

Speaking notes on Repentance

October 2021

A

IMHO - The biggest theological breakthrough in the twentieth century was:
The rediscovery of Jesus as a Jew.

Ref Albert Schweitzer @ 1906.

By the middle of the century other Germans were trying to obliterate that truth by destroying Judaism.

B

In consequence of this it was further realised through last century that Jesus preached a Jewish Gospel that had been buried through the Christian centuries.

Can anyone quote that basic Gospel of Jesus from scripture? Mark 1:15a Also [Matthew 3:2 & 4:17]

‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;’ NRSV

This may be familiar to anyone going up Stafford Street?

This statement comes as good news to people who know they live in a fallen world where evil is advanced by a powerful Kingdom that has infiltrated every aspect of existence.

Life on earth is not what God intended or provided for.

This is covered by the Doctrine of Sin.



To this Jewish awareness Jesus says:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near”

That is great news for anyone expecting God to come and change the situation for the better, especially if you are one of God’s people in a hostile world.

It’s Jesus announcing a new season when God would be close.

C

This is then followed by a call for direct response:

‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;
repent, and believe in the good news.’

See how Jesus preached for response?

Here is Good News AND Here is what you need to do about it.

So if you receive part A, **repent, and believe** in the good news.

This response is a double action in two dimensions:

- Turn away from things NOT of God’s Kingdom and start to trust God’s Kingdom in that regard.

- Stop action or life style A which is NOT of God and faithfully embrace God's Kingdom way.
- At present you trust this idol or wicked thing for your life, let it go and trust God's provision and protection. Cf. The Rich Young Man.
- Change sides from the Kingdom of this World to the Kingdom of God/Heaven.
 - Imagine changing sides and shirts in a game such as Football or Hockey?

SO far so Good?

Jesus brings a Jewish Gospel saying God is close at hand to overthrow the evil Kingdoms of this world.

What you need to do is disentangle from the Evil Kingdoms and embrace God's Kingdom.

Key Words

μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ
εὐαγγελίῳ

Μετανοεῖτε / Metanoeite

= Change Mind Repent

Now let's look at the Greek to make sure we really get this instruction.

So the verb we translate 'Repent' is *metanoeite*, which literally means "Change mind"

This is what I want to focus on here.

Jesus is calling for a change of mind. OK that's not so surprising is it?

I can't imagine any significant person in history saying,

"You are all doing very well, just continue as you are!"

Here is the key grammatical point: The tense is present continuous.

In other words, Your response to the coming of God's Kingdom needs to be that you start changing your mind or repenting and continue onwards without end.

That is present continuous, start and keep going.

It's like telling a baby to breath at birth, we start and we continue.

So what this is NOT, is coming to Jesus once, confessing our sins and then from then being on board and riding free as we are. Children's evangelists really scare me on this!

This is not a single response but an ongoing one. A challenge for those who do not like change.

To be clear, coming to Jesus can be sudden or gradual. That is already evident in the 4 Gospels and Book of Acts. But once you come, repenting is a continuous life time response.

D

I am going to describe this as the basic exercise of the disciple – repenting and believing.

This is the exercise Jesus calls everyone to in response to himself as the one bearing and bringing God's Kingdom on earth.

Let's consider this as a physical exercise involving muscles:

Muscles exist to be exercised.

When they are exercised they develop and remain flexible.

When they are NOT exercised they atrophy or shrivel and become weak.

So Jesus calls people to respond to his Good News of the Kingdom being at hand and within reach by entering a constant process of mind change, repentance or transformation.

Changing our mind is about reorientating.

It's about ceasing to believe or trust one thing so we may believe or trust another.

It's about turning from one thing for the purpose of embracing another, The Kingdom or Reign of this world for the Kingdom of God.

This is hard work like drawing new maps or changing currencies.

SO here is my point,

If we think Repentance is a once only event or just for extreme circumstances, the repentance muscle will atrophy and shrivel. It will be weak and inactive leaving us weak as disciples – if disciples at all.

E

So how do you do it? How do you exercise this repentance muscle, how do you change your mind as Jesus calls for?

Some more Gospel may help.

By the end of the Bible we know that Jesus advanced his Gospel of God's Kingdom supremely through his cross and resurrection. That is the story of death and its power being taken to death so that God's new life could be received.

Repentance is about the death part. It's about taking things that we think, believe, say, do to the cross and leaving them there to die. It's a clash of kingdoms where the kingdom of darkness in this world is out flanked by the grace and love of The Kingdom of God present in Jesus.

We do this because when after repenting we then believe in God he works his Good Kingdom in us through Jesus.

We do this by saying 'NO'.

In modern terms it's about pulling the plug on thoughts, actions, behaviours, addictions that are rooted in the power of this world's Kingdom.

Saying 'No' is not always easy. If you are really serious you get help and some form of support and accountability from someone. "Help me to repent"

If you want to upgrade your cell groups this is the sort of thing to pick up. Talk about personal repentance.

"Brothers and Sisters, help me to trust God's grace and the Holy Spirit's support in turning the corner on this."

"Help me receive God's Kingdom Reign here."

For myself repentance is my response to realising I am thinking, saying or doing something that does not belong in God's Kingdom. It's usually in the mind and speech area but can be as simple as reducing speed on the road.

Repentance is changing our mind and seeking to follow through on that.

F

Conclusion:

SO what is the take-away here?

It's this: Jesus as Jesus set it out,

For people raised and adjusted to the Kingdom of this World, embracing the Kingdom of God come close in Jesus will mean ongoing change led by an ever changing mind in active repentance.

Where it meets you and I as Kingdom Christians is that we need to be actively exercising the repentance muscle or we lose the ability to repent.

We may even begin to think we have basically arrived!

It requires active engagement.

When we realise an area of deficit or the Holy Spirit convicts us as he does, our delight should be to repent and say 'No' to whatever has become apparent.

Then to say 'Yes' in faith to God's Kingdom Way in Jesus.

Then I have a final question which I hope to challenge everyone with:

The grammar of "Be repenting" is plural – like so much of what is said to us in Scripture.

Remembering when you last repented and the time before that is one thing,

But can you recall this church ever repenting some way corporately or within itself?

Has St Matthew's ever changed its mind on something and asked for a new way in God?

Now this is really basic Christian Teaching But it cuts to the core of what it means to follow Jesus and embrace God's Kingdom as a disciple.

It may sound a bit harsh and remind you of hell and punishment etc but it need not?

Isaiah the prophet spoke about God's heart in the coming Messiah in Isaiah 42:

Hear these words as reassurance that the call to repentance is not harsh or police like.

God's Assurance from Isaiah 42.3

a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he
will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth
Justice.

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² He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;

³ a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth Justice.

⁴ He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Jesus comes to bring God's Reign of Justice in a way that will not break a bruised reed.
He will not quench a dimly burning wick.

Within that assurance, embrace God's Kingdom by exercising the repentance muscle, individually
and when necessary as a church.

In this way we will grow as church of disciples.