

The Gospel According to Mark

The First to Follow

Mark 1:16-20

Sunday, February 2, 2020

Introduction

After His baptism and His time in the wilderness Jesus begins preaching and proclaiming that *the Kingdom of God is at hand*. It's a message that many would have considered as confirmation that Jesus was the promised king who had come to defeat all of Israel's enemies and to establish His throne in Jerusalem. While it's true that Jesus was and is the promised king, His next move may have shown that His plans and His mission were different than what some may have expected.

We have already seen the authority of Jesus revealed at His baptism, in His meeting with Satan in the wilderness and in the message He proclaimed, but we see it demonstrated again as He begins to call men to follow Him. His call and the obedience of those called is yet more evidence that He is the Messiah and the One with all authority.

While this passage reveals the One who calls disciples and His authority, it's also important that we see the response and the actions of those who are called. Through these first disciples of Jesus we begin to understand what it looks like to respond and live as followers of Jesus. We also see that it is through men and women that Jesus will take His message to the world.

The Context of the Call to Discipleship

- **The Sea of Galilee** – To understand the men who Jesus called starts with understanding their setting. The Sea of Galilee was a primary fishing hub for a region with a fish-heavy diet. To be a boat-owner and a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee was significant and revealed a certain level of skill in fishing and commerce.
- **Unlikely Disciples** – One may presume that Jesus would surround Himself with the religious and the elite, but instead Jesus calls fishermen as His first followers. While fishermen in Galilee may have been skilled and competent men, they seem like unlikely disciples to the Son of God and promised Messiah.
- **Application** – Throughout the Scriptures we see that God often uses unlikely people to accomplish His work in the world. He doesn't need those who are defined as great by human standards. God can call and equip anyone He chooses.

The Nature of the Call to Discipleship

- **A call to follow** - When Jesus called these four fishermen to follow Him it was a significant calling. He was calling them leave all that they had known and worked for. He was calling them to submit their lives and loyalties to Him. It was a call to complete allegiance.
 - **Background** – Mark's account shows the authority of Jesus and the response of the disciples, but John's Gospel reveals that there is some backstory between Jesus and these men (John 1:35-42).
 - **Application** - While Jesus' calling of these men was for a unique ministry, there are still implications for us. Jesus is still calling disciples and following Him means loving and serving Him above all else. It's a call to complete allegiance (Mk 8:34-36; Lk 14:25-33).
- **A call to mission – Fishers of Men** – In Jesus' calling of His first disciples we see a glimpse of His plan to reach the world. Jesus does not only call the disciples to follow Him, but to become ambassadors for His message to the world.
 - **Fishers of Men** – In the Old Testament God used the imagery of fishermen to describe the gathering of people for judgment (Jeremiah 16:16-18). Jesus flips the picture on its head as He is calling fishermen to gather those who will be saved from judgment.
 - **Application** – When we follow Jesus we are entering into His mission for reaching the world. Just as the first disciples were called to fish for men, we are called to take the message of Jesus and His work of salvation to the world (Matthew 28:18-20).
- **The Response to the Call to Discipleship**
 - Mark emphasizes that the disciples responded to the call of Jesus promptly (immediately) and fully (completely). When He called they didn't hesitate to leave everything and give all of themselves.
 - **Application** – Our call may not require all that was required of the first disciples, but it may. Either way, we must have hearts that are given to fully loving and following Christ.
- **The Results of the Call to Discipleship**
 - **Imperfect yet faithful disciples** – As we keep reading the accounts of these men it becomes clear that they are far from perfect (like us). Yet God used them to begin the mission that has now reached us with the Good News. It is now our turn to be faithful disciples, even in our imperfection.