

**Small Groups Discussion**  
“The Off-Broadway Debut”  
Mark 1:14-39

**Opening Question:**

- What is one form of medication or technology that has made a life-altering, positive difference for you? How did you learn about it?

**Intro:** We’re in a sermon series that’s spanning the academic year, called “The Big Story.” We’ve been walking through the Bible, seeing the ways that it’s one big story of redemption. Between now and Easter we’re looking at some of the key elements of how Jesus went about the rescue that he came to accomplish. Today’s passage in Mark is important because here we see the essence of Jesus’ 3-year, public ministry.

**Read Mark 1:14-15**

- What event catalyzed the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry (v. 14a)?
  - Why would such an event push him to go public?
  - How does this event create a sense of foreshadowing for the whole story told in Mark’s Gospel?
- How does Mark summarize Jesus’ public ministry (v. 14b)?
  - In view of our look at Mark 3:13-15 several weeks ago—the invitation to discipleship—what is significant about Jesus’ proclamation in relation to our proclamation?
- Mark tells us the content of Jesus’ announcement of good news, in v. 15.
  - When Jesus says, “The time has come,” the word for “time” is loaded—it means “appointed time.” Jesus is saying that the watershed moment in history has arrived with his coming on-scene. What is so momentous about this occasion?
  - When Jesus says, “The kingdom of God has come near,” what does he mean by “come near?”
  - Why is this good news?
  - Pastor Josh said that Jesus’ announcement is akin to saying that the antidote to the deadly poison of sin has arrived. How is the kingdom of God like an antidote to a deadly poison or illness?
- **Read Mark 1:35-39**
  - How does this scene shed light on what Jesus saw as the heart of his ministry?
  - How do you feel about Jesus’ reply to the stated needs here?
  - What is the potential distraction for Jesus?
  - How are Simon and his companions actually serving the agenda of the demons rather than that of God?
- Mark gives us this glimpse in vv. 35-39 as a bookend to show us what activity encompassed the ministry of Jesus: proclaiming the gospel (good news), that God’s kingdom has arrived.
  - What had Jesus said in v. 15b was a fitting response to the arrival of this kingdom?
  - In your own words, what does it mean to “repent and believe the good news?” (Leaders: Pastor Josh said, “Because the news is so good, re-orient your life around it.”)
  - Pastor Josh used the analogy of a chair facing away from God, to represent our lives before repenting. But he also said that repentance involves a daily willingness to examine our hearts and be re-oriented around God’s kingdom. What things keep us from “turning our chair around,” so to speak?

- Because the “good news” that Jesus came to announce is the arrival of God’s kingdom, let’s spend some time trying to better understand the nature of that kingdom, by looking at some of the insights Jesus gave us into it. If you have time, you can walk through all of these together as a group. But if you are pressed for time, you may want to divide up into smaller groups or pairs to look at several passages, and then report back. As you read these excerpts, note what they show us about God’s kingdom.
  - Matthew 5:3-10
  - Matthew 5:20
  - Matthew 6:35-34
  - Matthew 8:5-13
  - Matthew 11:7-15
  - Matthew 13:44-45
  - Matthew 18:1-5
  - Matthew 18:21-35
  - Matthew 20:20-28
  - Matthew 21:28-32
  - Mark 4:30-32
  - Mark 10:13-31
  - Luke 12:32-34
  - Acts 28:17-31
- Discuss:
  - In the passages above, what aspects of God’s kingdom stood out? (If you have the space and materials, make a running list).
  - If we are going to embrace the kingdom of God as the orienting center of our lives, what things might need to change? How would we go about this?
- Pastor Josh talked on Sunday about the “already, not yet” aspect of God’s kingdom. Elaborate on this concept. In what way does the first coming of Jesus—in which he brought God’s kingdom—enable us to live with hope and endurance as we await his Second Coming?

**Share concerns and pray for one another.**