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3rd Sunday after the Epiphany
22 January 2012
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Mark 1:14-20

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

There are only two Kingdoms in this life.

One Kingdom is large and progressive.

It's a movement that wins people's allegiance left and right.

It's a kingdom that has existed for thousands and thousands of years—
ever since Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden.

This is the Kingdom of Satan.

The other Kingdom, much smaller in size, isn't a movement that wins any sort of popularity.

It's a Kingdom that has very clear borders, and is attacked regularly and fiercely.

This kingdom is also ancient—
it even existed in the garden and before.

This is the Kingdom of God.

There are only two kingdoms and two kings,
and today they meet head on!

Life in Another Kingdom

The first kingdom, the kingdom of Satan, is the kingdom into which we are born.

Ever since Adam and Eve first took and ate the forbidden fruit,
their children have been born into this Kingdom of lies and deceit.
And this means us too.

In this Kingdom we have Satan as King—
though you'd never know it.

As a citizen of this Kingdom, Satan gives you the power and the right to be king yourself.

He steps out of the way and lets you do all the kingly you want.

With Satan, it's all about you...
whatever makes you happy, whatever makes you feel good;
no strict doctrine, no rigid or uncomfortable confession—
with Satan, whatever you want, goes.

And so it's no wonder that people love this kingdom.

It seems so free.

It appears so nice.

It gives us whatever we think we want and more!

But every once in a while, those who live in this kingdom recognize that not all is perfect.

We get glimpses here and there that we aren't actually in control.

The king of this kingdom—though he gives you all sorts of freedom and pleasures—
actually hates you.

He does whatever he can to rule you and destroy you—
and sometimes the best way to do that, is to let you have control.

He has no care for his subjects, no love for his citizens.

This king wants you to just disappear—
he hates all of your unique characteristics;
he hates the things that make you, you.

And so this king rules his kingdom by way of coercion and force.

Though everything seems so free—there’s actually no freedom at all.

You’re bound, you’re a prisoner, you’re a slave, beaten and destined for hell.

In this kingdom sin comes naturally.

You look out for yourself.

You murder and steal,
you terminate unwanted pregnancies, and take whatever is convenient.

You lie and cheat,
and it’s all justified, it all seems best.

There’s no mercy to be found, no hope, no salvation.

Everywhere you look, all you’ll see is hatred for the other.

And you’ll even find this hatred in yourself.

That’s the sort of kingdom you’re born into.

That’s the kingdom that’s so natural, so easy, so reasonable, so common.

And that’s what makes Mark’s Gospel so urgent.

Life in the Kingdom of God

Today we see a very different sort of kingdom, a different sort of king, and a different sort of life.

“Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of God saying,

‘The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is here;

Repent and believe the Gospel.’” (Mk 1:14-15)

This is the beginning of Jesus’ preaching, the beginning of His ministry, the beginning of His way to the cross.

And as soon as Jesus opens His mouth to preach,
a new Kingdom is revealed.

This new kingdom is completely different than the other kingdom.

Here, with Christ, there’s no force, no coercion, no lies or deceit or hatred.

With Christ whatever makes you unique, whatever makes you, you, is pure joy.

In this kingdom, where there is true freedom—
 freedom from hatred and lust,
 freedom from envy and gossip and all the lying—
 in this kingdom there is a freedom from sin.

And that's the Gospel of God.

That's the good news.

For this Jesus, who now opens His mouth and preaches,
 preaches about Himself: His work, His suffering, His way to the cross *for us*.

In His Kingdom, it's all about what *He* does *for us*.

His works; not ours.

His achievements and accomplishments; not how well we do, or how far we've come.

And in His Kingdom, where Jesus is King, everything He does is for you—

He keeps none of it; He gives it all away.

In this kingdom, the King goes to Calvary, the King suffers, the King dies, all for your sake.

In this kingdom, the King truly loves you.

Entrance into Kingdom Life

And so these two kingdoms meet today.

The old kingdom, the familiar kingdom, the kingdom all about me—

what I do, what I decide, what I choose, and what makes me happy—

this old kingdom of slavery now meets a new kingdom, the kingdom of God.

And this Kingdom of God is found in Christ.

Now the question naturally will be, how can one leave the old kingdom to join the new?

Well if it were that simple, who would stay in the old kingdom?

If it were simply a matter of directions, a matter of law, a matter of do this and not that,
 don't you think everyone would come?

Entrance into the Kingdom of God isn't by our doing!

That's what we've been saying all along; it's all Christ and Christ for you!

And so, the way in is by way of Jesus—His work; not yours.

So, "**Repent and believe the Gospel.**"

Admit to your sins.

Confess that you love the kingdom that's all about you.

That you put yourself first and above all others.

That you seek your own happiness and not your neighbor's.

And that you ignore or hide from the fact that this kingdom is really the devil's kingdom.

Then believe what Christ says, that the time has come, all is finished, He has done it—*for you!*

This is the Gospel.

This is the preaching of Christ crucified for you!

This is your entrance into the Kingdom of God—

not by what you've done;

not by what you've decided or chosen, or how you've turned yourself around—

none of that!

To enter this kingdom is by grace alone, by what Jesus has done for you—freely.

It's all about His saving work for you.

His cross for you.

His Calvary for you.

His death and resurrection and life, *for you!*

And in this Kingdom there's forgiveness.

Forgiveness for your hatred.

Forgiveness for your putting your own friends down and hurting their reputations.

Forgiveness for abortion

and for getting pregnant outside of marriage

and for snorting coke

and for whatever else you can possibly think of—

Here, in this Kingdom, Jesus does it all,

and He does it all for you.

So wherever Jesus is, there you have the kingdom,

there you have forgiveness, there you have peace.

Jesus loves you.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit