

## Joining the Mission

This series is meant to help us wrestle with what it means to follow Jesus.

- To be known for what He was known for
- To be like Him
- To be on mission with Him

**If you were asked to explain the mission of Jesus in one sentence, how would you explain it?**

\*The Gospel (the Good News) is bigger than- "Jesus came to live the perfect life I couldn't live and then die on a cross as a sacrifice for my sins so that I can go to Heaven when I die if I will believe in Him."

The Four Gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, almost always connect the "Good News" with the "Kingdom of God."

**Luke 4:40-43 (NIV)** - <sup>40</sup> At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. <sup>41</sup> Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah. <sup>42</sup> At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. <sup>43</sup> But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

**Note:** Jesus connects the Good News with the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not the place you go to, Heaven, when you die. The Kingdom of God is wherever God is recognized as the King and His rule is submitted to. This is political language. In fact, the word, "gospel" itself is political language. The Gospel writers use it to proclaim that the Good News is this...Jesus is King. They don't use it in the sense we use it...Jesus died for our sins.

Here is how Mark begins his Gospel.

**The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Christ/Messiah, the Son of God.** (Mark 1:1)

**Note these words:**

- 1) **Gospel** was used as to announce the victory of a military commander or the ascension of an Emperor. We actually have a letter dated to 9BC where the word, gospel, or euangellion in Greek.

"Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings [εὐαγγέλιον] for the world that came by reason of him."

- 2) **Christ/Messiah.** Messiah our English translation of the Hebrew word meaning "anointed one/King. Messiah, was translated as Christos in the Greek, also meaning, the anointed one. When the New Testament was written in Greek, the authors used Iesous Christos (Jesus the Anointed One) to identify Jesus as the Messiah. But, instead of translating the Greek word, Christos, into English, we simply transliterated it and shortened it to Christ. And somehow, instead of it being His title, we turned it into His name. His name is not Jesus, middle name, Christ. His name is Jesus. His title is King.

- 3) **Son of God.** Once again, Mark isn't making a theological statement. He is making a political one. What gave the Caesar's of the Roman Empire their ultimate authority? It was the belief that they were more than human. They were divine.

On 1 January 42 BC, Julius Caesar was recognized as divine by the Roman Senate and given the title *Divus Iulius* ("the divine Julius"), and his adopted son Octavian (Augustus) who was the Emperor when Jesus was born, claimed the title of *Divi filius* ("son of the deified one, son of the god").

**Note:** When Mark begins by declaring his "gospel" he did not intend us to project our own flawed cultural understanding of that word- "I am about to tell you how you can get to Heaven." He is saying, "A New King has taken His throne!"

And, the mission of Jesus was the proclamation..."I am King. I have come and brought my Kingdom

**Mark 1:14-15 (NIV)** – <sup>14</sup>After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. <sup>15</sup>"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

**Note:** Make no mistake. He is King. His mission is to rule. He will one day rule over all Creation. He will One day make all things right. He will restore Heaven to Earth. And the Good news is simply this... "Jesus is the One True King."

And when Jesus came the first time, He inaugurated His Kingdom. In His second coming He will consummate it. Or, to put another way... when He came the first time He gave everyone a taste of the reign of a good King. Why did Jesus do the miracles He did? To give them a taste of the Kingdom.

When He returns He will bring all of Heaven with Him. And all those who have pledged allegiance to His Kingship- which is what true Biblical faith is- will live in that Kingdom.

This is what we find in **Revelation 21:1-4 (NIV)** – <sup>1</sup>Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth, "for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

This is the central theme of the Gospels- that the Good News is the Good News that the rightful King of the Universe has come to redeem His Creation. And this is the message that the early church was known for proclaiming and willing to die for. This is what we find in Acts 17

In **Acts 17:6-7** - "These men...are acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, Jesus."

And the early Christians for the first 3 Centuries gave their lives defending and proclaiming the gospel, the good news that Jesus, not Caesar is the One True King and by His resurrection we are certain of a Kingdom that will come and be eternal if we align our lives with King Jesus.

The language of salvation in the New Testament is the language of the Emperors.

- **Nero (54-68 A.D)** - loved being referred to as "Savior"- (Soter) vs. Acts 4:12

*"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

- **Domitian (81-96 A.D)** - demanded worship under the title "Domitian-Lord and God" (Dominus et Deus) vs. Revelation 4:2-8

*"<sup>2</sup>At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. <sup>3</sup> And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. <sup>4</sup> Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. <sup>5</sup> From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. <sup>6</sup> Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. <sup>7</sup> The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup> Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," who was, and is, and is to come."*

All of this historical context is important to understand how the early Christians would interpret words like "gospel" and "salvation."

For instance Paul wrote the book of Romans under Nero's reign. He chooses to use the language of the Empire and the Emperors to describe salvation.

This is what we find in **Romans 10:9-13 (NIV)** – *"<sup>9</sup> If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. <sup>11</sup> As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>14</sup> for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Every hope in a lesser King or Savior will disappoint you. You will be put to shame.

But, if you can believe that Jesus is the One True King you will be saved- saved not just from sin but saved For Him.

The faith that saves us is the belief that Jesus reigns even when we don't see it, even when we have reasons to doubt it.

The resurrection is our anchor. We do not have to bow our knees to lesser kings and things.

And if we cannot do this, then we have chosen to place our faith in lesser kings who don't deserve the title "The Son of God" or "Lord and God" or "Savior."

So, we let us prove our faith that Jesus is the One True King who is bringing His Kingdom by following Jesus in such intimacy and love that we give the world around us a taste of His Kingdom.

People are Looking for Heaven.

We, the church, are the Body of Christ. And as Jesus lived to bring Heaven to Earth, we can and should offer them a taste of Heaven's peace, and purpose, and love that they have never experienced anywhere else.

I invite you today to give yourself to His Kingship if you haven't. If you have I invite you to give yourself to living your life in a way that gives people a taste of the Kingdom coming and the love of a good King.