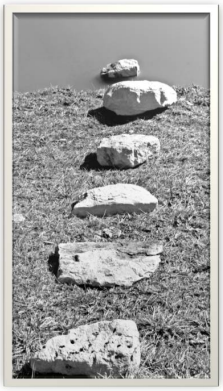
Take The Next Step
Mark 1-2



"The time has come, "he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" ***Mark 1:15 NIV***

"Time's up! God's kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message." ***Mark 1:15 The Message***

Truth to Stand On

Christ did not come to give us all that we want or expect, but He does promise to give us more than we ask or imagine.

Opening Prayer

Dear God, Open our eyes to see the coming of your kingdom. Let its transforming power come also among us. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Getting in Step With Your Group

If this is a new study group, be sure to take time to introduce yourselves to each other. Ask for volunteers to share a time when something turned out better than they expected.

Step by Step Through Mark 1-2

The first two chapters of Mark relate the coming of God's kingdom to earth in Jesus Christ. Read through Mark 1-2 together, noting these steps along the way:

- Step 1: John the Baptist points to the coming kingdom – Mark 1:1-8
- Step 2: Jesus in inaugurated into public ministry in His baptism and temptation – Mark 1:9-13
- Step 3: Jesus calls helpers to announce the good news of the coming kingdom – Mark 1:14-20
- Step 4: Jesus spreads His kingdom through teaching and healing – Mark 1:21-48
- Step 5: Jesus shows that He has power not only to heal but to forgive sins – Mark 2:1-12
- Step 6: Jesus demonstrates that the kingdom is for sinners – Mark 2:13-17
- Step 7: Jesus silences the kingdom critics – Mark 2:18-28

As you read through these verses, what actions do you see Jesus taking? What evidence do you see of His coming kingdom?

Who pronounced a blessing on Jesus at the beginning of His public ministry? (1: 11)

What kingdom power source did Jesus tap into as he carried out His ministry? (1:35) Scan through the chapters and list all the things Jesus shows His power over.

What kind of kingdom were the people expecting the coming Messiah to bring? How was Jesus' kingdom so much more than they expected?

Jesus often says and does the unexpected. What did He do in Mark 1:41 that would be unexpected around a contagious disease like leprosy? What unexpected thing did He command in 1:44? Why do you think He said this? What was the result of the man's disobedience?

Look back at the story of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12. Which was the greater gift to the man – the forgiveness of his sins or the healing of his body? Which one was more impressive to the teachers of the law?

Stepping into Our World

Each time we say the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "Thy kingdom come." Luther reminds us that what we are really praying is that God's kingdom would come among us. As time allows, choose from the following questions to discuss as a group.

- Where do you see the coming of Christ's kingdom on earth? In your own life? In what area of your life do you most need Christ's kingdom power?
- In The Message paraphrase, John the Baptist calls himself the stagehand and points out the coming star of the show. How could you point out Christ to others in the coming week?
- Jesus was immediately tested by Satan at the beginning of his public ministry. Where do you see the advancement of God's kingdom tested by Satan?
- The teachers of the law doubted Jesus' power to forgive the paralyzed man. Have you ever doubted Christ's power to forgive you? How are these chapters of Mark reassuring?
- The teachers of the law saw the tax collectors and sinners as unworthy of being with Jesus. Are there people that we judge unworthy of Jesus' company? Who would Jesus welcome into our church that we would be uncomfortable with?

More Than We Ask or Imagine

When the leper disobeyed Jesus' command to keep quiet, Jesus became known as a healer and was swamped with people looking for relief from their diseases. Perhaps the reason Jesus did not want to be publicized as a healer is that He knew people would come seeking less than the most He had to offer. The crowds were desperate for temporary bodily healing, but He was offering eternal healing for souls.

Often we are like the crowds, calling out to Jesus to take away our earthly troubles and relieve us of any suffering or distress. Jesus truly cares about our earthly needs, but He has so much more to give us. Ephesians 3:20 tell us that God is able to do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." Can you think of a time when you prayed and received more than you asked for? Is there an area of your life right now where you are asking God for something physical and He might want to give you a greater spiritual gift?

Taking the Next Step

Take today's study of Mark 1-2 into the week ahead by choosing one of the following challenges:

☐ Think of someone you know who needs kingdom power and point them to Christ.

☐ Do the unexpected and "touch" someone who has been left out by others – send a card, make a phone call, write an e-mail

☐ Think of a need you have right now in your life and ask God to meet it in a way that is beyond what you are expecting

☐ Invite someone to your group who could benefit from being in the company of Jesus

☐ Follow Jesus' example and begin each day this week tapping into the kingdom power of prayer

Closing Prayer

Give group members an opportunity to share prayer requests for the coming week.