

Mark 1:9-20

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[0 : 00] Our passage this morning will be Mark chapter 1 and we're looking at verses 16 through 20. Let me pray again before we open God's word together.

! Our Father, we are thankful for your many mercies to us. It's not lost on us that as we sit and stand in this place that you are a God who has spoken into the darkness of this world and that you have shown great light.

We're thankful for the light of revelation. We are thankful for the revelation of your Son. We are thankful for the way that your Son reveals you, the Father in heaven, to us.

We pray that as this word is read and as it is preached, that it would not return void, but accomplish your purposes in our hearts and in our very souls for your glory and for your praise.

And we pray all of this in the strong name of Christ. Amen. We read Mark chapter 1, verses 16 through 20. This is a holy and errant, sufficient word of God.

[1 : 12] Passing along the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

And Jesus said to them, Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

And going on a little farther, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who were in their boat, mending the nets. And immediately he called them.

And they left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. Though the grass withers and the flower fades, the word of God is forever.

Thanks be to God. Amen. Three points this morning. The first is this, is that Jesus calls.

[2 : 12] Jesus calls. This passage begins, as Mark says, alongside the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee will go by different names in the scriptures. You will sometimes hear it called the Lake Gennesaret, or the Sea of Tiberias, or here the Sea of Galilee.

It was a lake that was teeming with fish at this time, especially during this age. There was quite a fishing industry that had developed along the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

And it is there that Jesus sees Simon and Andrew, his brother, verse 16. And then verse 19, going on a little farther, is what Mark tells us.

He sees James and John and, quote, each of them he called them. Verse 17. And the call was this. Follow me.

Two very simple words. Follow. An imperative. A command. Follow. And then the subject. Me.

[3 : 21] His call to these men was not to an idea. Not to a thing. Not to a cause. Not to a morality. Not even to an institution or a degree. Or a program.

The object of their calling was his person. He said, follow me. You've heard this a lot, being good church people.

So, this might not strike you as strange that this was the command that Jesus gave. You've heard it so often. I did it with the children this morning. And they knew this verse. You've heard it a lot.

But this would have been strange at this time. Rabbis didn't do this. They didn't say that you were to follow them. They did not make themselves the object of your following.

In fact, it would have been seen as haughty. And proud. Would have even been seen as blasphemous. Deuteronomy 13. 4. You shall walk after the Lord your God.

[4 : 23] And fear him. And keep his commandments. And obey his voice. And you shall serve him. And hold fast to him. And yet this call that Jesus issues is to himself.

He issues the call to Andrew, to Peter, to James, and to John. They were to yield in this text to something that we have rightfully heard over and over.

Because though it was their particular call, it's applicable to all disciples of Jesus. He says this often, right? Just in different words.

He will say, If anyone would be my disciple, let him deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow me. And he says in those famous verses there in Matthew 11.

He will say, Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

[5 : 29] It's follow me. As Ralph Davis said, Dale Ralph Davis said once, he said, Jesus, quote, attracts us by his character, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and by his promise, and you will find rest.

And it seems that these four men had listened to Jesus and seen Jesus before this day. And what they had seen and what they had heard allured them to Jesus.

And so they yielded to Christ, not reluctantly. There was a happy yielding to him when he said, follow me. Now, how do you know that, Jason?

Well, I know it because that's always the case. When Jesus calls, and we truly see him, and we truly hear him, we don't come reluctantly.

We don't come with him dragging our heels. We come willingly. Think of how the Apostle Paul speaks of himself, Romans 1.1.

[6 : 41] Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus. He's not grousing. He's not complaining. He's delighting in the fact that he is a servant, a slave of Christ.

Galatians 2.20 I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. Philippians 1.21 For me to live is Christ. He says to the Corinthians in verse Corinthians 6.19 You are not your own, for you were bought with the Christ.

When you follow Christ, you do so because you've encountered Christ. And when you've encountered Christ, you follow Christ willingly because you've encountered the beauty of Christ.

Once you've truly seen Christ, you want Christ. And it changes everything.

Everything. Everything. A number of years ago, when my daughter, who is turning 20 this year, when she was probably eight or nine years old, she was really into astronomy.

[7 : 51] And there was going to be this once in a lifetime event. Or so she told me. It was going to be a full lunar eclipse. And so literally for months, probably every single day.

This is not exaggeration. This is what we talked about. And she would bring it up. And we had it. She had it plotted out on the calendar. That day it was circled. It was on her calendar in her bedroom.

And we got a countdown for months about how many days until this full lunar eclipse was going to occur. And so this full lunar eclipse, the night before it was going to happen, it was going to happen that night.

And so that afternoon, she made me promise, Daddy, you will wake me up at this time because we had to do it when it was at its zenith. You had to get the full lunar eclipse.

And to borrow one of your words, this was in the wee hours of the morning. And so the afternoon, that evening, she laid everything out.

[9 : 00] She had her binoculars out. She had a pad of paper out. She had all kinds of colored pens out because she was going to sketch what she saw. And she hung her jacket upon the banister of the stairs because we live in Michigan.

And so she was going to come down and she could just grab it and grab the binoculars and grab the pad of paper and grab the colored pens. And we could run out the door and we could see this full lunar eclipse in all of its glory.

Daddy, please remember to wake me up. Set two alarms. So that very early morning hour came.

And I went upstairs and I woke her up and she leapt out of bed.

She ran down the stairs. She grabbed her coat, put it on, grabbed her binoculars, put it around her neck. She grabbed her pens, grabbed her paper. And I am chasing her outside because she is moving so fast.

And we stand there on the driveway. And I'll never forget it. She looked up at the moon. And she looked at me. And she looked back up at the moon.

[10 : 06] And she looked back up at the moon. And then she looked at me and she said, Daddy, this didn't change my life one bit.

But when you see Christ, when you truly see Christ, it changes everything. All of life is now oriented to Christ. He says, follow me. These four men, they heard the call to follow me.

And they did immediately. Mark says that Jesus came. Then upon Simon and Andrew, as they were casting their nets into the sea, they've thrown it in.

And Jesus said, follow me. And Mark says, immediately they left their nets. You're meant to understand that they left their nets in the ocean. He said, but that makes no sense.

[11:19] This is their livelihood. Someone could come and steal those nets. Those nets, they could drift away in the sea.

It makes sense in the world's eyes to follow Christ. Surely it doesn't always make sense to follow him immediately. But he says, follow me.

Some of you in this room, even this morning, I would guess at IPC Ealing, some of you have not yet followed him. But you're hearing the call this morning.

Maybe you're starting to do the calculations. And you're saying, ah, but to follow Jesus, it would cost this. It would cost that. And it doesn't make sense here.

It doesn't make sense there. Again, it doesn't always make worldly sense. The sons of Zebedee are described in verse 19 as, quote, mending.

[12:27] And Mark says, their nets out in the boat. They were preparing them for the fishing they were to do. These were bigger nets than the ones that Andrew and that Simon Peter had.

Nets that required a boat with more than one person to help drag in that boat. So much so that we're told in the text that they had laborers. They had servants.

They had workers as part of their business. This was no small enterprise that John and James were part of. Maybe the sign above the stall, their stall in the Sea of Galilee.

Maybe it read Zebedee and Sons Incorporated. It's a big operation. And yet, we're told that having seen Christ and heard his call, they, quote, left their nets.

They left their business. They left their father. And they followed Jesus. They left everything. Why? To gain everything.

[13:35] When he calls, we yield. There's nothing wrong with nets. There's nothing wrong with businesses.

There's surely nothing wrong with fathers. But nothing is to hold us back from Christ. It costs to follow Jesus. Maybe you have to give up your nets.

Maybe you don't have to give up your nets. But you have to be willing to give up your nets. Anything for Jesus. He calls.

Second, Jesus calls common men and common women. You notice he did not choose the prominent or the powerful or the prestigious.

This tends to be his way. Jacob was the second of the sons. David was a little ruddy boy, shepherd boy. This is what he does. He calls Simon and Peter and John and James, their mere fishermen.

[14:39] Amen. I often think of Isaac Watts' famous hymn, How Sweet and Awful is a Place, which we will often sing.

He said, For while our hearts and all our songs join to admire the feast, each of us cry with thankful tongues, Lord, why was I a guest? Or that next line, which I have trouble singing without my eyes filling with tears.

Why was I made to hear thy voice and enter Wilder's room, when thousands make a wretched choice and rather starve than come?

Why would you choose little old me? Why would you choose little old me? Every disciple of Christ has that thought regularly.

If you're sitting here this morning, you say, Well, I don't have the gifts. I don't have the talents. I'm not good enough. I don't desire enough.

[15:50] I don't... It's not what he calls. He calls sinners. He calls the poor in spirit.

He calls common men and common women to himself. You just come. It's fascinating. In Acts 4, when Peter and John, these common men, are dragged before the Jerusalem Religious Council, Luke says the response was, Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated common men, they were astonished.

And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. And that's his way. He calls common men and common women.

But you'll notice that what people recognized about them is that they had been with Jesus. That's the calling. Which leads to our final point.

He calls common men and common women to an uncommon mission. He calls common men and common women and he calls them to an uncommon mission.

[17 : 09] When we are called to Jesus, if you are called to Jesus, you're not just called to Jesus, you're called to the mission of Jesus.

Jesus said, I came into the world to seek and to save the lost. That's his mission. And when you are called to him, you're called to his mission.

He says to his disciples, come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. This is their mission. When we're called to Christ, we're called to the mission of Christ. He calls common men and women to an uncommon mission.

They are to be fishers of men. And it isn't simply just a cute little turn of phrase by the Lord Jesus.

You say, oh, isn't that cute? They're fishermen. He says, I'll call you to be fishers of men.

That's not what he's doing in the text. Rather, the context for this passage makes it starkly clear.

The context is that the kingdom of God has broken into the world and the person of the king coming into the world, Jesus.

[18 : 16] So you look back up to verses 14 and 15, which Pastor Paul read this morning. The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Fishers of men has an Old Testament history. And it's God who is often the fishers of men. And the scene in which God is the fishers of men is often a scene of judgment.

So Ezekiel 29, verses 1 through 6. God speaks of Egypt and he says he will put hooks in their jaws and cast them into the wilderness with all the fish of their streams.

And then he closes by saying, quote, then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord. In Ezekiel 38, verse 4, prophecy against enemies.

God says this, and I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws. And I will bring you out. And then we're told of judgment. And it closes with this, quote, then they will know that I am the Lord.

[19 : 20] Or in Habakkuk 1, 14 through 17. All mankind is referred to as fish. And what follows is the famous Habakkuk 2, 14. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

God is the fisherman. The scene is judgment. And the end is so all might know that he indeed is the Lord.

And Mark 1 is making it clear that judgment is on the horizon. The kingdom of God has arrived. It's broken into the world.

Because the king has come into the world. And when the kingdom of God has broken into the world, judgment is just over the hill.

It's on the horizon. And sinners are going to be judged. But here's the other part of it.

[20 : 33] The king who comes in judgment is also the Savior who saves. And that's why Mark begins, verse 15, Repent and believe.

Judgment is coming. So the gospel is being preached. So that souls are brought into safety. Out of the sea of darkness. Into the kingdom of light.

And he's taking these common men and these common women. And he's setting them out about this mission. I will make you fishers of men.

The time is short. In part, that's why the call by Jesus is responded to with such immediacy in this text.

The time is short. If you've been called to Christ, you've been called to the mission of Christ. A few applications.

[21 : 44] First, would you count it not as a weight, not as a burden, but as a responsibility and a privilege that you get to participate in the mission of Christ?

I want you to think about this. Is that there are very few things that will survive for all of eternity.

There's so many things that you and I will busy ourselves about. So many things that we will invest our time and our energy and our person in. And they don't last.

You do realize, right, that there is one name that lasts forever and ever. And that's the name of Jesus. And you get to labor for that name.

You know the name Great Britain doesn't last forever. You know the name of your fraternity or your fellowship or your business doesn't last forever.

[23 : 00] The name of Jesus does. And you get to labor for that. Unto His glory. It's a distinct privilege.

Second, our time to labor for this is short. So get busy. Get busy about the work.

You don't know how many days you have left. You only have so many days to store treasures and glory.

Only so many. You only have so many hours. hours. If I gave you today and I said, this is how many hours and minutes you have left in your life here on earth.

You'd start going, oh man, I'm using those. You only have so many hours and minutes. Andrew and Peter and John and James didn't know. Andrew and Peter and John and James didn't know.

[24 : 12] James and Andrew and Peter only have a couple of years. That's all they got. That's all they got. Third, be willing to follow wherever Jesus leads.

Be willing to follow wherever Jesus leads. The imperative is very simple. Follow. Where do I follow? Follow. Where are we going? Follow. You follow wherever he leads you. And there are people scattered throughout this world that have never heard the name Jesus.

There are unreached language groups scattered throughout the world that have never heard the name Jesus. For the church to go out, it requires that some Christians go out.

Andrew and Peter and James and John, they won't stray far. The call to discipleship doesn't mean for most that we're going to go to the ends of the earth, but we should be willing. I remember a seminary professor telling me in just one day, 25 years ago, he said, Jason, I always pray to the Lord, please send me to Alaska, because that's the one place on earth I don't want to go.

[25 : 41] But he was jesting in that, look, you have to be willing to go anywhere. He calls, you go. He says, follow me there, you go.

You say, well, I'm pretty settled in life. So was John, so was James, so was Andrew, so was Peter. But I have a family. So did John, so did James. We find out later that Peter had a wife.

I have a business and a home. So did John, so did James. As a disciple, I'm not my own. Follow me doesn't just end at conversion.

It's a lifelong pursuit where you and I are simply following him wherever he leads. And now, it may not lead beyond healing.

Understand that. But wherever you are, you're called to Christ's mission. If you've been called to Christ, you've been called to the mission of Christ. So you seek to labor where you're at.

[26 : 40] And you seek to support those that are going out from you and to other parts of the world. So I want to encourage you, challenge you to aim higher.

Father, mothers, would you be so bold as to raise your children to understand that their life is not their own?

Fathers, would you maybe even pray and speak to your children about maybe them being called to the mission field? What if instead of being an anomaly that one of our covenant children was a missionary within this generation, it became a regular occurrence for IPC Ealing?

What if just 5% of all of the children in the IPC congregations went to the foreign mission field?

What would be the impact? I was recently reading about Princeton Seminary during its faithful Orthodox days, and at its peak, one in every three graduates of the seminary went to the foreign mission field.

[27 : 59] This is in the early days of what you call the colonies. There was a mission field there, and yet one in three was going to the ends of the earth. Why?

Because they wanted to follow wherever Jesus was leading. And that didn't just happen. How is it that one in three graduates went to the ends of the earth?

It's because they developed that culture. They prayed about it. They fostered it. They developed it. It was part of their conversations. It was part of their culture.

We are going to live on mission for Jesus. We have been called to Jesus, so we're going to participate in the work of Jesus.

It's part of who they were. We want to develop in our local churches a sense of we are on mission together for the name of Christ together, to see perishing souls reeled in from the darkness and brought into the light.

[29 : 05] Let's close with this. Let's close with this. One of the most amazing things at the church I serve is something I have absolutely nothing to do with.

We are on the edge of a university that has 55,000 students, and most of them are residential students.

And a couple of years ago, some of our older women in the congregation in their 70s, early 80s, decided that they were afraid of evangelism, and they were afraid of college students.

And so they challenged one another. They said, let's get busy about Christ's work. So every week, these 70 and 80-year-old women go on the campus of Michigan State University.

They set up a table. They put a sign on the front of the table that says, would you like prayer? And they put fresh-baked cookies on the table. And they offer a hug.

[30 : 14] And who doesn't want a prayer and cookies and a hug from Grandma? And they share the gospel. Now what's wonderful is the people they're sharing the gospel with.

But you know what's just as wonderful? Is the way they impact my life. And the life of other people in our church.

They're helping to create the culture and the atmosphere and challenging us. That we've got to be busy. That even in the twilight of life, we're going to be busy about evangelism.

IPC Ealing, you're here for a reason. You've been put together for a reason. You're here with purpose. And that's to follow Christ.

And if you're following Christ, you're busy about the mission of Christ. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.