

Mark 1:14-15
The Kingdom of God Part 3

When a word or phrase becomes very familiar to us it is easy or maybe even common for that word or phrase to lose the thrust of its meaning. Linguists call this semantic bleaching. When the meaning of a word becomes weakened because it is used so frequently, casually, or in exaggerated ways. Take toxic for instance. Originally used to describe poisonous substances; now commonly used to describe any difficult relationship. How about hero. Once reserved for extraordinary courage; now commonly applied to anyone who does something good. Here's a good one, trauma. Commonly applied to ordinary disappointments, diminishing its clinical significance for individuals who have experienced situations beyond their human capacity to naturally cope. Love is another great example. A critical biblical term which signifies covenant commitment and self-sacrifice but often reduced to affection and tolerance. Last week we spent the entire message hashing out another critical word of the faith, repentance. Often understood as being sorry rather than grieving one's sin and turning back to God through faith in His Son, Jesus. Another important word that has lost its thrust due to our familiarity and heavy use is believe. And this brings us to our final question of this series. What is it to truly believe in something? A critical question considering our text. ¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Believe in the gospel. The gospel being the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God which has been brought near by His Son, Jesus, the promised Messiah, the true King, the savior of the world. So, what is

it to believe in this? To believe in the gospel is to literally place oneself in the story. It is to die with Christ and to be raised with him in newness of life, spiritually, now, and physically in the life to come. I am convinced that when we truly believe in the gospel. That is, we literally place ourselves in the story alongside Jesus we experience three deaths. This morning I want to discuss those three deaths in hopes that we will faithfully discern whether or not we truly believe in the gospel.

First death we experience. We die to self. In dying to self, we die to the lie that we are by nature good. That we are okay with God. We die to the lie that we, by our own effort, can do what's necessary to be in right relationship with God. In dying to self, we acknowledge that the only hope for us is the grace of God afforded to the world through the death and resurrection of God's Son, Jesus the Christ. We die to the old self, and we put on the new self. Hear me. Salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart. It is by the grace of God through faith in Jesus. That work belongs to God, but the putting off of the old self and the putting on of the new self belongs to us. So, the question here is, who are you wearing this morning?

Eph 4:17-23 ¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your

minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” **ESV**

Col 3:1-10 “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” **ESV**

Eph 2:8-9 “⁸God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.”

NLT

Second death we experience. We die to sin. I am convinced these deaths occur in the order I am presenting them. Logically, no one dies to sin until he first acknowledges that he is in bondage to it. And no one comes to that realization apart from faith in Jesus Christ. Faith gives rise to repentance—a turning away from sin and a turning back to God. It is, in essence, a dying to self; a dying to the lie that we are inherently good or capable of saving ourselves. Faith in Jesus also brings about the birth of a new creation. A creation that has been set free from sin's bondage, because we have died to sin. Church, sin no

longer has dominion over us. Listen! We are no longer captives of our fallen nature. This does not mean that we will never struggle with sin. But it does mean that sin is no longer our master. The old self, the one ruled by sin, was buried with Jesus. If sin continues to reign unchallenged in our lives it is our own choice and if this be the case for anyone professing to follow Jesus, Scripture gives him or her reason to question whether he/she truly know Christ. Such a life reveals that there has been no death to sin because there has been no death to self. And if there has been no death to self, there has been no genuine repentance. Have you died?

Romans 6:1-14 “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for

unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” **ESV**

Third and final death we experience when we believe in the gospel.

We die to this world. Prior to faith we were not only in the world we were of it. Now that we are in Jesus we remain in the world, but we are not of the world. **We are no longer under its sway. No longer under its influence. We have come into the marvelous light of God, dying to self and to the rule of sin, and so the world has lost its luster. It has lost its pull upon us because we have died to it. Or has it?**

Listen. We can't be citizens of two kingdoms. We either reside in the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of the world. And let me warn us by reminding us this world is passing away and all that's in it.

John 17:13-20 ¹³ “Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴ I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. ¹⁶ They do not belong to this world any more than I do. ¹⁷ Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. ¹⁸ Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹ And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth. ²⁰ “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.” **NLT**

1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵ Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a

craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. ¹⁷And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.” **NLT**

In closing, when we believe in the gospel we stake our very lives to it. So much so, we would be willing to die physically because of that belief. If it called for it. Or, at a minimum, we trust that in such a moment the Holy Spirit would empower us to be willing to do so, with joy even. The Kingdom of God. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**