



TURN AROUND — REPENT AND BELIEVE!

Bible Study

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

Who is to blame?

Repentance begins with realizing we are sinful. How can we even begin to repent if we refuse to acknowledge any fault? In the beginning, at the time of the Fall, Adam got the ball rolling by blaming God and Eve for his sin. It was not his fault! Often we, too, are guilty of shifting blame. "Whose fault is it? Certainly not mine! Someone else's!"

In our lives, we find other ways of shifting blame. "Why can't I get ahead? It's because of my race, creed, skin colour — surely not because I can't cut it! I've been cheated by society...my parents...the school system...everyone!"

Segments of society also like to blame others for their problems. One segment says, "You owe me! Society owes me! We deserve special treatment because of all the discrimination we've experienced." Maybe others can say the same thing because of reverse discrimination. So that group, too, begins to blame someone else for their problems.

Please read Mark 1:15. These are Jesus' first words in his public ministry as recorded by Mark. Jesus picked up where the ministry of John the Baptist ended.

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The kingdom of God...

We who are in God's kingdom need to keep repenting. What is the kingdom of God? Remember the catechism question and answer? "What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is His ruling as king over the whole universe (kingdom of power), the church on earth (kingdom of grace), and the church and angels in heaven (kingdom of glory)." ¹

Repent!!

Listen to what Dr. Martin Luther has to say about the word repent. "Repent: to feel the wrath of God in earnest because of one's sin, so that the sinner experiences anguish of heart and is filled with a painful longing for the salvation and mercy of God." ² To go back to our introduction — how can we even begin to repent if we refuse to acknowledge any fault?

Franz Pieper, a great Lutheran theologian, speaks of repentance in terms of sorrow and contrition in Christian Dogmatics, Volume 2. The Greek word for repent indicates a radical change and an actual turning from one direction to go in another direction.

Look up the following Bible passages to see what they say about repentance.

Mark 6:12

Luke 13:3

Acts 2:38

Acts 3:19

Believe the Good News!!

What is belief or faith? Martin Luther says: "Faith: to believe that which is not yet present. It is the 'yes' of the heart." ³

Soren Kierkegaard, Scandinavian philosopher, called faith "the leap knowing that God catches." Do you know the faith game? A person stands with his or her back to you and trusts you enough to catch him or her when simply letting go and falling backward.

What is the Good News? The Gospel of Jesus Christ, that He died and rose again to save us from our sins. Dr. Martin Luther expresses it this way: "The words of the New Testament: Christ gave his body and shed his blood for us and for the forgiveness of sins." ⁴

Please look up these passages to see what they say about the Good News, the Gospel.

Isaiah 61:1-3

Romans 1:16

1 Corinthians 15:2

Colossians 1:21-23

Why is the Gospel preached? To lead us to the foot of the cross.

Notes

¹ Small Catechism (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), p. 179

² What Luther Says (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 1210, #3851

³ What Luther Says, p. 466-467, #1376-1378

⁴ What Luther Says, p. 560, #1700