

Jesus' Announcement

"Follow Me as Savior" Series, October 19 & 20, 2024 | Mark 1:14-15, 29-39

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Not all apologies are the same.

Here are some bad apologies:

"I was just kidding." That apology minimizes what we've done to hurt another person.

"I'm sorry that you took what I said the wrong way." You're actually the problem, not me.

"I'm sorry if I have done something wrong." That may be an apology. If. But maybe no.

"Fine. Okay. I'm sorry." This is more of a call to "get off my case and drop it" than it is an apology.

"Your mother told me that I owe you an apology ..." This isn't even really your apology!¹

Have you ever received a bad apology? It doesn't feel very good does it?

What makes for a good apology?

There are steps that make for a good, complete apology:

1. Say "I'm sorry" clearly.
2. Express regret for what happened.
3. Acknowledge the social norms or expectations that were violated.
4. Empathize about the impact of your actions on the other person.
5. Request forgiveness.²

That's what makes for a good, complete apology.

Jesus opened His ministry by calling us to repent and believe.

Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

He called people to repent and believe the Good News.

This summary statement of Jesus' preaching applies as much to us today as it did the first time Jesus said it. So, clearly Jesus calls us to repent and believe.

How do we do that the right way?

If we can apologize poorly, it's possible to repent and believe poorly.

We want to repent and believe in the right way, so we want to know what that looks like.

The Kingdom of God is at hand.

The time was right.

The prophets had been foretelling the coming of Messiah for centuries.

John the Baptist announced that Messiah was coming and called people to get ready.

Jesus was baptized, filled with the Holy Spirit, and blessed by the Father.

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/narcissism-demystified/202009/13-fake-apologies-used-narcissists>

² <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/201311/the-five-ingredients-effective-apology>

Jesus faced Satan in the wilderness and defeated him.

Then John the Baptist was arrested and put in jail. The time of preparation was over.

It was time. So, Jesus went to Galilee and began proclaiming, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

What is the Kingdom of God?

The **Kingdom of God** is the place where God is in charge, God's rule is recognized, and God's rule is actualized.

God is in charge; God is always in charge everywhere because that's the nature of God.

But God's rule is recognized in the Kingdom of God, meaning that we know God is in charge.

And God's rule changes everything. Life and the world are actually the way God intends.

The Kingdom of God is "at hand." What does that mean?

The **Kingdom of God** was embodied in Jesus, is now established among Jesus' disciples, and is anticipated fully in Jesus' return.

Jesus knows that God is in charge, and He fully obeys His Father and fully lives out the will of God, so the Kingdom of God is right there in Jesus. It's fully present in Jesus.

And the Kingdom of God is already starting among us as disciples of Jesus. There is a now element for anyone who follows Jesus. If you think of the Kingdom of God as owning territory, then we are like little outposts of the Kingdom of God in the middle of the kingdoms of this world. God is in charge of us, we know it, and we are trying to live it out.

But the Kingdom of God will come fully only when Jesus returns.

That's the Kingdom of God, and it is "at hand."

This isn't like "Let's Make a Deal."

"Let's Make a Deal" is a gameshow that has been around for decades.

The idea is that contestants (usually dressed in ridiculous costumes) are offered deals.

There is something they have—it could be money or a prize.

And there is something they don't have and don't know. It's another prize, and it's frequently behind a curtain or a door. They can keep the prize—the money, say \$1000—or they can trade it for what's behind door number one. It could be a car. Or a trip. Or a dirty rag. They don't know.

They're being invited to choose between something they have and know and something they don't have and don't know.

Jesus is making it clear that we aren't being asked to play "Let's Make a Deal." Jesus is saying that we are being invited to trade what we have and know (our old lives) for something we DO know, life inside the Kingdom of God. That's the deal Jesus is calling us to make.

Do you sense that the time is right for you?

You may be weighing this deal right now.

You know your old life. You may like your old life. But you certainly sense that there is something missing from your old life.

And you hear that there is a new life you're being offered. You don't know exactly what it's like, but you are getting a really good sense of it. You may even have one hand on this new life.

You're torn between the two, maybe even trying to hold onto both for a while.

But you have to choose. Is the time right?

What does choosing the Kingdom of God involve? First, it involves repentance.

Repent.

What does it mean to repent?

To repent means more than to apologize.

There is a turning away from something old, a change, and a turning to something new:

1. To turn away from sin, false gods, and self-reliance. We are turning away from all the sin we have committed, from the false gods we have chosen (and we have, even if they are not physical idols we can see), and from relying on ourselves and everything else to provide what only God can. We have to turn away from all of that.
2. To change our mind, admit we were wrong, and regret the pain we have caused. Everything changes when we repent. We can't keep thinking that we were right when we repent. We have to acknowledge that we were wrong. We have to change our whole way of thinking and adjust it to God's thinking. And we have to admit that we have caused pain to God, to each other, to ourselves, and to the world by our sin. We've got to own our sin.
3. To turn to God in a new relationship of whole-life obedience by grace through Jesus. First, understand that we can really repent only when God helps us because this kind of change doesn't happen easily. We can do it only through Jesus. Jesus helps us to have a whole new relationship with God when He forgives us and claims us; we become children of God and have to live in that kind of family, in a dependence relationship with God, and it changes everything for us; it's whole-life obedience.

It is as if we were walking one way, we turned around, and we walked in a new direction.

Jesus calls us to repent.

God explained what sin is like for Him through the prophet Hosea.

When God called Hosea to be a prophet to tell Israel about its sin, He told Hosea to go and find a wife who had been a prostitute. God said to bring her home, marry her, honor her, and have children with her.

Hosea did. He brought Gomer home, honored her, married her, and had children with her.

But then Gomer got bored. She went back to her old life and her old lovers.

That's what sin is like. If you can imagine the pain of loving a spouse who is repeatedly faithless, then you can imagine what sin is really like for God.

And you can imagine how important it is to repent, really repent.

We've got a lot of things to turn away from.

We have sinned against God.

There are the things we've thought and said and done and left undone.

We've sinned grievously.

It's more than skin deep, too. Sin is the inclination of our hearts.
We've got a lot of things to turn away from. How have you sinned?

We've got a lot of ways we need to change our minds.

We are used to relying on ourselves, to getting our own way, and to thinking that we are in charge. And we like it. That mindset has to change fundamentally.
We have done a lot of damage, and we have to own that damage and regret it.
How do you need to change your mind?

We've got a lot of turning to God and new life to do.

We are turning toward God. We are getting into a new relationship with God.
We are submitting to God and putting Him in charge. We are obeying Him.
We start thinking new things, saying new things, and doing new things.
We don't resist the new thoughts, words, and actions either. We embrace them!
How do you need to turn to God and turn to a new life in Christ?

Believe in the Gospel.

The Gospel covers salvation history from Creation to Conclusion

Creation: The good news is that God made heaven and earth—everything including you and me. He made us perfectly to have a relationship with Him forever.

Brokenness: But we human beings sinned against God. That broke us; it broke our relationship with God, broke our relationships with one another, and broke creation. We tried to save ourselves and repair the damage, but we couldn't.

Jesus: Thankfully, God had a plan. He called a special people, Israel, who would be His people and through whom He would send a deliverer, a Savior. That Savior is Jesus, God in the flesh. Jesus lived a perfect and sinless life and died on the cross to pay the price for our sin. Three days later, He rose from the dead victorious over sin, death, and evil. He ascended into Heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father.

Church: God sent His Holy Spirit to the Church. God the Holy Spirit calls us to repent, gives us saving faith, makes us holy, and gives us gifts for serving God. We bring God glory by obeying Him and making more disciples while we wait for Jesus to return.

Return: Jesus will one day return, vanquish evil finally and forever, and turn the world as it is into the world as it should be. We will be resurrected, and God will rule forever.

Jesus tells us to believe this Gospel.

Some decisions are not easy to make. For me, it's buying a computer bag.

I don't know why computer bags are so complicated for me.
I guess it's because I carry it everywhere with me. Home. To work. On airplanes.
So, when I buy a computer bag, it's a big decision. It has to be perfect.
I bought a computer bag ten years ago, and it was a painful process.
I went to multiple stores. I found one that I liked in a store 30 minutes from my house.

But I couldn't make up my mind. It was nice, but it wasn't perfect.
I drove 30 minutes each way three times looking at the bag.
Then, at the last minute, I found a bag online and ordered it.
Not all decisions are easy. I get it.

Where are you with the decision to believe the Gospel?

Does the Gospel make sense to you? Or are there points that make you wonder?
Does trusting Jesus make sense to you? Or is there something that makes you hold back?
Does taking the leap of faith feel right? Or does it still seem like a big leap?
Where are you with the decision to believe the Gospel?
Jesus tells us that we must believe.

Repent and believe.

We are praying for revival and renewal.

Revival is when large numbers of new people come to saving faith in Jesus, and it changes their lives in dramatic ways. Revival changes whole communities and entire nations.

Revival starts with renewal. Renewal is when the Church finds new fire in our faith. That new fire comes out in worshipping with our whole hearts, pouring ourselves into community, serving one another and our neighbors, and reaching the world with the Gospel.

This Friday we will be joining with churches around New England to pray and fast for revival and renewal in New England, across the country, and right here in our community.

But this isn't just a one-time prayer. We want revival; we want many more lost people to come to faith in Jesus Christ, and we want it to change our culture fundamentally. We want renewal; we want this church to be so alive that you can't mistake the presence of the Holy Spirit here. These are not one-time prayers for us. This is our desperate plea to God.

Jonathan Edwards tells us what revival looks like.³

Jonathan Edwards was an early leader in the First Great Awakening that spread across the colonies in the 1730s before the United States was even established.

Edwards' most important work was at his own church in Northampton, Massachusetts.

He himself described what happened. He wrote that after he became the pastor, it was a time of religious dullness in town.

He was profoundly concerned about the young people who had become corrupt. He wrote, "... there were many of them very much addicted to night-walking, and frequenting the tavern, and lewd practices, wherein some, by their example, exceedingly corrupted others."

But then something happened. The young people began to think and talk about God. Two young people in town died, and it made all of them ask questions about life, eternity, and God.

That winter, everything started to change: "And then it was, in the latter part of December, that the Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in, and wonderfully to work amongst us; and there were very

³ Jonathan Edwards, "A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God"

suddenly, one after another, five or six persons, who were to all appearances savingly converted, and some of them wrought upon in a very remarkable manner.”

A few people repented and turned to Jesus, and that changed everything.

More and more people came to Jesus. Their lives changed.

That changed the church; worship was more alive than ever.

The town changed. Pretty soon, everyone was talking about God and what He was doing.

Revival had broken out. It changed Northampton, New England, and all the Colonies.

Revival and renewal are gifts of God.

We can't force revival or renewal; God has to give it.

Revival and renewal are gifts from God by His power and in His timing.

For our part, it all starts with repentance.

Revival only happens when the Church is renewed.

However, renewal of the Church happens only when the people of God repent.

It's no accident, then, that Jesus started His ministry calling people to repent and believe.

And that's what Jesus is saying to us (to you and me) today, "Repent and believe!"

Repenting is not a one-time thing but a lifetime process.

Repentance is something we must constantly do for a lifetime.

It's something we must do over and over and over again.

You may have done it a hundred times in the past, but that doesn't change the fact that Jesus' call to repent and believe still rings clearly today. It's time to repent and believe!

Repenting can't be like a bad apology!

We can't just say, "Well, if I've done anything, then I'm sorry."

We can't blame God, "YOU made me do this!"

And we can't just repent half-way.

Repenting means turning away from our old life, changing our minds, and turning to God and new life in Christ inside the Kingdom of God.

Repentance starts with us.

Repentance starts with you.

Are you ready to repent today?