

Sermon Title: How To Start a Ministry  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:12-20

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 1-7-18

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Come with me this morning to the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 1. We're going to spend time this morning with our newly-discovered friend Mark, or at least new to our studies here. We took a couple of weeks off over the holidays and when we last visited Mark, we had left off at a glorious moment, so I want to start by reminding you of that.

You can think of that moment, if you will, as the public introduction of the King—the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16). You know what I'm talking about. It was the baptism of Jesus, which Mark describes in Chapter 1, Verses 9-11: "In those days"—that is, the days when John the Baptist was preaching—"Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.' " (NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted). John also introduced Him, we know from the Gospel of John, as, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29; cf. Is. 53:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). This was the introduction of the Savior and the inauguration of the ministry of the King.

That momentous day when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist began a period of about six months of overlap between the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus. Hold that thought, we'll get back to that in a moment. And this time starts with a stark contrast. There is the glory of the Trinity on display at the baptism, and then we have the darkest days of Jesus—prior to His arrest and trial and crucifixion—in the form of His temptation. So our text for today spans more than six months of Jesus's life, and I'll explain more in a moment.

Remember Mark's theme, though. Everything that he says will fit into this. He says in Chapter 1, Verse 1, what's probably his title of the book in his own mind: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." So Mark is going to describe the beginning of Jesus's ministry in terms of what is essential to a gospel ministry, what is essential to doing what the Son of God came to Earth to begin doing. We might even call this, "How to Start a Ministry the Way Jesus Did." He's going to show us what is important for us to know about the Christ, the Savior, the Son of God, and worshipping and serving Him as we should. So: How to Start a Ministry the Way Jesus Did. I'm going to suggest to you three points from Mark 1:12-20. Resist Temptation, Preach the Gospel, and Make Disciples. Not too complicated, but very significant.

Number 1: Resist Temptation. Mark describes it this way. His description is much shorter than that of Matthew and Luke. Mark 1:12-13: "Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him." Now, "immediately"—there's Mark's common word, he likes to move things along. His gospel is the shortest, sort of the thrill-packed "adventure" version of the life of Christ. Matthew and Luke use the word "then," connecting it from the baptism: "*then* the Spirit led Him out into the wilderness." Mark uses an even stronger word; he uses the word "impelled." Literally, the Holy Spirit "threw Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted."

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Now, the public ministry of Jesus began with that remarkable, spectacular introduction by God Himself: "You are My Son in whom I am well pleased." And based on the pattern that we've seen, if you've already looked at the birth of Jesus, there was that glorious angelic announcement—countless angels announcing His birth (Lk. 2:8-14)—and you might expect another massive celebration of His baptism, full of heavenly doxologies and astounded people running around to announce what they saw and angels singing and glorifying God. But that didn't happen.

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He will, indeed, come again in great glory, but it's also true that this same Jesus is the One whom Isaiah predicted in the terminology "the Suffering Servant" (see Is. 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). He was humbled—He humbled Himself, I should say—to take on humanity (Phil. 2:7-8). This most exalted One is also the most humiliated One. Jesus's sufferings did not begin with His arrest—they began with His birth. He labored, having taken on humanness. And now, we're going to see Him in His time of particular temptation. Picture Him emaciated from 40 days of fasting, to the point that He needed angels to minister to Him. That is profound, especially in juxtaposition to the glorious Trinitarian announcement, "You are My beloved Son" (vs. 11).

Now, it's important to understand that, although the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness—or, "impelled" Him into the wilderness, to use Mark's term—"to be tempted" (Matt. 4:1), understand: God is never the tempter. God did not tempt His Son. James 1:13 says that God Himself "cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone." So by His holy nature, God has no capacity for evil, He is not vulnerable to it; so imagine how excruciating it was for Jesus, who is God, to take on humanity and thereby experience the fullness of temptation. And His temptation was *far worse* than what you've faced (see Heb. 12:4; 1 Cor. 10:13)—His was face-to-face with the Devil himself. God allowed His Son to be tempted, to be tested, so that His victory would demonstrate His absolute power and authority over every device of Satan (Col. 2:15). Jesus' temptation did not happen only by the will of Satan. Oh, trust me, he came along, he took his best shots. But in the will of God, it was designed to authenticate His Son as the King (see Acts 2:23-24).

Now Luke adds the detail, right after we read about the Holy Spirit descending in the manner that a dove descends and landing on Jesus, Luke adds that Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 4:1), so he connects that visible representation of the Holy Spirit at His baptism to the fact that everything Jesus did was by the will of the Father and everything He accomplished was by the power of the Holy Spirit. So it was the Father's intention to take His beloved Son out to be tempted, and He was all the while led by the Holy Spirit. One reason this is here is so that we know that *He* knows what we face, and we know that He has the power over sin (Heb. 2:18).

"The Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness" (Mk. 1:12). Where's that? Well, I'm sure there are a lot of places on Earth that have been described as "wilderness." This is "*the wilderness*," referring to the general area north and west of the Dead Sea. It was and is a truly desolate place. I've been through there on a bus, and I was *really* glad to have the bus. There's nothing there, except you'll go by and you'll see some mountains and they'll say, "There's some caves up in there and that's where they found the Dead Sea Scrolls." Mark's

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brief description says that Jesus' only earthly company during that time was that "He was with the wild beasts" (vs. 12). Only wild beasts live in such a place. And Jesus was driven there and went without food for 40 days (Lk. 4:2). Now if you're tempted to think that the problem is that John the Baptist didn't share his recipes for locusts and wild honey, you should note that Matthew and Luke specify that Jesus fasted for 40 days (Matt. 4:2). And if you'll notice Mark's terminology here: "He was in the wilderness"—and then he uses a participle—"being tempted by Satan" (Mk. 1:13). So He was being tempted during all of that 40 days. Matthew specifies that *after* those 40 days came those three specific temptations that he and Luke record, but we have no idea what all it was that Jesus went through.

As always, it's good to compare and to harmonize the gospels when they comment on the same thing. A couple things we can say: You can't tell it from Matthew, but it's Mark and Luke that tell you that He was tempted throughout the 40 days, but Matthew is the one who uses terminology that implies a sequence of events after the 40 days that He fasted, *then* came this and this and this temptation. He's the one that uses those terms in that way.

Another thing that we find out is that there is a difference in the order in the temptations between Matthew and Luke. Mark doesn't mention the specifics, so he doesn't count in that one. But there's no real discrepancy or contradiction between them because only Matthew puts them into a sequential description by using terms: "first this and then this and then that." Luke makes no claim to have listed them in sequence, so that's not a problem.

It's another thing to note that as you look at all three of these descriptions of the temptation of Jesus, Satan didn't tempt Jesus by offering Him something that He wasn't entitled to. Satan did not offer Him any forbidden fruit, as with Eve (Gen. 3:1-5). The three recorded temptations all had to do with trying to get Jesus to take things—then and there—which are clearly in the plan of God, but Satan tried to get Him to do it on a schedule different from what the Father and He had planned before the incarnation. In other words, Satan was trying to get Jesus to *forego His humiliation*. "Get it now! Jesus, get your best life now!" That was a bad idea back then, just like it is now; like whoever would write a book telling Christians they can have their best life now, is telling people, "You've got to be going to hell!" Because if this is all there is, boy, are you missing it (see 1 Cor. 15:19).

You see, he's telling Jesus, "You can have the Kingdom *now*." Well look, the kingdoms of this world will indeed become part of the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns (see Rev. 11:15). He says, "Well, turn these stones into food if You're hungry." Well, eating is a normal part of life, and God promises to supply us with our daily bread. Even the care of His people by angels—that's part of God's providence, according to Hebrews Chapter 1:14, but it's wrong to presume on God by throwing yourself off the Temple and *making* an angel catch you. You see, it's wrong to demand that God meet your needs whenever and wherever *you* see fit, in the manner that you want it, on your timetable. The kingdom of God would have no population for Jesus to reign over if Jesus didn't stay and finish the work of atonement (see Lk. 24:26)! So Satan was trying to get Jesus to give up His humiliation, and to get His glory prematurely. He wanted Him to not entrust Himself to the Father's will and to walk by the Spirit.

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Now, another reason this is here, other than validating who Jesus is—other than introducing the King, other than showing His authority over Satan—is to help you and I understand what it means that we are commanded to imitate the attitude that Jesus had in His humility. You've probably familiar with the words of Philippians Chapter 2, the command in Verse 5: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." Now skip down to Verse 8: "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." He humbled Himself and walked through every day of that plan that the Father had for Him.

Understand also that this is not something that you can take care of once and for all in your life. Luke 9:23: Deny yourself, take up your cross "*daily* and follow Me." You've got to do it every day! Jesus was tempted all throughout His life. This was the pinnacle of the temptation, but it was *all* temptation for Him, if you will. It was *all* testing His obedience. Hebrews 4:15 looks back on this and it says, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (cf. Heb. 2:18). Jesus has been tempted in every manner of every stage of life that you've been tempted, or will be tempted. He has faced every kind of temptation that you face, but He did it completely "without sin." We eventually crumble. He experienced temptation to the fullest, and never gave in. He experienced temptation, not just from the world and the system and the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16), He experienced it face-to-face even with Satan, and yet without sin. That's why, when you are granted His righteousness by faith, it is a *perfect* righteousness. He lived this life perfectly holy, and you get it credited to your account (Rom. 4:23-24). This is astounding!

Another one is Hebrews 7:26. It says, "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest"—listen to these descriptions of Him—"holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens." Now, Christ is "holy"—that means He has no sin; He is "innocent"—that means He is without evil or malice, there's no wickedness in Him; He is "undefiled"—meaning He is free from contamination; He is "separated from sinners"—meaning that He has no sin in Him, as you and I do. He has no sin nature that would be the source of any specific act of sin (see 1 Sam. 24:13). That's why 2 Corinthians 5:21 can say, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus "knew no sin." He was separate from us, He was different from us. That means He did not have a fallen nature like you and I have. Romans 7:20 is where Paul gives the answer to his own rhetorical question: Why do I keep doing the things I don't want to do? Why do I keep failing to do the things that I want to do? And he says, I understand—it's because of "sin which dwells in me." That wasn't Jesus.

Now I've heard people say that, for Jesus to be "tempted as we are" means that He had to have a sin nature as we do, and I have a real problem with that (see Lk. 1:35—"the *holy* Child"). If He was able to sin, well then He might have been like Adam—maybe he hadn't sinned, but Adam certainly could sin. But if He was like that, that would mean that He couldn't be God. There's a very significant difference between saying He was "able not to sin"—everybody agrees with that—and saying He was "not able to sin." Big difference between "able not to sin" and "not able to sin." Jesus was fully temptable because He was fully human.

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He experienced every desire that humanity can experience—it's just that His wasn't tainted with sin. So He was *temptable* because He was fully human, but He was *impeccable* because He was fully God. Now, when you use the word *impeccable*, you might be thinking about someone's eloquent speech or that they dress really cool, or that their car is impeccably clean, or something like that. But in a theological sense, *impeccability* means "not able to sin." It doesn't mean He couldn't be tempted, even though the outcome was certain. Here's an analogy: a rowboat can attack a battleship, alright? The attack is going to fail, but it's a real attack. The fool in the rowboat is going to lose, but it's going to require the battleship to exterminate him to ultimately end the battle, right? It's not impossible to attempt the impossible. It was impossible to get Jesus to sin, but Satan took his very best shot.

Now, He was sent into the wilderness, He was "impelled" into the wilderness, and for "forty days" He was "being tempted by Satan" (Mk. 1:13). "Tempted" is a key word here: it's the Greek word *peirazo*, a very important New Testament word. The root idea of this word means, "to put something to the test, to try it," or, ultimately, "to test it to be approved" (see 2 Cor. 8:22; 1 Tim. 3:10; Heb. 11:17; 1 Pet. 1:7). In English Bibles, we have a long custom of using two different English words to translate *peirazo*, depending on the context. We use either "test" or "tempt." Now, what those two words have in common is that both of them include the idea of being put to the test. If you perceive the test as an opportunity and a solicitation to do something evil, we tend to call that "temptation," okay? But when you perceive the test merely as a challenge to overcome an obstacle, and especially when you meet that challenge successfully, we call it a "test" or a "trial." I've been going through the joys of physical therapy, and sometimes our beloved Josh has said, "Try this," and I try it and he says, "Let's save that for a couple weeks from now." That's not a temptation to do something evil, but, can I pass the test? That's a test or a trial. But if it's, "Hey...you want to go \_\_\_\_\_"—some solicitation to do evil—we call that "temptation." Now, in this context—and I'm including Matthew 4 and Luke 4 in addition to this—you see the contrast between Satan's purpose: he took his very best shots to try to make Jesus Christ sin; but on the other hand, there's God's purpose: *that* was to prove Jesus's perfection by showing Him successfully passing the ultimate test (see Is. 28:16).

Now, it says He was "impelled...into the wilderness," for "forty days being tempted by Satan" (vs. 13). Matthew and Luke say He was tempted by "the devil." "The devil" and "Satan"—no difference, same one, same person (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). He's called by many names in the Bible, by the way. Satan is called "the devil"—that Greek word is *diabolos*. That literally means "accuser" or "slanderer" (Rev. 12:10; cf. Zech. 3:1). *Diabolos* is throwing something against, you know, like throwing up an accusation. He is called "the tempter" (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5) because that's what he does—he solicits people to do evil. He's called "Satan," which is translated from Greek letters; in the Greek it's *Satan*, and it means "adversary" (see 1 Chr. 21:1; Lk. 22:31; 12:7; 1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Tim. 2:26). He is also called "the ruler of this world" three times in John (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), because ever since the Fall, he is the one who is in control of the evil system of the world. For that same reason, then, in Ephesians 2:2 he's called "the prince of the power of the air" and in 2 Corinthians 4:4 he is called "the god of this world." You get up into the book of Revelation and he's called in Chapter 12 "the serpent of old" and the "deceiver of the whole world" (vs. 9), and in Revelation Chapter 9 he is called "Abaddon" and "Apollyon" (vs. 11), two different words which mean "destroyer."

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Now understand: this was not a fair fight. Satan didn't have a chance! Satan is *not* the equal opposite of Jesus. Jesus is not "the Captain of heaven and Satan the master of hell"—he doesn't run hell. He's trying everything he can to not ever get there. Satan is a created being; he is a fallen angel. He was created by Christ! God made the angels (see Ezek. 28:13-15). He leads a force of approximately one third of the angels that were originally created by God, and that third of the angels rebelled with Satan (see Rev. 12:3-4) and they are doomed to the lake of fire which, according to Matthew 25, was created "for the devil and his angels" (vs. 41) for their eternal punishment (see Rev. 20:10). But between now and the dawn of eternity, these fallen angels, headed by Satan, these demons, work under the leadership of Satan to oppose God and His people (see Dan. 10:12-13; Acts 13:10; 1 Thess. 2:18; 1 Tim. 4:1). As we study our way through Mark, we're going to have plenty of opportunities to observe demons and their activities, including the very next paragraph after the pericope that we're looking at this morning.

But, understand: Jesus was "impelled" by Him "to go out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him" (Mk. 1:12-13). Now, here's an application you can make. Remember Mark's favorite little word—*euthus* in Greek—"immediately"? "Immediately" the Spirit sent Him out. "Immediately" when? Well, immediately after His baptism. An application I think you can make is this: it is normal for you as a believer, as it was for Jesus, to face the most severe temptation right after you experience a great high point in your spiritual life. After victory usually comes temptation. Even for Jesus, it was *immediately* after the glorious day of His baptism that He faced His most intense testing during His earthly ministry. You see, when you succeed at something important—hey, that feels good, right? It's okay to feel good! It's okay to be happy. But your exhilaration with success means that you are, at that moment, the most vulnerable to pride, and *that* sets you up for failure (Pr. 16:18). You are in the most danger of failure at the moment that you don't think you're in danger of failure. 1 Corinthians 10:12—"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall."

I don't know if you've noticed it, but Matthew just says "the tempter came" to Him (Matt. 4:3); Mark just says He was "being tempted" (Mk. 1:13). We're not told what form the devil took when he confronted Jesus. You can spill a lot of ink as a Bible commentator speculating about that, but the truth is, God does not lower Himself to the lowest common denominator of whatever we can think of to speculate about and question. We don't know the physics or biology of how Satan appeared to Him in that time. How did he appear to Eve? Well, he came to her in the form of a serpent. Oh, but before that, before the curse, before the fall, serpents weren't snakes; they didn't crawl around on their belly (see Gen. 3:14). I don't know what the serpent looked like in Genesis Chapter 3. Has it ever troubled you that it didn't startle Eve that the serpent spoke to her? There must have been some sort of fellowship between Adan and Eve and the animal kingdom that was lost in the fall. But we're just told "the tempter came." It was a person-to-person, face-to-face encounter between Satan and Jesus Christ.

And by the way, here's another point of comparison I think is legitimate. Just like it is with you, Jesus's temptation is directly related to His physical situation. He was *weakened* by that fast. You would be, too. So the devil tried to play on His weakened condition. You are more

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temptable not only after a victory, but you're more temptable when you're hungry. Do you own one of those tee shirts that has the word "hangry" on it? Somebody's invented a nice new portmanteau word: "hungry" and "angry." Our son, when he was growing up—boy, if he needed fuel in the tank, oh, my word! You know, there's sometimes you had to just say, "Okay, we'll deal with discipline when we need to, but *first*, stuff something down his face!" And the whole world would become brighter! You're more temptable when you're hungry! You're more temptable when you're thirsty! You're more temptable when you're tired—when you're overburdened emotionally, when you're frustrated, when you're disappointed. It's easy to walk with God when everything is just like you wanted. But *real* faith is on display when you make the right choices against the backdrop of your worst moments (see Job 13:15; Prov. 24:16; Dan. 11:32).

Now, we're not going to go over to Matthew or Luke and look at the details of those ultimate three temptations. Mark doesn't mention the details, so we're not going to today. You can look at them on your own (Matt. 4:3-11; Luke 4:3-13). But Mark just wants his readers to know that Jesus is the Son of God. And I'm sure you know that Jesus responded to each of those temptations in a way that was a pattern we can follow. He quoted Scripture and He stood on it—three temptations, three times He quoted from the book of Deuteronomy and said, "No, God says this. Get out of here, Satan!"

Now as I said, we can learn from how Mark describes the way Jesus began His ministry, and if we want to have a ministry that is like the ministry of Jesus, let's follow His example. We spent a lot of time on that one, but, to start a ministry the way Jesus did, Number 1: Resist Temptation. Number 2: Preach the Gospel. Much quicker on these next two. Mark 1:14-15—"Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'" Now, Mark keeps things moving forward. John the Baptist was a big deal, so he includes John the Baptist. Jesus's baptism by John the Baptist was a big deal, so Mark includes that. But since Mark isn't trying to provide the full biography of Jesus like Luke was, and since Mark wasn't addressing himself to the Jews to try to deal with the subtleties of the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures like Matthew was, Mark moves us right along to Jesus's preaching ministry.

So at least six months pass between Verse 13 and Verse 14. During those months, Jesus had been in Judea—that's the southern area, just north of the wilderness; that's where Jerusalem is. He had gone into Jerusalem and cleared the temple for the first time (Jn. 2:14-17). He will do it again before the cross. He has then headed for Galilee, and Jesus did something that was specifically, intentionally calculated to poke His finger in the spiritual eye of the Pharisees and the Sadducees in Jerusalem. He wanted to go from Jerusalem up to Galilee; the natural way to do that is to just walk there, go there. That would mean that you would walk through Samaria. Now the Pharisees and the Sadducees, in their *great* love for mankind, hated the Samaritans so much, they refused to set foot on Samaritan soil (see Jn. 4:9), so if *they* had to go from Jerusalem to Galilee, they would add at least one day—maybe two—to their journey, to go all the way east, cross the Jordan River, go up the east side of the Jordan River, cross the Jordan River again, and go into Galilee, rather than walk through Samaritan territory. So

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remember what Jesus did? It gets almost a whole chapter of play in John's gospel, John Chapter 4. He walked through Samaria. And He stopped and He talked to a *woman*, specifically shocking everybody there. She was so shocked—she could tell by the way He looked and dressed that Jesus was a Jewish man, and here He was talking to her. How could that be? Well, that's the way Jesus rolled, if you will.

But now, He goes to Galilee, and what comes next, we're told in Verse 14, is: "After John had been taken into custody"—he just assumes we know that, but, John's going to loop back later, and he's going to explain to us in Chapter 6 about John being taken into custody. But it was after John the Baptist's arrest that Jesus ministered extensively in Galilee. There was that six months of overlap. Now, He "came into Galilee"—that's the northern region of Israel. To the proud, arrogant, self-righteous, snooty Pharisees and Sadducees—who were anchored in Jerusalem—Galilee was "redneck" country. That was the backwoods. That was the place where nothing significant ever happened, and that was the place from which no one important ever came. Where did Jesus come from to be baptized? Nazareth in Galilee. Remember the Pharisees were so twisted, they even said, "Well, no prophet ever came from Galilee" (see Jn. 7:52). Well, they just didn't count anybody as important enough to have come from Galilee, even though Amos did, even though Micah did.

But He came there, comes to Galilee—to the backcountry, if you will—"preaching the gospel of God." Now, as we've said, the "gospel" was a word that was understood, both in the Jewish culture—and it was used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament—and it was also used in Roman culture; "the gospel" was understood, essentially as the announcement of the arrival of a king. "Everything's going to be okay now because *this guy's coming*"—that's the secular idea of it. In biblical terms, "the gospel" is always the message of salvation. 1 Corinthians 15:4 explains that the gospel that we have believed is that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, He rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures. So, what is the gospel that Jesus was preaching *before* Jesus died and rose again? He wasn't preaching His own death and resurrection, He was preaching what's called here "the gospel of God"—the "good news" from God, the "way of salvation" from God. He was saying what? "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." What does that mean? "I'm the King. I'm here." So, "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1:15). Before the details of Jesus's death and resurrection, the gospel was closely connected, in the mind of the Jews, with anticipating the kingdom of God. Jesus was claiming to be the King. Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. That's the gospel. And it's always a message of repentance (see Prov. 9:6; Is. 55:7; Ezek. 33:11; Hos. 14:1; Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Pet. 3:9). The kingdom of God is at hand because the King is *here*.

Now, there isn't a lot to say about this. We've already talked about it a little bit in Mark, we'll see more. But we want to emphasize again that, if we want to have a ministry that is the kind of ministry that Christ wants, we're going to need to be serious about resisting temptation by being strong in the Word of God (Ps. 119:11), and we're going to faithfully preach the gospel—which we know now includes that Christ died for our sins, He was buried, He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and we're going to always call people to repent and believe (see Acts 3:19; 17:30; 20:21; Heb. 6:1).



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Now, there's a third element. If you want to start a ministry the way Jesus did, Resist Temptation, Preach the Gospel, *Make Disciples*—Verses 16-20. A very significant part of what Jesus did during His earthly ministry was pouring Himself into the lives of His men, His disciples. He eventually named them as the Apostles. He poured Himself into those 12 men, one of which He knew from the beginning was the "son of perdition" who would betray Him (Jn. 17:12; cf. Jn. 6:64, 70-71). Think about the majesty of the sovereignty of God, that Jesus *knew that* and chose him. That's pretty mindboggling.

Now, how did He choose His disciples? Well, He didn't send out a casting call. I hear on the radio now that you should use Zip Recruiter. He didn't do that, either. He did not conduct an essay contest. He did not spend several days interviewing interested candidates. Mark includes for us a little glimpse of how Jesus was so compelling that the men He chose immediately chose to follow Him. Calvinists like to call that "Irresistible Grace." It doesn't mean He steamrolls people's opposition, it means that He's irresistible! You can't turn Him down. He also didn't choose all 12 of them at once. And by the way, it wasn't immediate that all 12 of them followed Him. That came in a couple of stages.

We'll get to more of that later as we work through Mark, but we get to the beginning of the process in our text, and we'll close with this. Verses 16-20—"As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee"—up there in "redneck" country—"He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen." How wonderful is that? He completely ignores the uppity Pharisees and Sadducees, and He goes and gets some fishermen. Now, if somebody wants to put the word "ignorant" in front of fishermen, have them go read books like John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Revelation, 1 Peter, 2 Peter. They weren't ignorant, but they were fishermen.

Okay, so, "He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.." Alright, we're going to stop there.

What have you seen today? Jesus has the power over temptation. He is still calling you to repent, the kingdom of heaven *is* at hand, believe the good news, believe the gospel. He has authority over the lives of people and He calls whom He chooses (Matt. 11:27). Have you heeded His call? You can hear the message countless times and harden your heart to it, but, have you heeded the call? Have you reached out and repented? Are your many sins forgiven? Is it your joy to preach the gospel? Is it your joy to pass along the truths of the kingdom of God to somebody else (see Mk. 5:19-20; Lk. 8:39)? That's what making disciples is all about. That's how you start a ministry the way Jesus did.

*Now, Father, thank You for all that is before us. Thank You for reminding us of these essentials. Our message does not change because of the people around us. Our message is always the gospel. Temptation comes in so many forms, in so many ways, every day, all the*

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*time, and always the way to resist it is firm in Your Word. And Father, you've left us here because You have yet others that need to become disciples of Your Son, so use us in that process, we pray. Sweep away from any of our hearts anything that would get in the way of us being useful for that purpose. And please, as I always ask, please don't let a soul leave this place who has not turned to Christ to be forgiven, to be restored to fellowship with You, and to become Your servant. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

END OF AUDIO