts, but they don’t repent and they don’t trust in Jesus. That’s what belief is—trust.

Yet Jesus has mastery over the demon.¹⁵ He tells it to leave and it leaves. This shows that Jesus has power over evil. He came to take back the world from Satan.¹⁶ Adam should have driven the serpent out of the garden of Eden. Here, Jesus casts Satan out.

Now, I realize that some people may get embarrassed by all this talk of Satan and demons. But I think the fact that there is a supernatural evil power at work in the world best explains some of the outrageous evil that we see. It’s hard for me to think of Isis, or Hitler, without reference to Satan and his demons. The Bible teaches that we are all fallen, but that doesn’t mean we’re as bad as we can be or could be. Still, there are examples of over-the-top evil in the world. That doesn’t mean that demons lurk behind every rock and tree. I think there was a heightened demonic activity when Jesus came to earth because Satan knew something of what

¹⁵ “The demon refers to ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ as ‘the Holy One of God.’ That may reflect the belief that speaking the name of a spiritual foe granted one mastery over it.” Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 57.

¹⁶ “He has come as a divine warrior to overthrow the evil one.” T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 112.

God was doing in Jesus. He tried to stop Jesus, but he couldn't. Still, the point is that there are evil forces at work in the world, and Jesus has control over them.

We're also told that Jesus healed many people. He healed Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:30). And then we read this in verses 32-34:

³² That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Jesus healed many people of various diseases. He even healed someone who had leprosy, a skin disease. That's significant because lepers were considered unclean (Lev. 13:45-46). They were separated from others in order to keep the disease from spreading. Lepers not only had to deal with a physical condition, but also a social one. They were outsiders. But Jesus wasn't afraid that he would become unclean. He broke boundaries and provided healing to the leper because he had compassion on him. We see this in Mark 1:40-45:

⁴⁰ And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." ⁴² And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³ And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

Lepers were supposed to keep their distance, but this one came right up to Jesus. Somehow, he knew that Jesus could make him clean. And Jesus did just that, because he was moved. Jesus wasn't afraid to touch this man and talk to him. This leper trusted that Jesus could cleanse him, and Jesus cleansed him because he had faith. And what did the man do? Even though Jesus had told him to not tell everyone, he told everyone. He spread the good news.

Now, isn't that a perfect picture of spiritual healing? We start out life unclean because we have a spiritual ailment. We need cleansing from our sin. And if we come to Jesus trusting that he is able to heal us, he does. But in our case, Jesus wants us to talk to others about it. Earlier in Mark's Gospel, Jesus tries to keep his identity quiet because he didn't want everyone to know who he was. If word got out that he was claiming to be the Messiah, he might have been crucified much earlier. But now we are supposed to tell the world about Jesus.

So we see that Jesus came to usher in the kingdom of God. He is the perfect citizen of that kingdom. He's the true Adam and the true Israel. He's also the King in the flesh. He proclaimed the kingdom. He taught people what God is like. In fact, he's the clearest picture we have of what God is like (Heb. 1:1-3). He urged people to repent and trust in the good news that God was beginning to gather his people and forgive them. And he performed miracles to show he has the power over Satan and sin and death.

The question for us is, are we part of this kingdom of God? Are we repenting?

Is Jesus our Lord and King? Just this week, I had a conversation with someone who is close to me. We started to talk about ministry, and this conversation then led to politics and ethical issues. Though this man claims to be a Christian, he never made reference to the Bible when he was talking. I didn't expect him to quote chapter and verse, but even biblical principles and concepts didn't seem to come to his mind. That's not the way it should be. If you're a Christian, you must think about all of life through the lens of the Bible. We can't have Jesus as a Savior without him being Lord over us. We can't say, "Thanks, Jesus, for bailing me out," and then go our own way. We don't reserve our faith for Sunday mornings only. Jesus should be King over every area of our lives.

Here's another question: Is this real to you? I don't have time to go into this, but I had another conversation this week that reminded me of the fact that many people think of religion as something that is man-made, something that exists simply to make us feel good. These people tend to think of religion as a placebo: Take this sugar pill and feel better. But Christianity is an ultimate truth claim. The Bible claims to be the true story of the world. There is one true God. He made the whole universe out of nothing. We exist for him. Our real problem is our separation from him. And the true solution to that problem is Jesus. Everyone who denies Jesus has a reality that has been prepared for them, an eternity of being cut off from the kingdom of God and all the blessings that come with it. This is a true story. Will you believe it?

Will we put our trust in Jesus the King? Will he turn from our sin and turn toward him? Do we trust that he can heal us? Do we come to Jesus and say, "Will you make me clean? Will you show me how to live? Will you be my King?"

The King has come. Let's act like it.