

## **The Dawn Of God's New Day.**

Text: Mark 1:14-22

Suggested Hymns:

46, 40, 221, 282, 232

1) The Crack Of Dawn

2) The Dawn-Bearers

3) The Dawn Comes By Christian Education And Evangelism

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 1:14–22, *<sup>14</sup> Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”*

*<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” <sup>18</sup> They immediately left their nets and followed Him.*

*<sup>19</sup> When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. <sup>20</sup> And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.*

*<sup>21</sup> Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. <sup>22</sup> And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

That season of the church year, and the festival which we celebrate today is called Epiphany. The word “epiphany” means “appearing,” “manifestation,” or “revealing.”

It is also the festival of light, for during this season we study various events in the life of Christ by which He progressively disclosed His inner glory to His disciples and the world. We also think of the light of the Gospel, as its bright rays begin to penetrate the darkness of the heathen world.

Epiphany speaks to us of a bright new dawn — the dawn of God’s new day, ushered in by the person, words, and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless our meditation.

## **1. The Dawn Of God’s New Day**

### **The Crack Of Dawn**

God’s great new day for mankind began peacefully enough. It began with Jesus coming into Galilee, *preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,* <sup>15</sup> *and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.*

Mark tells us that Jesus commenced this activity in Galilee when He heard that John the Baptist, had been arrested. John’s arrest was a sort of signal to Him. John’s preparatory work was done. His voice was now silenced. Now it was time for a more authoritative voice than John’s to be heard, namely, the voice of Jesus.

### **The Event**

Jesus proclaimed an event of immense significance for mankind: *“The kingdom of God is at hand.”* Things had gone along the same old way for long enough. God had promised a brighter and better day for mankind, but it had been so long in coming.

The prophets had uttered their prophecies and thus raised the hopes and expectations of Israel, but one after another they passed from the scene of history, and the great event still lingered. But now, at last, with the coming of Jesus on the scene, *“the kingdom of God is at hand.”* Satan has kept his castle, with its dungeons and miserable prisoners, long enough. Now God lays bare His arm and begins to act.

Now there comes upon the stage of human history a Mightier One than Satan, who assaults Satan’s well-organised and powerful kingdom and despoils him of his abject and miserable slaves. God’s day had arrived because Jesus had arrived, and with Him the dawn of God’s day of deliverance for mankind.

This is one of the unique features of our Christian faith. It speaks to us first and above all about what God has done, and it remains for man to fall in step with God’s activity. Salvation is not something that man either initiates or

completes. It is from start to finish the gracious work of God, which we on our part either receive or reject.

Our Christian faith tells us that God has acted decisively in Jesus Christ. And He acted in saving love. He sent Jesus to despoil and plunder Satan's kingdom and in its stead to establish His own. Through the ministry of Christ, and especially through His sacrificial death on man's behalf, God has acted to free mankind of its sin, its guiltiness, and its lostness to God.

And through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, God has broken the bony hand of death so that it can no longer hold us as its victims. In the person and work of Christ, God's kingdom, His kingly power by which He asserts His claim to the hearts of men, has broken in upon the stage of human history.

### **A New Era Is Here**

And now that this has happened, things can never be the same. From the day that the first atom bomb was detonated we have all been living in a new era. We can never, ever, go back to "the good old days" when there were no atom bombs or intercontinental missiles carrying hydrogen bomb warheads.

A new day has come. It has happened. Man has learned to split and fuse and harness the atom, and its awesome powers are with us to stay for good or evil. Now we must learn to live with this new thing. We must accept it and adjust ourselves to it.

And the same holds true for the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is now a reality in the world. It broke into the night of man's sin and bondage like a bright flare, and there's only one thing to do — wake up and live in the light of it.

Paul told the philosophers of Athens in Acts 17:30–31, <sup>30</sup> *Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,* <sup>31</sup> *because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."*

### **God Desires a Response**

You see, in the light of what has happened, God demands action on man's part. He commands us to "*repent,*" to turn back to Him with all our hearts, and

to *“believe in the Gospel,”* to receive the mercy and forgiveness and new life which He offers us through faith in Jesus Christ.

He offers us a new Master also — a loving, kind, gracious Lord who will love us and protect us and give us eternal life. And this new Lord whom God has appointed to rule over us is none other than Jesus Christ.

And we must respond to this event. We cannot just shrug it off or come to grips with it at our convenience. This event is urgent and demands man’s immediate attention.

If the manager of a men’s clothing store calls you up and says, *“We just got a new shipment of suits in; why don’t you drop by and try one on?”* Well, you can heed that request or ignore it. It is entirely up to you. If it is convenient you may drop by, but if not, the worst that can come of it is that you might lose out on a chance to get a new suit.

But not so with God’s kingdom. This is something that has happened and that is happening which is crucial to our eternal destiny. It is a matter of life and death — eternal life or eternal death. It is important that we align ourselves with it, and that we are swept up and borne along by the powers of this new Kingdom being established upon earth. We must be a part of it, not felled like a stubborn, unyielding tree before the irresistible winds of God.

For as Luther says, *“God’s kingdom comes indeed without our prayer, of itself, but we pray ... that it may come to us also.”*

## **2. The Dawn-Bearers**

God’s Great New Day has dawned, but too many people still live in curtained parlours and dark cellars of ignorance and darkness. The bright light of God’s grace is shining, but what is needed is men who will go and knock on the closed doors and shuttered windows, and urge their fellowmen to awaken, to come out and enjoy the sunshine of God’s new day.

### **The Calling of the Twelve**

And thus we see Jesus walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, enlisting men who will become the messengers of God’s new kingdom. The important call *“Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men”* sounds out again and again. Christ gathers around Himself 12 men. For three years

they accompany Jesus, see His mighty works, commit to memory His powerful teachings, witness with awe and wonder the crucifixion and resurrection.

In this way Christ equipped them to become fishers of men. Thus He placed into their hands a new and stronger net, a net stronger than the toughest nylon, the net of the Gospel.

And success for their labours was guaranteed, for Christ promises in John 12:32, <sup>32</sup> *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*” This Jesus said referring to His death on the cross, and such was the magnetic love of that event, that no fisherman has ever fished with net or bait, that has such an attraction and therefore so certain of results.

These 12 men, and others after them, went out into the world with a message of joy and pardon. They proclaimed an event: *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.”*<sup>1</sup>

Now all that was needed was that men cease in their hostility to God, accept His gracious forgiveness, and then pass this message of forgiveness on to others as we read in 2 Corinthians 5:20, <sup>20</sup> *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.*

### **Christ Still Needs Men**

We are the men and women today who must bring “the event” to our fellowmen. We must speak the joyous words of deliverance so that those among our fellowmen who still live in the darkness of sin and Satan’s power may know of the dawn of God’s new day.

In plain and simple words we must tell them what God has done for them through the cross of Christ. The message is still powerful, the mighty net of the Gospel will still catch fish, all that is needed is men and women and children willing to wield it for their Lord.

An elderly Christian gentleman mentioned something that happened to him that illustrates how we, as Christians, should get the message of the Gospel out as an event that has happened.

He said that while he was working in his yard, a little girl who lives nearby in the neighbourhood came running up to him with the excited question, “Hey,

*Mister! Do you want to hear something?” With a twinkle in his eye, he replied, “Sure, I want to hear something; what have you got to tell me?” “Well,” said the little girl, “there was this Man named Jesus. And He was a very good Man; He did miracles and loved people, and taught them the way to heaven.*

*And there were some bad men, too, who hated Him, and they killed Him by nailing Him to a cross. But God did not let Him stay dead because He was His Son, and God loved Him. And because He died on the cross, God has taken away everybody’s sins, including yours, Mister, and we can all go to heaven!”*

This elderly Christian gentleman, of course, had known this wonderful story since childhood, but he was delighted to hear it told with such enthusiasm from the lips of this little girl, who felt she was telling him some great news of tremendous importance.

Well, it is news of tremendous importance, and you would be surprised how many people in this world have grown to adulthood and never heard this wonderful story.

And how pathetic it is that so many adult Christians have never, ever, tried to tell one of their fellowmen this good news. Christ says in Acts 1:8 that **“you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”** Jesus still needs men who will become fishers of men, wielding the mighty net of the Gospel.

### **3. The Dawn Comes By Christian Education And Evangelism**

Our text tells us that after Jesus had gathered His first disciples He immediately went into the city of Capernaum, entered the synagogue, and taught: **“And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”**

In verse 14 we saw Jesus *preaching the gospel* in Galilee, and now we see Him quietly teaching in the synagogue. To put this in modern terminology, we would say that He engaged in evangelism and in Christian education.

There is Christian education in evangelism, and evangelism in Christian education. It is all the one message, the message of God’s love active to save His children through the life and death of His Son. It involves telling people about

the greatest event in the Bible — namely, the life and death of Jesus Christ, and what this means to us.

A devout Christian man said that he became a Christian rather late in life. It all happened, he said, when one Sunday his wife persuaded him to go to church with her. The church service didn't make much of an impression on him, but after the service a man whom he respected came up to him and urged him to stay for the adult Bible class.

The man handed him a Bible and said, "*Join us, it will do you good.*" "*You know,*" he said, "*that was the first time in my life that I ever had a Bible in my hands. That was the first time I ever opened a Bible and saw the Word of God.*" There were tears in his eyes as he reminisced over that moment.

To sit, as Jesus did many a time in a synagogue, and teach the Word of God; or to stand in a pulpit and more formally "proclaim" the Word of God; or to write a letter of counsel or encouragement, including in it the Word of God — in whatever shape or form it takes, this is one and the same thing — this is evangelism, and this is Christian education. This is taking the given deeds and acts of God in Christ and making them known to others.

And this is the task which our Lord has given to us. And all who are active in speaking or teaching the Gospel are fishermen. They are wielding the net which the Lord has given us; sometimes skilfully, sometimes not so skilfully, but wherever the net is being let down, there fish will be enclosed and swept into the kingdom of God.

William James, a famous American writer and psychologist, once said, "*The great use of life is to spend life for something which outlasts life.*" How very true!

And what better way to spend a life than by making Christ and His kingdom known to our fellow-man? God's Great New Day has dawned; His kingdom has extended its mighty sway over the hearts of countless men and women throughout the world.

What greater joy or privilege can any of us ever have than this, that Christ says to us all, "***Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.***" In this way Christ invites us all to have a part in the Dawn of God's New Day. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20