Intro: Life is full of twists, turns and changes. That’s the key: change. Chinese proverb (on tv): “Make friends with change, because that’s the only friend you can count on.”

Q: How many of you, at one point in your life, ever thought you would live in Juneau?

For me, 10 or even 5 years ago, I never imagined I would live here. I always thought I would be a pastor in a small town, but never in Alaska. As I followed Jesus, we were led from place to place, to where we are today. What I found is that once I tell someone “I’ll be here for a long time” something changes. 1 month ago, I said this to my supervisor, and now the Lord is leading us in a different direction.

Today is perhaps the last sermon I will preach at RCJ. At other churches, I was happy to finish, here I’m a little sad. Never thought our time would end so soon. – My thoughts

Good – Isaiah 55:8

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.”

As we read through the Bible, we see the same thing again and again. God constantly surprises people with change – different thoughts.

Vs. 14 – Although in chapter 1, not the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Mark is not concerned with a timeline, but about showing whom Jesus is.

* Tells us why Jesus went to Galilee – logical because it wasn’t time for him to be arrested

Vs. 15 – Summarize Jesus’ preaching ministry

* Gospel = good news
* Kingdom of God is at hand
  + Fantastic news – since creation, humanity had struggled with the KOG

As God created Adam and Eve to live in community together and with him

* Rebelled and rejected God’s rule
* In 1 Samuel – God’s people ask for a king
  + Samuel (prophet) reminds the people that God’s intent was for God to be their king
  + Not socialism, communism, democracy, but a theocracy – God would rule his people in community
* Eventually Israel lost their kingdom – people mourned for centuries

Jesus enters the picture = the KOG is at hand

* God’s rule over people’s hearts and lives is now being established
* Much different than what the people expected – political kingdom
* Jesus had something far better in mind - Repent and believe

Repent (last week Mike) – confession then a change of behavior, attitude – change

Believe – pisteuw – entrust, think to be true, commit

* Not ginwskw – to know, or understand
* Truly embracing – changed life, desires
* 2 Cor. 5:17 – “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”
  + New life, heart, desires
  + GC: talking about how our lives would be different if we truly believe the Gospel
* Too many people in churches today have a knowledge about the Gospel
* Matthew 7:21-23
  + There will be people who verbally confess Jesus as Lord, but don’t truly repent/believe
  + They may even do great things, but from the wrong reasons – mighty works are not proof of salvation

Vs 16-17 – Calls to discipleship – something greater

* You enjoy fishing? How about fishing for something more meaningful?
* Echo of Jer. 16:15-17 where fishers and hunters of men will call people back from their idols to God.

Vs. 18-20 – They left everything to follow Jesus

* Simon and Andrew left nets
* James and John – father, boat, nets
* Think about that – all their lives, they knew what they would do – fish

James/John were part of a family business – leave it

* Didn’t wait to get bought out
* Gone at the call of Jesus

Father’s reaction?

* Shocked?
* Did he yell?

These people weren’t poor beggars who didn’t have anything to do – jobs, future – Jesus called, they obeyed

Placement of these two stories is by no accident – notice the order

* Repent
* Believe
* Follow

To truly be a Xian involves all three

* “Repentance w/o faith could become remorse, and remorse can destroy people who carry a burden of guilt.”
* Following Jesus, means following wherever he leads – even to pain
* Only 1 disciple died of old age
  + Simon Peter – crucified upside down in Rome
  + Andrew (brother of Peter) – scouraged, then tied (rather than nailed) to a cross, so that he would suffer for a longer time before dying. For 2 days, he preached to passersby
  + James (son of Zebedee) – Killed with a sword – Acts 12:1-19. His accuser was moved by his courage and repented/converted and then asked to be killed alongside James
  + Philip – missionary to Asia – scouraged, imprisoned and crucified
  + Bartholomew – missionary to India – beaten and crucified or skinned alive and then beheaded
  + Thomas – Preached in Greece and India – run through with a spear
  + Matthew – stabbed in the back in Ethiopia
  + James (son of Alphaeus) – at age 94, beaten and stoned then hit in head with a club
  + Jude – crucified in Turkey or Greece
  + Simon the Zealot – preached in Africa and England where he was crucified
  + Judas Iscariot – hanged himself after betraying Jesus
  + John – after being boiled in oil, exiled to Patmos

These men truly believed the Gospel and followed Jesus. Truly embraced the KOG.

Too often, we expect the American dream to parallel the Gospel. To be comfortable, happy and have our perceived needs met. That’s not the Gospel not the KOG.

Honestly, the KOG is a great paradox – Pain and Joy at the same time

* Pain – die to self, follow wherever Jesus leads
* Joy – nowhere else do you get to see the miraculous happen – people reconciled to God
  + People raised to life – analogy of drowning and Jesus saves
    - Floating on bottom of the ocean – dead and brought to life