

**Message #4****Mark 1:14-20**

We received a mailing recently that was designed to get churches to contribute to a cause. One of the themes that was presented in this mailing is we want to show the love of Jesus to the world. That certainly is an admirable goal. Of course the big question is “How do you do that?” If we contribute money to some cause, does that show the love of Jesus to the world?

There is no question that Jesus Christ demonstrated His love for people in the world at the highest possible level. As the beloved Son of God, He willingly left the glory and splendor of heaven and came to this earth to die on a cross so sinners could be saved. There is no greater level of love above that.

Now if we start tracking the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, we come to the conclusion that very few are actually showing the love of Christ to the world, because many do not follow His pattern. In fact, many churches have totally missed what Jesus Christ actually did.

He did not come singing; He did not come entertaining; He did not come sharing; He did not come philosophizing; **He came preaching!** The main focal point of His ministry to people was preaching. It is true along the way He helped some people. It is true along the way He did some miracles. But His main focus was on preaching. That point is very clear from this text in Mark.

As we come to these verses, we get to see the ministry of Jesus Christ as it began in Galilee. Now about one year had transpired between verse 13 and verse 14. It was, as one commentator said, a “year of obscurity” in the life of Jesus only found in the Gospel of John.

Mark picks up the story in a rapid fire way in the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus Christ. What we see is that:

**JESUS CHRIST BEGAN HIS MINISTRY BY PREACHING AND BY INVITING VERY SELECT AND SPECIAL DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM.**

Now although this is minimized in these days in which we live, the fact is Jesus’ ministry was about “preaching.” **In fact, the present tense of the participle “preaching” indicates this is what Jesus continually and habitually did.**

In fact, the word “preaching” means to proclaim and herald something in a public way (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 246). This is from the same word family in which Paul says to Timothy, I charge you “preach the word.” So what Jesus Christ did continually was to go to various places and publically preach God’s Word.

Frankly, I get tired of hearing about those churches and ministries that want to show Christ to the people not by preaching, but by doing stuff. Well if you want to show a true portrait of Jesus Christ to the world, you are going to have to be real serious about preaching, because that is what Jesus did.

Now we learn a great deal from these verses. There are certain observations we may make:

**OBSERVATION #1** – Mark reveals when Jesus came preaching. **1:14a**

Jesus came preaching “after John had been taken into custody.” The passive voice of the verb “had been taken” certainly establishes the sovereignty of God in permitting John to be taken into custody. Mark briefly mentions this here, but later in Mark 6:14-29, he will give a full analysis of what happened to John.

Now John obviously knew what His assignment was to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ and introduce Him to Israel. He probably had no clue about the fact that also his assignment would be to be put in prison and executed when his ministry was over.

But that is the way it is for each of us. We all are called by God into His family and we have a job to do in using our gifts and abilities for Him; and when our job is accomplished and our work on earth is done, our lives will also end on this earth.

Mark’s point is to quickly get to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ so he needs to briefly mention the chronology here.

It is critical to see the chronology of this because it was predicted that before the King/Savior/God/Son would come, there would be a forerunner who would surface that would announce him. That forerunner was none other than John.

By mentioning John, Mark is able to show that a transition was taking place from the ministry of John to the ministry of Jesus. The forerunners work is done. The O.T. Law is ending and N.T. grace is beginning.

**OBSERVATION #2** – Mark reveals where Jesus was preaching. **1:14b (Matt. 4:12-22; Luke 4:14)**

There were three main territories or provinces where Jesus could publicly minister. There was Judea, and north of Judea was Samaria, and north of Samaria was Galilee. Galilee was the most populated and most integrated of the areas. It was an area filled with common people who worked common jobs.

Now carefully observe where Jesus began His public ministry; not Judea, not Jerusalem where one would logically think, but He left Judea where He had been baptized and began His ministry in Galilee. Galilee became the early setting for the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Judean Jews did not like the Samaritans and they did not like the Galileans. In fact, they viewed them as such low life that when they heard Jesus had a Nazareth connection, their response was “can any good thing even come out of Nazareth?”

**OBSERVATION #3** – Mark reveals what Jesus was preaching. **1:14c-15**

There are four main parts to the message Jesus came preaching:

**Message Part #1** - Jesus came preaching the Gospel of God. **1:14c**

Now what this immediately teaches us is that Jesus came preaching “good news from God.” The word “gospel” means good news and this good news has its originating source as God. This Gospel is amazing news in that “all sins shall be forgiven” to one who believes in Jesus Christ (Mark 3:28). Jesus came proclaiming this good news and this good news came from God.

Now the specific message Christ came preaching was the Gospel of the Kingdom; not the Gospel of grace, although there is grace involved in any gospel. Mark does not use the word “grace” one time, so he is not developing the Pauline grace Gospel. The good news was that by believing in Him, He could give them entrance into the Kingdom that would be headquartered in Jerusalem. But the truth is getting into this kingdom or getting into heaven requires sins be forgiven and that only happens through Jesus Christ.

**Message Part #2** - Jesus was preaching the time is fulfilled. **1:15a**

This good news came at a very specific God-ordained moment of time. It had been prophesied that the Messiah/King/Savior would come into the world. It had been predicted in the O.T. that one would come who would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Paul said, “but when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law” (Gal. 4:4).

This moment when Jesus Christ came to this earth and began preaching the good news that sinners could be saved from their sins was a very unique moment specifically ordained by God.

**Message Part #3** - Jesus was preaching the Kingdom of God was at hand. **1:15b**

Now the phrase “kingdom of God” is one that Mark stresses 14 times and it was central to Christ’s message (1:15; 4:11, 26, 20; 9:1, 47; 10:14-15, 23-25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43). The primary point of these words was that Jesus Christ was the God/Savior/King who could give Israel her Kingdom and establish the Kingdom reign of God on earth.

Now scholars have long debated whether or not Jesus was announcing the presence of a future kingdom that He would establish in the future or whether He was presenting a here and now kingdom. What Jesus was announcing is that He was the Divine King and He was presently here on earth and if people were to change their thinking and believe on Him, He could establish God’s Kingdom on earth right then and there.

**Message Part #4** - Jesus was preaching a message of repent and believe in the Gospel.

Now **verse 15** says that He was specifically preaching the good news that the time is fulfilled concerning the Kingdom of God, because the King was here on earth and it was at hand and all that one needed to do to be saved was to repent, which means change your thinking and believe the Gospel.

The Kingdom was near because the King was here on earth who could establish that Kingdom. And all the people had to do to receive it was to repent (change their mind) and believe in Him. Do you see this? All you need to do to be saved is to believe the Gospel, which means to believe in Jesus Christ. As we will see, most of these people would not admit they were sinners.

I did a lot of swimming on vacation and it reminded me of a story that was once told by Thomas Constable to illustrate the point of repentance and believe. He said if a man were in a lake drowning and holding on to some flimsy piece of wood and a lifeguard swam up to him, all he would need to do is change his mind about what would save him. He would need to stop trusting in a piece of wood and trust the lifeguard.

That is what a sinner needs to do to be saved. All he must do is stop trusting in himself or his works or his religion and trust in the One who can give life—Jesus Christ. All these people needed to do was admit they did not have the righteousness necessary to get into the Kingdom and believe on Jesus Christ and they would be saved.

So the good news that Jesus came preaching, in Galilee of all places, was that the law days were over and that grace was now offered and if they would change their thinking and believe that they were sinners and if they would believe that He was the One who could save them from their sins, He could established God's kingdom in their lives and on this earth.

**OBSERVATION #4** – Mark reveals who Jesus called to be His first disciples. **1:16-20**

It was now time for Jesus to begin building His staff or team. Now Mark brings out almost verbatim to what Matthew brought out (Matt. 4:18-22) that Jesus is by the Sea of Galilee and He calls two pair of fisherman brothers to be His disciples—Simon and Andrew, James and John.

Mark calls this the Sea of Galilee and Luke calls it a lake. The Sea of Galilee is a large “kidney shaped inland lake” which is 14 miles long and 6 miles wide. The major business of this sea is fishing.

There were many fishermen who made a living by fishing this sea. Josephus claims in his day, which was just a few years after this event, that there were 330 fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee. People ate a lot of fish. It was their main meat source.

Now by virtue of the fact that there were so many fishermen, we know that the ones Jesus calls are very specific choices that He is making as God. Three of the four that He calls here—Peter, James and John—will become key inner circle disciples (5:37; 9:2; 14:33).

According to **verse 16**, when Jesus first saw Simon and Andrew, they were fishing and casting a net in the sea. There are three different Greek words used to describe different kinds of nets: The word used here ( $\alpha\mu\phi\iota\beta\lambda\eta\sigma\tau\rho\nu$ ) is one that refers to a casting net that you cast from the shore. The second word ( $\sigma\alpha\gamma\eta\nu\eta$ ) refers to a drag net you pull behind a boat. The third word ( $\delta\iota\kappa\tau\upsilon\omicron\nu$ ) is a general term simply used for a fishing net.

So when Jesus first came upon Simon and Andrew, they were probably on shore casting a net that is a round throw net about 15 feet across with weights on the edges. They would cast the net into the sea, it would sink to the bottom and trap fish and then they would haul in the fish.

I think this is extremely important to see—**Jesus calls those to become part of His team who are faithfully doing their work in the secular world.** God does not call lazy shirkers into His service; they call themselves into service.

When Jesus saw them, according to **verse 17**, what He said is “follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men.” This is a very personal invitation given by Jesus Christ to these two fishermen. The invitation is for them to join Him and His work. This is not an invitation to us.

There are three facts to observe here:

**(Fact #1)** - This is a personal invitation by Jesus Christ to these men to follow Him and travel with Him.

This is not the same as “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.” This is not a Gospel message. In fact, this is a strange message. This is not our message. We may make application, but this is not our message. There were times when people believed in Him and wanted to travel with Him and He said, “No” (Mark 5:18-19). This is an unusual invitation.

**(Fact #2)** - This calling is a calling to become something they weren't at the present time.

Now do not overlook the words “I will make you become” or literally in Greek “I will make you to become” fishers of men. To become a fisher of men is a process. It is not an overnight experience. This will be a gradual process produced by training over a period of time. In other words, just because one believes in Jesus Christ or starts to follow Christ does not mean he instantly is a fisher of men.

One of the real tragedies that you will see is that some famous athlete or entertainer gets saved, and they stick him or her up in front of people thinking they really are in a position to be a great spokesman for Jesus Christ. Someone who is just saved does not know sound doctrine.

In fact, someone just saved doesn't even know what just happened to them. They really are in no position to lecture the family of God on Biblical subjects or themes.

What they really need is to sit down and be taught. What really needs to happen to all of us is that we need to listen and learn before we speak. Becoming a fisher of men is a process that does not occur overnight.

**(Fact #3)** - Jesus Christ is the only One who could make them become a fisher of men.

Jesus is the One who makes the disciple a man fisher. The man does not make himself this. You cannot just sign up for some course on beach evangelism and catch men. They needed to travel with Jesus Christ and learn from Jesus Christ. This would not be an overnight experience.

This is a very specific calling of these two men. This is not a calling to us. What we do know is that if we believe on Jesus Christ and we purpose to understand and apply the Word of God, we will bear fruit. To truly be used by God to reach others, one must listen, learn and develop in a close relationship with Jesus Christ.

Now according to **verse 18**, as soon as Jesus said this to them, they left their nets and followed Christ.

Then, according to **verse 19** Jesus went on a little farther down the coastline and He saw James and John mending their nets. The noun "nets" is plural so they were working on all different kinds of fishing nets getting them ready for their next expedition.

Now these guys are not poor fishermen; they are very successful fishermen who are running a very successful fishing business. Notice their father's name was Zebedee and they had hired servants who worked for them. So they did not just leave their dad alone and say you are on your own. The dad had hired servants who were capable of maintaining and running the business.

According to **verse 20**, Jesus gave these two the same calling and they immediately left to follow Jesus.

These four gave up their fishing businesses to engage in the greatest work that could ever be given to a sinful, finite man. They were chosen by Jesus Christ to travel with Jesus Christ and to win souls for Jesus Christ. What is amazing is that Jesus let sinful people participate in His sovereign work.

Now I agree with H.A. Ironside in that not all who believe in the Lord today and purpose to obey the Word will become a great soul winner or fisher of men. There are different gifts that God gives to different people. Some people are evangelists. Some people are Pastor/Teachers. Some have a gift of mercy or helps or giving.

What we do know is that if any will purpose to obey the Word, God will use that person to accomplish His purposes, just like he did with these four fishermen.

Now perhaps you are here and you wonder about your own life and purpose. You wonder what you are here for and what it is you are supposed to accomplish. Well, here are two answers from this text:

First, change your mind about what will save you from your sins and believe totally and only in Jesus Christ.

Second, whatever your present task, whether it be your job or your school, God's will is that you do your best right where you are.

You purpose to come and hear and learn the Word and apply the Word and you will fulfill God's will for your life.