

Virtual Church 31st January 2021

Opening words: *Mark 1: 15 (The Message)* "Time's up! God's kingdom is here.

Change your life and believe the Message."

StF 24 Come, now is the time to worship <https://youtu.be/-jU1q33K6yQ>

StF 530 To be in your presence <https://youtu.be/typ7cueKdT4>

Let us pray:

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

There is no better time than now:
to turn away from complacency,
which says we do not need to change;
to turn away from greed,
which grasps more and more for ourselves;
to turn away from self-centredness,
which blots out what others need.

Now, today, we are sorry for all we have done wrong.

There is no better time than now:
to turn towards hope, which says that tomorrow belongs to God;
to turn towards trust, as we put ourselves in God’s hands;
to turn towards compassion and towards our neighbour.

Now, today, we want to live better lives.

Pause

This is the good news.

Jesus has come. Today he says to us: ‘You are forgiven’

Amen. We can begin again. Thanks be to God. (Jarvis and Pickering)

StF 628 Faithful one, so unchanging <https://youtu.be/HROSwkRwpPI>

Read: Jonah 3: 1-5,10

Read: Mark 1: 14-20

CMP 302 I want to walk with Jesus Christ

<https://youtu.be/nB9tJGdIMwQ>

1 Corinthians 7 :29-31 (the Message) I do want to point out, friends, that time is of the essence. There is no time to waste,

so, don't complicate your lives unnecessarily. Keep it simple--in marriage, grief, joy, whatever.

Even in ordinary things--your daily routines of shopping, and so on. Deal as sparingly as possible with the things the world thrusts on you.

This world as you see it is on its way out.

Sermon – “Time’s up!”

We heard a passage from one of the “minor prophets” Jonah of the 8th Century BC. The book of Jonah is thought to have been written much later – Nineveh itself was destroyed in 612BC.

It gives evidence of God as the Lord of love and not ONLY punishment. This particular section is Jonah’s second call (he ran away the first time). He is given a very specific message for the people of Nineveh – the end is nigh! 40 days and it is all over. Not only a specific message but a time frame.

Alongside this we heard the call of the first disciples. It seems strange, doesn’t it, to be only at the beginning of a new year and we have gone straight from Christmas through Jesus baptism as an adult to the call of the apostles. How come?

Well, Mark is a gospel that emphasises action rather than teaching. He begins his Gospel with several events of Jesus’ ministry in Chapter

1, followed by a collection of stories of conflict with religious authorities in Chapters 2&3 then a set of parables in chapter 4.

It is the shortest Gospel and probably the first to be written but it passes over the birth accounts and starts with the adult John. John's imprisonment appears to be the signal for the start of Jesus ministry.

The time has come – the kingdom of God has come near.

That phrase “The kingdom is coming (or near)” is used by Jesus over 100 times. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament at all.

We might not understand Kingdom here and now in the same way that it was understood in Bible times – the King was a person of power, status, and a national figurehead. In Jesus, the kingdom becomes a living reality but there is no display of power except to heal and release, no parade of status, not a leader of nationalism.

Jesus, in his call to the disciples is introducing a dynamic new idea – the kingdom is not a place or a time but the active reign of God.

So, the early Christians, as we know from a number of Paul's letters, started by thinking that Jesus would come back (coming again) any minute. When that didn't happen as they expected, they started complaining, misbehaving, and looking for an excuse to go back to the old ways. Come to think of it, that still happens in churches today!

And we, 2000 years on are finding it hard to live in the immediacy of that call to action. Now is the time!

But, do you know, I have had two experiences very recently that have collided to bring this message to you today.

This week the news that 100,000 people in this country alone have died from Covid -19, the disasters we have caused to our planet all

made the world suddenly seem a much more dangerous place. It occurred to me that tomorrow is not a certainty – we cannot assume we have it. So much so that I found myself, sitting in front of the television thinking “If the world ends now, this minute, and I meet my heavenly Father face to face, and he says to me ‘what were you doing just before the end of the world?’ what would I say? “Watching TV?” Worse still watching EastEnders (other soap operas are available).

So maybe you are thinking – poor old Val, she ought to get out more, bad case of nerves.

Then the second thing happened 3 years ago but I was reminded of it this week.

My brother, who is 6 years younger than me, had surgery aged 50 for Bowel Cancer. Just before Christmas he and we discovered that the cancer had returned but in his lungs. Last week all the tests came back to show that it is incurable.

My brother, being him, asked for the worst-case scenario from the Consultant. He was told 2-3 years. Yep – it is possible that he will never live as long as I have already. Shock – yeah.

But the next thing my brother said was “I’ll take that. I know what I have got to do now – make every day count”.

The letter to the Corinthians speaks about time being short. The world in its present form is passing away. I believe, more than ever before, we have got to take this seriously. We cannot go on living, with our diaries in our hands, thinking that tomorrow will do. Do you have a friend you haven’t contacted recently? Are you in a disagreement with someone? Have you been putting off saying to your neighbour, work mate, family member “I believe in Jesus, He is the centre of my life”?

There is nothing like a shortage of time to focus your attention.

“Time’s up! God’s Kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message”

The message is that God loves you just as you are – but too much to leave you that way! Don’t be afraid. Dedicate yourself again to his call on your life. Now is the time.

StF566 Take my life <https://youtu.be/Of4I5bTdZ8M>

Prayer:

We share together in the Lord’s Prayer while thinking about all who are in need of any kind. We pray especially for any folks that we have not been in touch with recently.

Dedication - StF 781 Take, O take me as I am <https://youtu.be/bv4f-8L1uk0>