

January 22, 2012

Epiphany 3

"Rescuing People for the Kingdom of God"

MARK 1:14-20

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!"

¹⁶ 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.

It was an amazing rescue wouldn't you agree. Firemen from Buellton rescued a mother and her two children from the mangled wreck of a 2001 BMW that hung over the guard rail of a bridge. They had been crushed and pushed over the edge by a large truck that crashed through the railing and plunged into the creek below. Firemen had to tear apart the car piece by piece as it hung on the edge of the bridge. After over an hour of work they were able to rescue the ten week old baby, the ten year old daughter and the mother. The firemen were overjoyed that they could be involved in rescuing them and keep them from dying.

Jesus was involved in an even more important rescue operation when he went into the region of Galilee and proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus came in contact with people whose lives were mangled by sin and unbelief. The Bible calls the land of Galilee the land of darkness, a land where demon possession seemed to abound.

I have in my office a needle point picture of Jesus carrying the lost sheep on his shoulders and joyfully bringing it home. There is a smile on Jesus' face. I like to think that there was that same smile and joy in Jesus as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and brought people out of darkness into the light of his love.

The joy that Jesus had in rescuing people is a joy that he gave to certain fishermen from Galilee who became his faithful disciples. That same joy of rescuing people for the kingdom of God has also been given to you and to me and every Christian living on this earth in these last days.

Look at how Jesus rescued people for the kingdom of God

"After John was put into prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.'" Jesus began preaching the good news of the kingdom of God in the land of Galilee. The land of Galilee was a land of darkness. Over the years heathen people

intermarried with Jews. The prophet Isaiah described these people as living in darkness and living in the land of the shadow of death. The people called the land of Galilee, "Galilee of the Gentiles."

Jesus told these people, "The time has come." Jesus wanted the people to know that the time to believe the good news is now, today and not tomorrow. When the firemen responded to the accident on the southbound 101 near Buellton, they knew time had come to get work and rescue the mother and her children before they died, or the car plunged over the railing. When a person has a stroke it is important to get them to the hospital as soon as possible. You have heard the advertisement: "Time loss is brain loss." The time to believe is always now and not tomorrow. These people would only have Jesus with them for a short time.

Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. He proclaimed the good news to people who were trapped in the darkness of sin. Imagine yourself trapped in that car, wondering if it would ignite in flames, or fall off the bridge into the creek below. Now think of where you would be if Jesus had not come into your life and taken you out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his love. Colossians 1 says of our God, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

What is it like to know about the kingdom of God? It means you know that you have a King who gives his life to rescue you and then holds you in his loving arms. What a joy it was to tell Herman Kautz that even though his life has changed dramatically and he is struggling to get enough air into his lungs, that nothing would ever separate him from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ his Lord. Romans 8 sums up the good news of the kingdom of God with these words: "No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any other powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Jesus told the people in the land of Galilee to "repent and believe the good news." The word "repent" means to change your mind about something.

Think of how God in his amazing grace and mercy has changed your heart and mind about how you can save yourself. In Philippians 3 the Apostle Paul speaks about how he once had great confidence in the flesh and his ability to do the right things to make himself accepted by God. But then the Lord Jesus led him to repentance and switched him over to trusting in Jesus for the righteousness to be accepted by God. He writes, "That I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

I read that the one of the fireman who helped rescued the mother and her children reached into the wreckage and held the woman's hand and kept telling her, "We are going to get you out of here." How foolish it would have been for her to tell the firemen, "I don't need your help. I can rescue myself from this car. Go away from me." In the land of

Galilee and here in this neighborhood and throughout our world, people live each day of their lives not wanting the good news that Jesus is their King who comes to rescue them. By proclaiming the good news, people are led to repentance and led to put their hope of eternal life in Jesus instead of themselves.

Notice now how Jesus calls fishermen from Galilee to join him in the important work of rescuing people for his kingdom.

Look at how Jesus calls people to join him in this rescuing others

"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. 'Come follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men. At one they left their nets and followed him.'" These fishermen already knew who Jesus was. John the Baptist introduced Jesus to them with the words "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." They have already spent some time with Jesus. Now Jesus calls them to leave their fishing nets and take up the important work of fishing for people.

Jesus saw Simon and Andrew casting the net in the lake. How do bring people into the kingdom of God? You throw out the net of God's Word and the Holy Spirit then creates faith to believe. I grew up fishing in the river than ran through out farm. We used lures and bait to trick the fish into biting into the hook and then we pulled them ashore and joyfully took them home to our mother to prepare a meal of fresh fish. Now as pastor of this congregation, I am involved in fishing for people. We do not use lures and tricks and deception to bring people into the kingdom of God. Even though we receive magazines such as this (Outreach Marketing) we do not succumb to marketing techniques or bait and switch tactics to lure people to accept Christ in their hearts. Jesus has called us, all of us, to cast out the net of his Word and he will be the one to bring people into his kingdom.

Peter left his nets to follow Jesus. Andrew his brother also left the nets to follow Jesus, and so did James and John. "When he had gone a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with hired men and follow him." They left their father Zebedee to follow Jesus. They left the familiar sights and sounds and smells of fishing on the Sea of Galilee to be with Jesus. They left their fishing business to tramp with Jesus from village to village preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. James and John had learned from their father Zebedee how to repair and tie the nets, and throw them into the water, and catch the fish and clean them and sell them at the market. Now they would learn first hand from Jesus how to preach the good news of the kingdom of God and rescue people from eternal death and destruction.

Jesus is still calling people to rescue people for his kingdom. He raises up leaders in his church to bring the good news to people so they can bring the same good news to others. Ephesians 4 says, "It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service that the body of Christ may be built up." Jesus' plan for rescuing people is different from the way our local fire department rescues people who are trapped in cars after a major crash. Jesus involves everyone in his church in his rescue mission. He leads

each of us here deeper into his Word so that we can take this Word and share it with our friends, family members and even people at work as the opportunity arises. We don't have to leave our jobs to follow Jesus. We get to do this at our jobs, in our homes, and in our community. Jesus is walking with us just as he did the disciples. He even promises to give us his Holy Spirit to us to help us speak the right words that will rescue them for his kingdom.

There is a sense of urgency to what we are doing, because the time has come just as Jesus said. Last Monday we driving down the 101 by Pismo Beach and we were side swiped by a small compact car, a Kia Spectra. What if that we a large cement truck or 18 wheeler that was out of control? Would I still be alive? Would I have another week to throw out the net of God's Word? How soon will it be before Jesus returns in glory and the time for rescuing people will come to an end? We close with the words we just sung:

I hear the Savior calling! His call has urgency!

Each moment souls are dying: Soon comes eternity.

And so, my precious Savior, This is my humble plea.

Prepare me for my mission For you are calling me.