

**Mark 1: 14-20; "Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom", Sermon #
3 in the series - "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on March 16th, 2008,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

Our text begins by stating that at the time when Jesus started preaching, John the Baptist was in prison. Matthew and Luke's gospels tell us that John was put in prison by Herod the tetrarch because John had rebuked him over his having taken Herodias, his brother Philip's wife to be his own wife, and John had told him that this was unlawful. (Matthew 14: 4 and Luke 3: 20) It was John's being a forthright and bold preacher which led him into this trouble of being prison. Bold and forthright preaching which is concerned to address men's sins will never be pleasing to fallen human nature whether it is preaching to a man like Herod, or whether it is preaching to any person who has not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is because people by nature do not like being told that they might be doing something wrong. Herod was personally addressed by John and he was told that it was not lawful to take his brother's wife. There are many unbelieving people who do not want to be told of their sin. They like to believe well of themselves even if they are great sinners against the Lord. This is the deceitful nature of sin. Herod was a man in public authority and he was not only sinning, but he was setting a bad example for the citizens of his kingdom. It was right for John to address this sin in him, and to rebuke him over it. We want to look at the preaching of Christ this morning; His preaching of the Kingdom of God. But I want to introduce this subject by saying a few words about John the Baptist.

I hope that you, who are listening to me this morning, will be those who will pray for God to raise up more men to preach as John the Baptist preached; men who are willing to address the sins of people whether they are people in public office or people that we live with and work with every day. Certainly there is a right spirit that this must be done in, and a righteous and loving concern which should govern whatever reproof or rebuke that the preacher will make. But to let sin walk around openly, and to publicly parade itself as it does in our days is truly a shameful thing. John the Baptist did not hide from men the truths of the coming Judgment Day and the wrath of God which will come against all unrepentant sinners in that day. John did not preach to make men feel better about themselves. He preached so that men would come to terms with their own hearts in the sight of a Just and Holy God. This is also what preachers of the kingdom of

God are called to, in our days. A preacher cannot hide the light that he has been given, whether he is addressing unbelievers or believers. Neither can any ordinary Christian afford to hide the light that he has been given. We as Christians should be much in prayer for those who preach publicly, that they would be bold to reprove sin even as John did. The question that we want to ask this morning is this: "What should a good and godly preacher be like, in the generation in which we live?" "What are the truths that he should proclaim and what should he be looking to accomplish by his ministry?" These are the questions which we want to examine this morning as they relate to the verses that I have just read to you. I believe that what we have portrayed for us in the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the best of models for what a true preacher should be like. All preachers and all Christians should learn from their Master what a godly preacher and good preaching consists of. The Preaching of Christ, as it is portrayed in this text, shows us 3 components of a godly ministry of preaching. They are, 1st - Preaching to see men turn from their sins. 2nd - Preaching to see men enter and become useful citizens of the kingdom of God. And 3rd - Preaching to see men become fishers of other men. Let us pray that God will help us to see the importance of this kind of preaching.

The 1st Component of a Godly Ministry of preaching, which is exhibited to us by Christ, is Preaching to see men turn from sins.
(Verses 14 and 15)

Jesus was a man who stated the matter plainly. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." "Repent and believe the gospel." There is a great two-fold object in preaching. It is first of all that men and women and young people and children would come to realize that by nature and practice they are sinners, and that in coming to that realization, they would also come to terms about what they should do about the many sins that they have committed in the past and the many sins which they will continue to commit if they do not have God's grace at work in their lives. Sin is the greatest problem that mankind has. His greatest problem is not what country that he lives in; it is not the government that he is under. It is not even the parents who raised him or the influences of the ungodly people around him. Man's greatest problem is himself in the sight of a holy God. And so, a godly preacher will preach that all men need to repent of their sins; they must repent or they will perish. Each person here this morning must repent of their sins, they must not excuse them or condone them. They must not say to themselves that there is no such being as God; that I am not accountable, that God will not punish me for my sins, or that I will not give an account of myself personally to God at the last Day, the Day of

judgment. If this is the attitude of your heart, I must tell you, that you will perish both physically and spiritually, and suffer eternal torments in the Lake of Fire. These are not fictions, something which the preacher makes up to scare people with. These are eternal realities which I am speaking of here. Jesus spoke plainly about these realities. John the Baptist before Him spoke of those realities. Jesus knew that John had prepared the ground of the people's hearts by his preaching. He knew that they needed to keep the matter before their minds.

Turn with me to Luke Chapter 3, verse 7 and following and we will see the kind of repentance that John preached, which Jesus was building upon in his ministry. Now, I have already spoken to you in a past sermon about John and his preaching. He was a voice. He was a voice crying, "Prepare the way of the Lord." How were the people to prepare for the Lord's work? It was to be awakened up to their need to repent in both a general and a specific sense. His baptism was a baptism of repentance for remission of sins. John could not give them remission of sins. Only God, through Jesus Christ could do that. But to prepare and to awaken the hearts of the people that he preached to, to their need, he gave them both the general command and the specific instruction concerning what their repentance was to be like. "Make His paths straight!," John had said in verse 3. Here in verse 7 it says of John, "Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers!" "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Sin is that evil within us which takes the plain commandments of the Lord and attempts to bend them and break them. God's wrath is against all sin and all those who tolerate it and promote it in themselves. That wrath is very real now; resting and abiding upon all persons who have not repented of their sins. The people that John addressed when he said this were, it says in verse 8, those who thought of themselves as "children of Abraham." Many of them were religious people. They were Abraham's descendents and many of them believed that they should, on that basis, automatically receive the blessings of eternal life because they were related to him, the father of faith who had received the promises. But John says to them, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" This is an integral part of our initial repentance. The general command is given to repent and I realize that I need to flee from wrath. In general terms of what God forbids in the giving of His commandments, He expects all men not to have other Gods before Him. He alone must be worshipped and served with our life, our time, our talents, and everything that we are and do. He is a jealous God. And this is not something that men do by nature. Sometimes men see that God has expectations of them

in keeping His commandments, but they want to fulfill those expectations in accordance with their own view of what He should be pleased with. This is turning things around and it leads to legalism. Legalism is looking at the commandments of God and thinking that we can keep them and please God in accordance with our own wisdom and strength. But the person who repents is not like this; he is poor in spirit. He does not believe that he can keep God's commandments in a way that will please God. Good preaching will bring a person to that place where their confidence in themselves, to please God according to their own wisdom and strength, according to their own observations on life, are shattered. And even their own way of looking at God's Word in a self-centered sense is destroyed. Having a Bible and reading it, abiding in it and loving it; all this will lead us to repentance if grace is at work in our heart. "The axe is laid to the root of the trees John the Baptist says in verse 9. "Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." There is the punishment of God. It is a sword which is suspended over the sinner in this life, and which is even now, in the preaching of the word, the axe that is being laid to the root of the trees. A good preacher gets to the root of what sustains the life that you live. If it is sin, it must be cut out. Ask yourself if sin is something that is being cut out of your life by believing the Word which is preached to you about your repentance.

Then there are the more specific commands related to repentance. A person who repents, must repent of his specific sins specifically. Look at Luke 3: 10. "So the people asked John, saying, 'What shall we do then?' "He answered and said to them, 'He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.'" "Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, 'Teacher what shall we do?' "And he said to them, 'Collect no more than what is appointed for you.'" "Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, 'And what shall we do?' "So he said to them, 'Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.'" What sins are these that John the Baptist addressed when he was asked by each of these groups of people what should be done specifically in repentance? To the people in general he wanted them to think about others around them. He wanted them to love their neighbor as themselves. If you see someone who does not have a tunic and you have two, you should think of what you could give to him to help him. All of these clothes in our closets. They can be unloaded and taken to good will if they sit around too long. And if we have food, it can be shared or some given to those in need. We do need to think practically about repentance in these areas. Sometimes we think that we have done

our whole duty to the poor when we have paid our taxes. "Let the welfare agencies help them." "I don't want to look at the poor or think about them." Ah yes, but God would have you to think about them. Then there was the tax-gatherers. What did they need to repent of. They needed to repent of their asking for more than what the government was asking them to collect. They were in a position where they could conceal or modify this information from those who they collected the tax from, and actually charge them more. They probably had come to see this embezzlement of funds as their commission for doing the work. It was their greediness for money that caused them to do this, and it was their sin. It was a form of stealing. And John puts his finger right on it. We can apply what is being said here to ourselves as well, in terms of the sins which we may need to repent of. 1 Timothy 6: 11 says, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." We must ask ourselves how much do we love money and possessions? Do we love them more than people, so that we will withhold from them what we should do to help them? Do we love it enough to cheat people by taking more than we should, gouging them in our business transactions with them? All of this the Lord sees, that we need to repent of it. Verses 17-19 of Chapter 6 are a good indication of a heart and life which want to bring forth good fruit. "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." "Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Then there was also the soldiers. They were told by John, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." Here were men who had strength and power with them. It was given to them by the state. But they could use the power which had been given to them in a way that was not right. They could abuse their power and their authority. They could charge people who they did not like with false charges just to gain control over them or to get money from them. John was telling them that these bullying tactics were sinful and they should be repented of. Each of us should ask ourselves in this regard, "Am I a person who is using whatever power and authority that I have been given, in a way is non-threatening, not intimidating, not bullying and bothering people in order to get what I want, or to accomplish what has been assigned to me by others? Are the fruits of kindness and gentleness seen in my words and actions? You see, this is true repentance; to turn away from specific sins as we find them in our lives. The true

Christian does not rationalize, or make excuses for, or try to justify sin in his life. He repents and takes action to deal with it so that he can be transformed by the power of Jesus Christ. A godly pastor and a godly ministry will seek to turn people away from their sins. Jesus Christ exemplified this ministry in every way in His teaching and in His actions toward others. And so did John the Baptist. And so will every pastor and preacher who knows what he has been called to.

Now 2ndly- A 2nd Component of a Godly ministry of Preaching which is found exemplified in the life of the Lord Jesus is - Preaching to see men enter and become useful citizens of the kingdom of God.

I am thinking of the words of the Lord Jesus in verse 15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." " Believe in the gospel." Good preaching and a godly ministry wants not only for people to come to terms with their sin in the sight of a holy God. It wants to see people enter the kingdom of God and become useful citizens of that kingdom. Dealing with sin by repentance and forsaking it, by the power of the grace of the Lord Jesus, should naturally lead a person on to see himself or herself as the servants and subjects of a great King, the King of all the earth; God Himself. But even God Himself, the Father and the Holy Spirit, we discover as we read the New Testament, have given all authority to the Son, to our Lord Jesus Christ. Turn with me to John 5: 21. "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will." "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father." "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." How was the Son honored in that day? The Son was honored when men saw Him not only as a great King and Lord; they saw Him as the only King and Lord of all. We must ask ourselves the question here, "How was it that people in that day, the days of Christ's ministry, were to "believe in the gospel?" Christ had not yet suffered and died for men's sins on the cross. What were people to believe when they believed the gospel? What was the gospel that was to be believed? The gospel which was to be believed was for men to honor the Son and to believe in His statements of truth that He was the Savior and King of the World. All of Jesus' words and works and miracles proved that this was so. The gospel was, and is, "Jesus is King, and He is Lord." "Honor Him as such." "He has come to reveal God to us, He has come to reveal to us a kingdom and open the door to that kingdom by preaching to us the truth, and confirming His love and good-will to us who are sinners by laying down his life for all who will believe in Him." The

Kingdom of God was at hand, in that the King had made His appearance on behalf of sinful men. He would have men enter into His spiritual kingdom and be saved from their sins. This is what it meant for people to believe in the gospel in that day. And this is what it means to believe in the gospel in this day. In that day it was even more important that they "honor the Son" as they would honor the Father; to honor him by faith, as the work of the cross was not yet accomplished. To believe in Christ is to honor the Father. To believe the gospel was to honor the Son who came to bring the heavenly Kingdom to the hearts of sinful men.

To honor the Son and to believe in Him you must receive the testimony of the Father in the Scriptures. But this is something that sinful men cannot do without grace. Listen to John 5 again. Verse 37 says, "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me." "You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form." "But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe." "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." "I do not receive honor from men." "But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you." "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive." "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" So here we see that by nature men do not honor Christ as King and Lord of all. To honor Him is to receive Him in all of His glorious offices. He is a Savior of sinners, He is the only Mediator between God and men. He is the King and Lord of all to save, to protect, to defend, and to rule over all of His people; the Elect of God. And the Elect of God are those who are willing to come to the Lord Jesus that they might have life. If He then touches your soul and heals you of this sin-sickness, this great plague of yours, then you will by nature honor Him and seek His glory and honor in all that you say and do. But this kind of faith only comes through a godly ministry of the Word where the preacher is interested in the honor and glory of Christ more than his own honor and glory. And those who attend upon his preaching and his ministry are made aware that it is Christ that he preaches and His glory and not himself and his greatness as a preacher. If you go away from a preacher marveling over the man who spoke to you more than the Christ whom he preaches, the man who has preached has in some measure failed in his ministry. It is Christ who must have all the glory for godly preaching and godly preachers. In applying this to ourselves, let us pray for godly preaching and a godly ministry in which Christ is honored

and in which we receive the Word of God concerning our King Jesus with all meekness. When this is done, we will listen for God's sake, for King Jesus' sake, whose kingdom and glory and honor are being proclaimed. We will listen for His sake, I say, because we are His servants seeking to know Him better and to do His will in a way which will honor Him. We must pray to worship Him attentively in this way when we assemble together. Surely our God will bless us if we bear this in mind.

And then 3rdly- The 3rd Component of a godly ministry of preaching which is exhibited to us in our Lord Jesus Christ is preaching to see men become fishers of other men.

Verse 16 says, "And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen." "Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'" "They immediately left their nets and followed Him." I haven't time to delve into this as I would like at this time. It will have to wait for the next sermon. But let me introduce this subject to you by saying that the example of the Lord Jesus given to us here is of great value to all who see the kingdom of God advance in the hearts and lives of men. Men are not only pictured for us in the Scriptures as sheep. They are also pictured for us by our Savior as fish who must needs be captured in the gospel net if they are ever to be saved from their sins. They must be taken out of the element of the kingdom of the sea that they live in, the kingdom of sin and Satan; and transferred into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It is a most amazing thing to me, and I hope that you will be amazed too. God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit would have all godly ministers to be fishers of men. The pattern of the plan is found here. Jesus called these men to this great work. He called them as Apostles, messengers sent by Him, to cast the gospel net out in the sea of the nations and see what would be enclosed in the nets. What is truly amazing is that the great commission is not only given to the Apostles in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. The great commission is given to all of Christ's church, all of his people to help with the gospel nets. Certainly all who are called to preach and minister will cast the gospel nets. But I hope that it is evident to you that God would have every Christian consider how he or she might become a fisher of men. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," it says in Mark 16: 15. This commission was given to the Apostles; yes. But it must have been given to the pastors and preachers of every generation since, because it says in Matthew 28: 20, "...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." The Apostles are only of that generation and time and limited to a certain small number. But I am saying that when you are caught in the

gospel net and hauled to the shore of the kingdom of God, and you believe and enter in and find eternal life, you greatly desire to help in the work of fishing. If you cannot preach you can pray. If you cannot speak, you can be full of good works. You can say what you think that you can say and pray for grace to bear witness to Christ more. You can bring others to church and point them to Bible and say, "Listen to this preacher." "He will tell you how you can find eternal life!" More on this next week.