

MARK 1:14-15

Introduction

Stuck in your head

Have you ever had something stuck in your head? Something you can't get out of your head? I've got something stuck in my head and I want to share it with you this morning. It's something I haven't been able to shake for a few months. And, to be honest, I hope it gets stuck in your head too: repent and believe in the gospel.

Now, right away, several of you just tuned me out. You think this sermon is for unbelievers. And, sure, I'm happy if unbelievers listen in, but today, I'm talking specifically to believers. I'm talking to people who profess to be (and, in fact, are) Christians. And my message is very simple: repent and believe in the gospel.

Our Sunday School

My name is Jim, and I teach a Sunday school class here at the Hixson Campus: **Our Sunday School**. That's actually the name of it: Our Sunday School. (I'm not that creative.)

- "Our" because it is something that's shared—it's relational.
- "Sunday" because it happens on Sundays.
- "School" because we have an educational focus.

We focus on building relationships with God and relationships with man using our heads, our hearts, and our hands. If you don't have a Sunday school class to attend, I'm inviting you to ours. You can check out OurSundaySchool.com for resources from our class to see if it might be a good fit for you.

In Our Sunday School, we usually take the approach of Read, Explain, Apply, and Personalize. We'll do that, Lord willing, this morning as well, but with a few minutes of introduction first.

The Gospel of Mark

In Our Sunday School this year, we've been studying **the gospel of Mark**. Just a few minutes ago, we finished up with week 38 of our study, and we're almost finished with **Mark chapter 4**. We're taking our time.

Go ahead and turn to **Mark chapter 1**. It's page _____ in the black pew Bible if you'd like to follow along—and please do.

If you're new to church or new to the Bible, you might be wondering what a *gospel* is. Well, the word *gospel* has two basic meanings today.

Gospel (3:30)

The first meaning is taken from the Greek word **euaggelion**: meaning *a good message or the good news*. It's describing the *content* of the message that Jesus Christ preached when He walked on the earth. His message was this: life with God is possible only through Jesus' perfect life, perfect death, and perfect resurrection. And, if life—eternal life—with God is really possible through Jesus, then that is a good message—that is good news.

The second meaning of the word gospel is taken from our modern **English dictionaries**¹: **one of the first four New Testament books telling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

The other three gospels are **Matthew, Luke, and John**. Altogether, these four gospels give slightly different perspectives on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of **Mark** was written by Mark. We *think* this is the same Mark that shows up later in the New Testament with the name **John Mark**. John Mark traveled with the apostle **Paul** and **Barnabas** and is believed (based on church history) to have spent considerable time with the apostle **Peter**. I got these pictures off of their LinkedIn profiles. Actually, it was Wikipedia, but I find if I have someone to look at, it helps to make them a bit more real. The gospel of **Mark** is quick, action-oriented, and focused on doing more than saying. (Which sounds a lot like the apostle Peter.)

Because of that and a lot of early church history and evidence, we think the gospel of **Mark** is actually Peter's retelling of the gospel story (the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus) **through the hand of John Mark**.

¹ Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, taken on October 7, 2019

Read (6:00)

Enough of the introduction, let's get to the good stuff. Let's read **Mark 1:1-15**². I'm reading out of the ESV.

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

**“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,**

3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

**‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”**

4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

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.”

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.

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.”

² The ESV® Bible, copyright © 2001 by Crossway. ESV Text Edition: 2016.

Explain (8:00)

Let's go back and walk through this text a bit slower. As we walk through, I want to make sure we're reading the bible both literally and literately. This is a story made up of words, so we're going to look at the words—as well as how the words fit together. HT to [Jen Wilkin](#) for the literately/literally distinction. You should check out her book, *Women of the Word*.

1 The beginning of the gospel [Right away we see the word *gospel* again: [euaggelion](#) (I'm going to put the Greek words on the screen today—in the hopes that it might spark something in some of you to want to know more); 1. a good message 2. (specially) the good news of redemption through Jesus (i.e., the gospel of Jesus). The word *gospel* occurs eight times in **Mark**—with three of those occurrences in the first 15 verses: because Mark is being clear about what he's talking about. He's talking about the gospel. And not just any gospel.] **of Jesus Christ** [This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. There were other gospels at this time. There were others who claimed to be the Messiah at this time. But Mark is not shy about who the hero of his story will be. He tells us right up front that the hero of this gospel story is Jesus. It's not [Mark, it's not Paul, it's not Barnabas, it's not Peter](#), it's Jesus. We would do well to tell the story of Jesus and not try to make ourselves heroes while we tell His story.], **the Son of God** [And there it is—the one thing that makes Jesus different from every other person who ever lived: Jesus is God. Jesus is fully God and Jesus is fully man. And that's good news for us since we need a human to be a substitute to take our place. And we need an eternally-reaching sacrifice who could take on the sin of the world. And we get them both in Jesus.]

2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet [who lived 700+ years before Mark wrote this],

“Behold [This is a command to [stare](#) at and discern clearly. It is a command to pay attention and keep this in mind. By the way, let's do a bit of Bible trivia. **What's the last command in the Great Commission?** [Matthew 28:19-20](#). Let me [highlight](#) them for us. The very last command in the Great Commission is a command to behold that Jesus will be with us.], **I send my messenger before your face,**

who will prepare your way,

3 the voice of one crying [This is a [present active participle](#)—it's a specific Greek parsing meaning this action happened over and over again. Present active participles are patterns of behavior that are repeated. You could translate it this way: The voice of one crying and shouting and crying and shouting and crying and shouting repeatedly.] **in the wilderness:**

‘Prepare [This is a command to get ready and to prepare. This is not an option. This is not an opinion. This is an order.] **the way of the Lord** [Isaiah is saying the Messiah is coming! The Messiah is coming! Get ready! Get ready! We were promised someone to bruise the serpent's head in **Genesis**. We were promised a prophet like Moses in **Deuteronomy**. We were promised the Messiah would be a descendent of David in **2 Samuel**. We were promised the Messiah would be the Son of God, would be resurrected, would be despised and crucified, would be hated without cause, and would be Lord in the **Psalms**. We were promised

elsewhere in **Isaiah** that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. And we were promised in **Zechariah** that the Messiah would be God and priest and king. And Isaiah is saying the Messiah is coming! This is big news. This is great news. But certainly, this is good news.],

make his paths straight,” [And what happens next in **Mark 1:4**? John appears.]

4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming [**kerusso**]. This is also a **present active participle**—it means to announce, proclaim, herald—to preach. There are several words in the New Testament that can be translated as preach, and this one is my favorite. This one is to lift up high and herald like an old-school **public crier** clanging his bell and shouting out his message for all to hear. In this context it means to lift up Jesus high and shout and say over and over: here is the Messiah! Here is the Messiah! And that’s what John did.] **a baptism of repentance** [John’s message didn’t stop at proclamation—he called for repentance. Repentance in the New Testament is a change of mind that leads to a change of behavior. Repentance is a recognition of guilt before a holy God followed by a change of mind and a change of behavior.] **for the forgiveness** [This word means freedom and pardon. There is freedom and pardon to be found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a better way to live. There is forgiveness for our sin and freedom in Christ. If we are on our own and just trying to do better by ourselves, that won’t cut it. That’s not enough. New self-help books come out every year because they don’t work. And moralism (just living a ‘good’ life) isn’t the answer. Moralism doesn’t provide freedom and rest. That’s not how treadmills work. HT to **Matt Smethurst** for that line about treadmills. And if you have a Twitter account, you should follow Matt. He will help to insert some gospel amongst the Twitter hate.] **of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him** [to John] **and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing** [acknowledging fully and agreeing with John about what John had to say about] **their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached** [**kerusso**], **saying** [This is another **present active participle**—he said this over and over and over again.], **“After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”**

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.”

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.

19:00

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming [*kerusso*. This is another **present active participle**—this is what Jesus preached over and over and over again.] **the gospel** [Jesus proclaimed the good news about Himself. Jesus preached repentance and faith in . . . Jesus.] **of God, 15 and saying** [Yet another **present active participle**. At this point, you might be wondering how I know to tell you this is a present active participle. It's nothing we can see in the English text of Scripture. And I'm not fluent in Greek, but I do have a few **resources** that can help you if you want to know more about this. My current favorite is stepbible.org. If you want to know more about this resource, let me know after today's lesson and I can show you how to use the parts I know how to use (it basically involves clicking on words and reading what it says about them). But back to the text: Jesus is saying—over and over and over—the following words.], **“The time is fulfilled** [This is a **passive** verb—meaning something or someone is acting upon it. Wanna guess Who acts upon time? God. This word for fulfilled means to completely fill. It was used to describe cramming a **net full of fish** or leveling out a hollow spot. It can also mean to finish a task. At this point in history, when Jesus steps in, God had completely filled in everything that needed to be filled in. He had crammed history full of prophecies about the Messiah and Jesus had arrived to fulfill them all. Jesus is the topping off of God's plan.], **and the kingdom** [Kingdom is a word that shows up often in the New Testament. It has three different primary meanings: royalty, rule, and realm. Royalty refers to the lord or king. Rule refers to the law. Realm refers to the land. Jesus is using all three definitions at once here. He is revealing Himself to be Lord and King, He is fulfilling the Old Testament Law, and He is telling people the territory of the kingdom is about to get bigger.] **of God is at hand** [**How far away is something that is at hand?** It's close! And now we come to what's been stuck in my head. These six words: repent and believe in the gospel.];

repent [*metanoeo*. This is a **second person plural present active imperative**. It is a command to be repeatedly obeyed. It is not intended to be a one-time event. To *metanoeo* is to think differently and reconsider. It is to change the mind and the corresponding sinful behavior. Jesus commanded His listeners to repeatedly change their minds. Not back and forth from one sin to another sin, but repeatedly to change our minds about sin—to recognize that it is sinful. We are all sinners. We Christians are all sinners. We all repeatedly sin. So, we must repeatedly repent of our sin and think differently about our sin This is not a one-time event.]

and [There are two and only two steps. Aren't you thankful for that? God could have established any number of things here, and He established two.]

believe [*pisteuo*. Again, just like *metanoeo*, this is a **second person plural present active imperative**. It too is a command to be repeatedly obeyed. It is not intended to be a one-time event. To *pisteuo* is to **have faith in or with respect to a person or thing**. *Metanoeo* is about thinking and behaving and *pisteuo* is about believing and having faith. At this point, I'm concerned you might be misunderstanding what I'm saying. So, I've put the next few sentences on the

screen to ensure we're all on the same page. *Metanoeo* is about thinking and behaving and *pisteuo* is about believing and having faith. **Our conversion into children of God demands repentance and belief once, but our relationship as children of God demands repentance and belief repeatedly.** I am not saying we are repeatedly saved. I'm saying that our part of the salvific process is also our part of the relationship process. Repenting of sin and believing in the gospel once is enough for salvation, but it is not enough for an ongoing, right relationship with God. But there's one more sentence I want us to be crystal clear on. **If repentance gets us thinking rightly and behaving rightly about our sin (that sin is bad and we should stop sinning), then faith gets us thinking rightly and behaving rightly about our Jesus (that He is good and we should live for Him).** Repentance changes our mind and our behavior and belief orients our focus to the right object. These two words (repent and believe) work together. But, our six-word stuck-in-my-brain phrase isn't done yet. We're only halfway there. The next word is in.]

27:00

in [This is the Greek preposition *en*. It means in. Prepositions tell us about the direction and location of things, and **this is the Greek preposition circle.** It's a handy Bible study tool. You'll notice that *en* isn't over, upon, around, beside, out of, under, through, into, or toward. It's inside the middle of the thing. We don't repent and then believe in something around the gospel, something beside the gospel, something under the gospel, something toward the gospel, or something close to the gospel. We repent and believe in the gospel. And the gospel is the good news of redemption through Jesus Christ. The gospel is the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel says that we too can be part of the kingdom of God. The gospel declares to the world that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Gary is constantly telling us that faith has to have an object: well, welcome to the object: the gospel.]

the [In Greek, there is a singular definite article before the word gospel. This the indicates that there was a specific gospel to which Jesus was referring—it was His gospel. Repentance and belief in any other gospel is futile. It is worthless. It is fruitless. And it is pointless. Only repentance and faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ can save. And now we come to the last word in my six-word stuck-in-my-brain phrase.]

gospel [For the last time in today's text we see the word **gospel**. It still means a good message and the good news of redemption through Jesus. If you want to have a right relationship with God for the first time, repent and believe in the gospel. If you want to have a right relationship with God for the 100th time, repent and believe in the gospel. If you want to have a right relationship with God for the 1,000th time, repent and believe in the gospel.]”

You might be thinking—yeah, but you don't know my situation. You don't know how dark my sin is. You don't know how bad it is. Let me let you in on a secret—He already knows. And the power of the risen Christ in the message of the gospel is enough for you too. This song—by my favorite band, **CityAlight**—reflects how I feel about God's forgiveness and our hope. **Video.**

Forgiveness is available. Repent and believe in the gospel—and be forgiven. Jesus is alive.

Application (so what?) (35:00)

Jesus' repeated command to repent and believe in the gospel is an ongoing command for everyone

Personalization (now what?)

Jim is to continually repent and believe in the gospel

Here's what that looks like in practice: God has a sin-free design for His relationship with man. (feel free to copy this picture down in your notes). I sinned against God and rebelled against that design. I experience brokenness. Then I repent and believe in the gospel. With the Spirit's help, I pursue God's design. (I repeat as often as necessary—which is to say, as often as the Holy Spirit convicts me of sin—which is to say, for the rest of my life.)

It's not complicated. And that's part of the beauty of the gospel. The work has been done for us—by Jesus. Jesus did the hard part—He satisfied the wrath of a holy God by dying for us as our substitute.

It's not complicated. It's about repenting and believing in the gospel. Over and over.

- When we have the invitation and we are distracted: repent and believe in the gospel.
- When we hear the announcements and we are impatient: repent and believe in the gospel.
- When a sinful thought crosses our minds: repent and believe in the gospel.
- When someone cuts us off in traffic and we hate them: repent and believe in the gospel.
- When we worry today about tomorrow: repent and believe in the gospel.
- When we wake up tomorrow and fail to give thanks: repent and believe in the gospel.

That's what's stuck in my head: repent and believe in the gospel. And now, I hope it's stuck in yours too. For the rest of your lives: repent and believe in the gospel.

If this is your first time around the repent-and-believe-in-the-gospel process, we'd love to talk to you today about that. That's a really big deal. And, if this is your second time, or third time, or six thousand four hundred and forty-second time, well, that's a big deal too.

You might want to come forward and pray with someone about something you've heard today, we're about to have a time of invitation where you can come and ask questions and find out more about this beautiful gospel of Jesus Christ.

But I leave you with this: The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. Let's pray. (39:00)