

So now what do we do?

Good Morning!

If you brought your Bible with you this morning... turn with me to 1 Samuel 17:40-50...

To the story of David and Goliath... *“Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. “Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!” David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.” As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.”* (NIV)

In 1 Samuel 17 we have the classic story of David, the modest shepherd boy who slew Goliath, the arrogant giant of Gath.

The **drama** of that story grabs our focus... so much so, that the spiritual lessons contained in the more *minute* details tend to escape our notice. For instance... did you ever wonder why *five* smooth stones? Why more than one? Wasn't David a man of faith? Did he doubt that God would deliver Goliath to him?

Maybe it was because David knew there were *other giants*... And indeed there were... at least four of them. Read 2 Samuel 21:15-22... Perhaps David was preparing for *all* of them. Trusting the Lord *implicitly*, he chose **one** stone for

Goliath, the champion of the Philistines... and just enough to be ready for any others in case they attacked.

And why did he choose "smooth stones"? Maybe it was because David knew you can shoot much more *accurately* with the *proper* ammunition.

David had *faith*, but he also used *sanctified common sense*. That is, the good sense God gave him... He didn't say, "God is going to do it anyway, so I'll just pick up any old rock."

I believe David recognized *in addition* to *Divine Providence* that he was counting on to carry him to victory... *he* had a *human responsibility* to go into battle as prepared as he could be...

That *human responsibility*... is what I want to talk to you about this morning...

For the last five weeks... Pastor Bob has given us a *refresher course* on the *foundations of our faith*...

We learned about God... The Father... The Son (Jesus)... and the Holy Spirit.

We learned about man... *us*... Who we are and the sinful state we were in before Jesus came to earth in the form of a man... to die a sacrificial death *for us*... so that through believing in Him, we might be saved, and brought back into *relationship* with Him.

And we learned about The Kingdom of God...

These things are the cornerstones of our faith... and they *are* the cornerstones of our faith... because *they are true*.

They are *objective truths*... that is, they are *true no matter what, no matter when... true for all people, for all time*...

The world doesn't care much for objective truth. The world is much more comfortable with the idea of *relative truth*... that is, that we each have *our own* truths... what's true for me, may not be what's true for you...

This idea of *relative truth* has been with man... since the fall... and it has plagued us ever since...

In John 18:37 & 38 Pontius Pilate is questioning Jesus... and *Jesus says* "... *for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*" "What is *truth*?" Pilate asked." (NIV)

It's obvious Pilate wasn't interested in the truth as much as he was of finding the easiest way out for him...

Pilate *knew* Jesus hadn't done anything wrong.... He says so right after that... But Pilate also knew the Jewish leaders were going to make life difficult for him if he didn't take care of Jesus the way they wanted... The truth was, Jesus was *innocent*... He didn't deserve the trouble He was getting from the Pharisees. But Pilate wasn't looking for truth... he was looking for a way *around* the truth.

My belief is that relativism waters down **accountability**. If there is **no** objective truth, there is no need for accountability.... **Conversely**... if there **is** objective truth, then there **must be** accountability to that truth... In John 14:6 Jesus said: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father, but through me.*" And the world doesn't want to hear that! They want to justify themselves through their **own truth**. You can't have as much fun **doing your own thing**... if you know one day, you'll be held **accountable** for your actions.

So, what's that got to do with **us**?

We're Christians... We know the truths about who we are... who God, Jesus and The Holy Spirit are... We know about the Kingdom of God...

If we know these truths... the question becomes... **so now what do we do?** That's the big question... We're **Christians**... We follow Christ... if we have a question about how to do that, or what that looks like, **we should do what Jesus tells us to do**...

And He tells us what we need to do in Mark... Chapter 1, verses 14 through 17...

Jesus is starting to gather the men who will become His disciples... and He's traveling through Galilee...

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

What do we do now? **This** is what we do now... we **repent and believe**... and we obey Jesus' command to **"follow me!"**

That is what we're called to do.

1. First... we're called to REPENT...

Repentance has really developed a bad name over the years. Repentance... to most folks... still has that Old Testament type of *stigma*... Sack cloth and ashes, a dour breast beating, "I'm so sorry God!"...

And that was how the kings and priests demonstrated repentance in the Old Testament.

But in the **New Testament**... in our world today, repentance has a whole different meaning.

The Greek word for repentance... is μετανοια... meta-noia... and it literally means *change of mind*...

Repentance... is a **change of mind**... a change from **my ways**... to **God's ways**... Repentance means to turn **away** from the things we think are important, and turn **towards** the God who is *forever turning toward us*.

You know, there was a time when I thought I had everything figured out. I thought I could get what I want... and do it **my way**... But as time went on, I realized I **didn't have things figured out**... and I **needed God** to help me, or I wasn't going to make it....

That process, of realizing I was headed in the *wrong direction*, and I needed God to help get me on the right track... that moment I looked to God... **that** was repentance!

Here's another thing... Repentance means to **go another way**... *Go another way*... as in **move**... It has nothing to do with feeling guilty... or sorry... or afraid... those are all **stuck feelings**... and the word for them is **remorse**, not repentance.

Barbara Brown Taylor says it this way....

"Remorse is what you do after you have driven your car into a major mud hole and your tires are spinning, digging deeper trenches every time they go around. Remorse is what you do while you tramp around in the mud yourself, lamenting your decision to go out on such a bad day, cursing your poor judgment in leaving the road in the first place, gunning your engine over and over again to convince yourself that you are not really stuck. Remorse is fine, but it does not get you anywhere.

Repentance **does**, but it **begins** with the sure and certain knowledge that you **are** stuck, and despite everything you have been telling yourself to the contrary, you **do need help**. Repentance is when a man appears out of no where, with a board under his arm, and when he offers to wedge it under your back wheels,

and you have the good sense to say “thanks”, instead of “no thanks, I can handle it.”

Repentance is when you take his advice to try putting the car in reverse instead of drive. Repentance is what happens inside you when he leans on your bumper and you feel the car starting begin to move, and you feel it keep moving until you’re back on the pavement.

Remorse keeps us stuck, **repentance** moves us forward.”

Repentance **changes** us... and if it doesn’t... it’s **not** repentance...

In his book *Loving God*, Charles Colson tells the story of Mickey Cohen.

Mickey Cohen was, in the 1940’s and 1950’s sort of the “Al Capone of the West Coast”. He was also an orthodox Jew. One night he went to a Billy Graham meeting at a friend’s house. At the end of the meeting, Mickey Cohen expressed an interest in Christianity. He saw a lot of Hollywood stars and powerful people come to Christ and he thought, “why not?”...

The Christians at the meeting told Cohen that Jesus was knocking at the door of his heart, and all he had to do, was let him in. Cohen said, “is that all there is to it?” and the Christians said, “yes”... so Mickey Cohen said “all right then, I’ll accept Christ.” The ramifications shook through the evangelical world. Mickey Cohen, the number one gangster on the West Coast had become a Christian.... The trouble was, Cohen kept running the rackets and having people “rubbed out”. So his Christian friends went to him and said “Hey Mickey, you’re a Christian, you can’t keep doing all that illegal stuff”... and Mickey Cohen said “why not?” He said there are Christian musicians, Christian actors, Christian businessmen, why not a Christian Gangster?” The idea is, of course, ludicrous... As soon as Mickey Cohen heard about repentance, he wanted nothing to do with Christianity. Mickey Cohen didn’t have a **change of mind** at all... He wanted to keep doing things the way he was doing them...

Repentance is a **gift** God gives us. Repentance is **humbling**. Repentance **awakens** us to our desperate need of grace... and as a result, prepares us to **receive** Christ, with humbling gratitude. Repentance **embraces** Christ in faith.

Paul’s conversion is a **classic example** of repentance. He persecuted Christians because he was convinced that Jesus was *not* the Messiah. He was a very devout Jew who **thought he was doing the will of God** by crushing this apostasy from Judaism by Jews who had become Christians.

Then, when Jesus confronted Paul on the road to Damascus... Paul **suddenly knew he was dead wrong**. He trusted in Jesus and repented. **His life was so completely changed** that he **risked** his life, multiple times, to preach in the synagogues that Christ **is** the Son of God (Acts 9:20-25). Throughout the rest of

the book of Acts we read of Paul suffering brutal persecution because he preached Christ. This ex-Pharisee who had once **despised** Gentiles... had become the **greatest missionary** to the Gentiles the world has ever known...

That... is repentance... That... is what it means... That is what we are all called to... To change our minds... from our ways, to God's ways...

That is what Jesus meant when He said "**repent**"...

2. Second we are called to Believe.

It turns out **believing** is a **big deal** to God....

It is interesting to note that in Webster's Dictionary, the first definition of Belief is **not** to believe **in** something... but "*a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing.*"

Jesus wants us to **make a habit** of placing our **trust and confidence** in **Him**...

How wonderful! How comforting! God does **not** want us to live in uncertainty. God wants us to **know and understand** what it means to **believe**...

God wants you to **BELIEVE** Him. God wants you to **KNOW** you are saved because He said He would save you. **That**... is believing God. He wants you to trust Him to do **exactly** what He says He will do - and **He says** He will save you... if you **believe** Him.

This morning... you're sitting here thinking... "**I believe!**" But... **do you? Do you really believe?**

I'm reminded of the story of Charles Blondin... the great French tightrope walker of the 19th century... In 1859 Blondin strung a tightrope across Niagara Falls... and 100-thousand people came out to watch him walk from the Canadian side of the falls... to the American side... As he inched his way across the crowd *held its breath*... and when he reached the American side the crowd started chanting his name "Blondin! Blondin! Blondin!"... Blondin quieted the crowd... and said "I'm going back to the other side now, carrying someone on my shoulders, do you believe I can do it?" And the crowd chanted: "We believe! We believe!" Blondin said: "Which of you will be that human being?" There was a *long* icy silence... and finally *one man* stepped forward... got on Blondin's shoulders... and Blondin carried him safely to the other side...

The point of the story is blatantly clear... 100-thousand people said "I believe!", but only one really did!

In the *incredible* story in the 11th chapter of the book of John... Where Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead... when He gets to Bethany, and is talking to Lazarus' sister Martha... Jesus says in verses 25 and 26...

*"I am the resurrection and the life. He who **believes** in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and **believes** in me will never die. Do you **believe** this?"*

And *incredibly* Martha answers **"yes!"** Verse 27...

*"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I **believe** that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."*

Then... in Matthew 9... Jesus heals the two blind men... Verses 27 through 30...

*"As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "**Do you believe** that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, "**According to your faith will it be done to you.**" And their sight was restored."*

Those blind men, Martha, **they believed Jesus!... They really believed Jesus...** And because they did, they are forever **perfect examples** of what Jesus wants from us when He says **Believe!**

Believing is **crucial** to Jesus... It's **so important** to Him... That He even **limited** what He was willing to do... on the basis of belief... Remember in Matthew 13... when Jesus went to His hometown? How He was met with a *wall* of resistance from the people there?

They were wondering *who is this guy? Isn't he the carpenter's son? Didn't he grow up here with us? How did he get to be so smart all of a sudden?* And what does The Bible say? It says: *"And he (Jesus) did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith."* (verse 58)

Let me ask you this morning... You know the foundations of Christianity... You know the doctrine... But **do you believe Jesus?**

I'm not asking do you believe *in* Jesus... James (2:19) tells us *"the demons believe"*... I'm asking do you **believe Jesus?** Do you **believe** He *can and will* do what He's said He will do?

Listen... You don't have to answer that question *to me*... I'm not the *"belief police"*... but you need to be able to *honestly* answer to yourself... *for yourself*... **"do I believe Jesus?"**

Here's one way you can answer that... are you **obeying Jesus**? Because that's the third step in the process of "**what do we do now?**"

Finally... in this passage of Mark, Jesus says: "**follow me!**"

Isn't it **interesting** that all three of these commands are all so **interconnected**?

First... we **repent**... we change our minds from our way of thinking... to God's way of thinking...

Second... we **believe**... we put our trust in Jesus... we have **confidence** that He will do the things He says He'll do...

3. Third, we are called to obey. We **obey** Jesus command when He says "**Follow me!**"...

Repentance means we realize Jesus is **The Way** and we **believe Him**...

And **Believing**... means having the **conviction** to **obey what Jesus commands**...

Oooh! You're thinking... "We *almost* got out of here without him bringing up that obedience thing!"

I might be *new* at this pastoring job... but I'm not *that new*! If we're not *obedient* to the things Jesus has called us to be obedient to... we need to seriously examine whether or not we *truly* believe Jesus...

The idea that we can **believe** in Jesus **without** obeying His instructions, is a common but biblically flawed perspective... Jesus addressed this in Luke 6:46 when He said: "*Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?*"

In John 14:15 Jesus says: "*If you love me, you will obey what I command.*"

When we **repent**... which is to **change our minds**... from our ways, to God's ways... And when we **believe**... as evidenced by **placing our trust and confidence** in Him, and by our **obedience** to His commands... what we're doing... is **following Him**... And **that** is living in **The Kingdom of God** ...

John Calvin said "*It is the first duty of the Christian to make the invisible Kingdom visible.*"

When we **repent, believe** and **follow** Jesus... that's exactly what we're doing... we're making the invisible Kingdom of God **visible** to this world...

And when we **demonstrate** The Kingdom of God to *this world*... This world is **always impacted**...

During World War II there was a church leader in Bulgaria, an Orthodox priest by the name of Metropolitan Kyril... When the Nazis rounded up the Jews in his city and herded them into a barb-wire enclosure, Kyril knew he had to do something...

A train that was supposed to take the Jews to Auschwitz pulled up at the station. The S.S. guards were just about to start loading the people into the box cars that would take them to their certain death, when suddenly, out of the darkness stepped Metropolitan Kyril... He was a tall man to begin with, and he was wearing a miter on his head, and his priest's robe, which probably made him look like a giant as he emerged out of the darkness... and behind *him* marched many of the townspeople.

Kyril went to the entrance of the barb-wire enclosure, which at that point was surrounded by his supporters. When the Nazi guards tried to stop him, he laughed at them and pushed their guns aside. He went in among the Jews, who were crying hysterically, because they knew where they were going... Kyril raised his hands to quiet them down... then... he quoted one verse of Scripture... Ruth 1:16...

“Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.”

The Jews crying turned into cheering... and the Christians who had shown up to support Kyril cheered too! They were no longer separate peoples. They had become one in the declaration of the Word of God!

Because of such heroics... not one of Bulgaria's 48-thousand Jews ever died in a Nazi concentration camp. And that is a historic fact...

When men and women are willing to lay down their lives to oppose oppression and injustice... **amazing things** can happen in the Kingdom of God...

So now... **now** that we have heard The Gospel... **now** that we know **the truth** of The Gospel... **now** what do we do?...

We do what Jesus called us to do in the book of Mark... We **repent**, we **believe**, and we **follow Jesus**... Because **The Kingdom of God** is near! And it's **our job** to demonstrate that Kingdom to our sick and dying world...

As His **disciples**... As those who have been saved through His mercy and grace... As those with the same **sanctified common sense** God gave David... it's the only thing **we can do!** Amen!

