

**An Important Call**  
**Mark 1:14-20**  
**ABC 1/30/22**

Open your Bibles to Mark 1 (pg #896 in pew Bible) as we continue to work our way through it. By way of review, vss 1-13 are often seen as the prologue to the book. Vs 1 gave us the theme by saying, **the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God**. This is the *good news* of Jesus the Messiah, the promised One, the Son of God. & then we saw that this was proven by the fact that the OT prophets anticipated this & by John the Baptist who came & preached repentance & that the Messiah was coming. Then we saw the Messiah presented to us as we saw Jesus baptized & the Father audibly affirming Jesus, His beloved Son along with the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus. All this clearly demonstrated & proved Jesus is the Messiah, the promised & expected One. Mark then gave us further affirmation of this as the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Jesus withstood & came through these 40 days without sin. That's the prologue of Mark's gospel. Today we move on to Jesus' beginning His public ministry as told by Mark by calling men to follow Him. Speaking of calling, have you noticed how frequently we don't answer a phone call? Our 1<sup>st</sup> reaction is to check the caller ID to see who's calling & if we want to talk to them or not. I don't know about you, but I'm grateful for this technology. It allows me not to waste time talking to telemarketers & salesmen. Who is calling makes a difference in how we respond to the call. In our passage this morning, who is calling makes a difference as well. The voice of Jesus is the one identified. Will the men being called recognize it & how will they react? Before we get there,

**1. Jesus' Method** Mark doesn't begin his account until Jesus arrives in Galilee, skipping 6-12 months<sup>1</sup> of Jesus' ministry in Judea following His baptism (Jn 2:13-4:3) along with His journey through Samaria (Jn 4:4-42). Mark takes us to the beginnings of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Notice the timing here: **14**

Why does Mark begin with this & why doesn't he give any details about John's imprisonment, which he'll get to in chpt 6? Clearly, it was after John the Baptist's arrest that Jesus began His public

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<sup>1</sup> William Hendriksen & Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, vol. 10, New Testament Commentary, pp 54-55

ministry in Galilee. Prior to that, John was still baptizing in the Jordan & Jesus was ministering in Judea, so their ministries overlapped (Jn 3:22-24). After John's arrest, Jesus returned to Galilee for ministry there (Mt 4:12). Mark apparently wants to show that John, the forerunner, completed his God-appointed task & only after that happened did Jesus enter His ministry.<sup>2</sup> The work of the forerunner is completed & the ministry of Jesus begins. But John's arrest hardly makes this a promising beginning & foreshadows that Jesus, as the One John proclaimed, won't fare well with the powers of this world either. It reads literally, *after the delivering up of John...* Jesus also will be *delivered up or handed over* (9:31; 10:33; 15:1, 15). John is more than a herald who comes before Jesus. He's Jesus' forerunner in His ministry to Israel, in His fateful conflict with earthly authorities, & in His brutal death. But this isn't an indication that things are falling apart. This is God doing exactly what He wants to do. John the Baptist came & served a great purpose for God. God now moves him off the scene to be arrested & Jesus rises to the forefront. The term **taken into custody** or *handed over* or *delivered up* makes us ask, *Who is doing this? Whose hand is behind this? Is this the result of wicked human schemes or is it part of God's plan?* Hopefully, that's a no-brainer to any of us. Obviously, unknown to the earthly powers, John's arrest in God's plan sets the stage for the proclamation of the **gospel of God**. Herod may have thought he was getting his antagonist out of the way; but, in reality, it's all part of preparing the way for the coming of the kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup> The preparation for & inauguration of the work which God the Father had given His Son to do is ended. Having been introduced by John the Baptizer, Jesus, by means of the baptism which He requested, has reaffirmed His decision to take upon Himself the sin of the world. He's proven Himself by triumphing over Satan in the wilderness. He's done this as His people's representative, the last Adam, succeeding where the 1<sup>st</sup> Adam failed. Nothing can prevent Him from carrying forward the task assigned to & voluntarily taken by Him. & so Jesus goes to Galilee & is **preaching**. In vs 1 it's **the gospel of Jesus Christ**. Here it's the **gospel of God** which is the same wording Paul uses at the beginning of Romans where he declares he has been **set apart for the gospel of God**

<sup>2</sup> Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8, p 624

<sup>3</sup> David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary, p 58

(1:1). It's significant that Paul isn't speaking of the good news *about* God. Rather, the grammar he uses is possessive, meaning the gospel *belongs* to God. God is its Author. We might say God owns it. He's the One who gave this message, not John the Baptist, & not even Jesus. It wasn't Jesus' gospel, as such. It was the Father's *good news* of the Son that Jesus declared.<sup>4</sup> God is both its source & object; it's from God & about God. Whether it's in a church setting or over your back fence, we're all called to preach **God's gospel**, the good news that comes from **God** Himself to the world concerning the salvation from sin & judgment available only through Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> Jesus preached the truth of God's good news about Himself & His kingdom of salvation (Lk 4:14–30). The Father's method of reaching the world then was through the **preaching** (or proclamation) of the **gospel**. **Preaching** is still the means God has ordained to use to spread His good news. Don't you dare think you're off the hook because you're not a *preacher*. We all have the same divine message to proclaim, **the gospel of God** (Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thes 2:2, 8–9; 1 Pt 4:17).

**2. Jesus' Message** What did Jesus' preaching of the **gospel of God** include? His message had 3 parts: the kingdom, repentance, & belief.

### **A. The Kingdom 15**

The phrase **kingdom of God** only occurs about 7x in the OT yet there's a sense in which the whole OT is about the kingdom of God. It's about the rule of God, the kingship of God, the dominion of God, the sovereignty of God & that God is establishing His gospel in Gen 3:15, where it says the seed of the woman would crush the head of Satan. From then on we see God bringing His kingdom & Jesus now says, *The kingdom of God has come. It's here*. In the coming of Jesus something of the fulfillment of God's plan, design, & decree has come to fruition. Of course, there's a sense in which the kingdom of God is yet to come. In the Lord's prayer Jesus taught us to pray, **Your kingdom come** (Mt 6:10). We want to see the kingdom of God come fully in all its glory. There's a sense in which the kingdom is yet to come but Jesus says there's a sense in which the kingdom has arrived. It's in Jesus & it has come. The time of which all the OT had looked forward to had arrived. God's

<sup>4</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Mark*, First Edition, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary, p 17

<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur, *Mark 1–8*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, p 47

reign upon earth is here. When Mark writes Jesus' words, **the time is fulfilled**, he uses an interesting word. There are 2 words in Greek that are translated by our word **time**. One refers to the moment-by-moment passing of time. The other refers to a particular moment in time that's so significant it defines everything that follows. We don't have similar words in English. The closest we come are probably with the words *historical* & *historic*. Everything that takes place in space & time is *historical*, but not everything that takes place is *historic*. We use the word *historic* for events of great significance. For something to be *historic*, it has to be so important, so momentous, that it shapes history. When Jesus said **the time is fulfilled**, He was saying a very significant moment in human history had arrived. The word translated as **fulfilled** means *super fullness* or *been made full* (Jn 3:29). Usually, when I pour a cup of coffee, I don't fill it to the brim because it's likely I'll slop it everywhere. I leave some room at the top so I don't spill it. But when we fill something in the sense of *super fullness*, it's spilling over the edge. Jesus was announcing the time for the arrival of the kingdom of God was *super full*. In effect, Jesus was saying, *The historic & the super full have come together*. The time of waiting for the arrival of the kingdom of God was over; Jesus was here. God's in control & He keeps a perfect timetable. This is the major event on God's timetable, the coming of the King & the announcement of the kingdom of God. In the same way, the term **at hand** means *near*, but Jesus wasn't saying the kingdom of God was *near* simply in terms of the clock. Rather, He meant that it was **at hand** physically. The kingdom of God was **at hand** because Jesus was here. The long-awaited Messiah had come. The historic moment was unfolding in the person of Jesus. His coming marked the turning point of salvation history. As Paul explained in Gal 4:4, **when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son** (cf Eph 1:10). This was the time the world had long been waiting for. The Savior, the promised Messiah, had arrived to pay in full the penalty for sin & thus provide salvation for all who believe.

Maybe you're wondering, *Hasn't God's kingdom always existed? Isn't He the all-powerful, almighty God from eternity past to eternity future?* Of course, but when the OT speaks of the coming kingdom of God, it refers to God's personal visitation to this fallen world to bring redemption. The people of Israel in the OT looked forward to the day when God's rule would be visible here on earth

in the coming of His Anointed One. So, following in the footsteps of John the Baptist, who'd announced the coming of the kingdom, Jesus declared the gospel of the **kingdom of God**. In essence Jesus was saying, *Because I'm the King, wherever I am My kingdom is present*. The **kingdom** that Jesus proclaimed can be understood in 3 dimensions: as a spiritual kingdom, a millennial kingdom, & an eternal kingdom. Though it's invisible & spiritual in the present, it will one day be a physical, earthly kingdom. The kingdom of God did come but it is also yet to come. The **kingdom of God** has come & is coming. Anyone who trusts in Jesus as Savior enters the **kingdom of God**. In His 1<sup>st</sup> coming, the King preached the good news of salvation & established His spiritual kingdom in the hearts of all who believe (Lk 17:21). Christ's kingdom is being advanced even now, as sinners come to saving faith & are transferred out of the domain of darkness & into the realm ruled by the Son of God (Col 1:13). At His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, the King will establish His kingdom in a visible & physical way here on the earth. According to Rev 20:1–6, that kingdom will last for 1,000 years. During that time, all the millennial promises of the OT will be fulfilled. Jesus will reign as the King in Jerusalem & the whole world will be under His rule. After that 1,000-year kingdom, God will inaugurate the final eternal kingdom by creating a new heaven & a new earth, where the triune God will reign forever & ever (Rev 22:1–5). Right now, the **kingdom of God** is made up of all who embrace Jesus Christ as their Lord & Savior. He rules over & is resident in the hearts of all those who belong to Him. His kingdom advances one soul at a time & will continue until He returns to establish His earthly reign which will be followed by His eternal reign.

**B. Repent** Jesus' message was also repentance. What is repentance? Some think it's mostly about feelings, like feeling sorry for your sin. While it's good to be sorry about your sin, repentance isn't a *feelings* word but an *action* word. Repentance is to change our mind & our direction. It's a change of thinking that leads to a change of behavior. We no longer love our sin & nurture it, but hate it. We daily crucify it by the power of the Holy Spirit. This good news isn't that we can go on sinning; it's that we don't *have* to go on sinning. We're no longer slaves to sin but have died to it with Christ. Why did Jesus call the people to repent? The same reason John preached repentance. Because mankind is sinful & unrighteous. Due to our sin, we're under the sentence of

eternal death. That's the bad news. God is perfectly holy & has decreed a just & eternal punishment for every sinner. He says, **the wages of sin is death**, eternal death (Rom 6:23). Each one of us deserves it. We've all sinned & the wages of sin is death. But there is good news. While we were utterly sinful, while we were enemies of God, Jesus died for our sins & was raised from death for our justification. Having been justified by faith, we can now have peace with God (Rom 5:1). We no longer have to fear judgment. We no longer have to fear sin & death & eternal punishment. No, we who are justified by faith, we who are justified by God's mercy & grace, are destined for glory. We can't come to the **kingdom of God** unless we repent & leave our sin & self-rule. Jesus preached the gospel & said, *Your response to the gospel must be to repent &...*

**C. Believe.** Repentance & belief are inseparable. You can't truly repent unless you also believe. In other words, unless God regenerates you, makes you alive, gives you a new heart & a new nature, & enables you to believe, you'll never repent. Any call to repent without the call to believe in Christ is a call to earn your own salvation. Having turned from sin & unbelief, sinners must **believe in the gospel**, meaning they turn in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in Him & His finished work of redemption from sin & victory over death. As Paul explained, **if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, & believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved** (Rom 10:9). That kind of belief is a wholehearted embrace of the person & work of Jesus.

Having convincingly demonstrated His authority over Satan in the wilderness, & anticipating His final victory over Satan at the cross, Jesus proclaimed the message of deliverance from sin for all who'd believe in Him. The whole world has been given an invitation to enter the kingdom of God from the King Himself.

**3. Jesus' Calling** Mark moves quickly on to the calling of Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> disciples. **16-18**

**A. Simon & Andrew** From the other gospels we know this wasn't the 1<sup>st</sup> time they met Jesus. According to Jn 1:35-42, Andrew was with John the Baptist when John pointed to Jesus & declared, **Behold, the Lamb of God!** After spending the day with Jesus, Andrew went & found his brother Simon Peter, who also came to see Jesus. Though a number of months had passed, Jesus pursued these brothers to call them to abandon their work & follow Him to proclaim His gospel. No doubt

over the months that have passed these men have pondered, thought, & discussed who Jesus was. This calling by the lake isn't a sudden invitation as though He was inviting them to take a leap in the dark. They've had months to think about Him & gather information about Him. As matter of fact, Jn 1 says Peter & Andrew were already disciples. Most likely James & John were already disciples as well, because Jesus' disciples were present with Him when He changed the water into wine (Jn 2), & when He met the Samaritan woman (Jn 4). These events had already taken place before Mk 1:16, so Peter, Andrew, James, & John weren't strangers to Jesus. The events in Mark here don't describe the time when they became disciples, but apparently records their call to full-time service.

Before we get to it, what is the **Sea of Galilee**? It's also called the Sea of Chinnereth or *Genneseret*, a form of the Hebrew word that means *harp* or *lyre*. The name is fitting because the lake is roughly shaped like a harp, about 13 miles long & 7 miles wide. It became known as the Sea of Tiberias (Jn 6:1; 21:1) because the city of Tiberias (founded by Herod Antipas c 18 AD) is located on its western shore. It's a freshwater lake fed & emptied by the Jordan River & sits almost 700 feet below sea level. It was a productive lake for fishing. According to Josephus, when the Romans invaded Palestine in 68, AD they commandeered some 250 fishing boats from the Sea of Galilee, which gives an indication of how many fishermen were working it in those days. Ancient sources indicate it had at least 16 harbors. We often think of the disciples as poverty-stricken fishermen trying to eke out a living, but these men had profitable businesses. The **net** fishermen used then was large & circular, up to 20 feet in diameter, with weights around the perimeter. They'd throw the net so it unfolded in the air, landing flat on the water's surface. As the edges began to sink to the bottom, the net would capture whatever fish were underneath. The **fishermen** would then retrieve it using a rope that ran through the perimeter. As Simon & Andrew were fishing, **17**.

There are 2 parts to this call. 1) To follow Jesus. Before you can do anything for Jesus, you need to know Him. You need to sit at His feet & listen. You need to ponder His words & His actions. You need to allow Him to instruct you. You must love Him & be prepared to say, *Wherever you lead me I will go.*

Jesus calls them to follow Him. This was unusual. In that world, rabbis never recruited students. Students applied to study with rabbis, just like students today apply to study at colleges. But Jesus was different & handpicked His students. The call to follow someone implies discipleship because the disciple breaks all ties to follow his master.<sup>6</sup> **Follow Me** was a command with the nature of a military command which made only one response possible: obedience. The stress in Mark's brief report falls upon the sovereign authority in Jesus' call & the radical obedience of His disciples. This isn't an invitation. It's not even a suggestion. So compelling is the call of Jesus that all prior claims lose their value. Unlike the rabbis, who instructed the people to follow their legalistic traditions, Jesus commanded these Galilean fishermen to follow Him. & He did so with ultimate authority, a power that no scribe or Pharisee possessed (Mk 1:22). The implications of His command were extreme & unmistakable: Abandon everything, including your careers as fishermen, & **follow Me**. It was a unique, nonnegotiable, all-encompassing mandate from the King to His subjects. The only proper response to Jesus' call to follow Him is to follow Him. It's an urgent & important call. It's more important than your job, your family, your property, & your dreams. Jesus would later echo the same kind of call when He said, **If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, & take up his cross & follow Me** (Mk 8:34). Jesus' call is a costly call. Just because it's a free offer doesn't mean it's an easy one. Just because it's worth it doesn't mean you don't have to pay some price, not to achieve it but because of the consequences of receiving it. It's also a permanent call. Jesus calls us to follow Him for all of our lives & for all eternity. It's not temporary or seasonal but once-for-all call. Jesus said, **No one, after putting his hand to the plow & looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God** (Lk 9:62). This reminds me of Elisha the prophet. When he was called, he stepped off the plow, chopped up the expensive wooden equipment, butchered the expensive oxen, & burned it all up. He was saying, *I'm going & I'm not coming back*. To follow Jesus' call is a one-way ticket. There's no contingency plan or safety net. We trust God completely & do what He tells us to do wherever He tells us to go. We follow Him without looking back. That might sound scary, but there's no safer thing you can do. He is trustworthy & able. He does what He says He'll do, & He

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<sup>6</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, p 67



says He will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb 13:5). What God promises, He delivers. What He commands us to do, He empowers us to do.

2) The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the call is to be fishers of men. Jesus promised He'd **make** them **become fishers of men**, an analogy they'd have understood instantly. Instead of casting nets for fish, they'd be trained to proclaim the gospel for the purpose of gathering in sinners. They'd be prepared by Jesus Himself to become heralds of the kingdom through the proclamation of His gospel. With this command, Jesus established the means by which His kingdom would advance. He uses transformed sinners whom He calls to follow Him. What they'll become depends on their following of Him. How were Simon, Andrew, James, & John made fishers of fish? By watching their fathers over a period of time. Jesus is saying, *If you follow Me, if you sit at My feet, if you listen to what I say, if you watch what I do, I'll make you fishers of men.* Jesus would make them fish for people. He'd use their gifts to fulfill God's call to them to follow Jesus in their new lives. Jesus does the same to us. He calls us to follow Him & proclaim the message of His kingdom & He has given us the gifts & abilities to answer that call. He doesn't tell us to make ourselves fishers of men. No, He said, **follow Me, & I will make you become fishers of men** (17). If you aren't fishing, you aren't following Him.

Remarkably, **immediately they left their nets & followed Him** (18). There was no resistance or hesitation on their part. They **immediately** drop everything to follow Jesus. Their response demonstrates both the Lord's authority & the power that moves in those He calls to respond.<sup>7</sup> Don't ever sell yourself short. If you think you're just ordinary, welcome to the club. If Jesus was able to use ordinary fishermen He met on the beach, He can & will use you too.

**B. James & John** We see the same thing repeated with James & John. **19-20**

As Jesus, & presumably Simon & Andrew, walked further along the Sea of Galilee, they encountered James & John sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, & their father's servants. Jesus called James & John to follow Him as well. Can you imagine Zebedee's astonishment when his sons, for whom he had built a profitable fishing business, got out of the boat? In an instant, the **Sons of**

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<sup>7</sup> John MacArthur, *Mark 1-8*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, pp 51-52

**Thunder** (Mk 3:17) were compelled to leave everything & everyone to follow Jesus. They likely left their dad scratching his head. All he had left were the servants. He watched them walk away with a strange young Rabbi & 2 other fishermen. That kind of obedience would be repeated with the rest of the disciples, like Levi, who simply walked away from his tax collection booth to follow Jesus (Mk 2:14). Their response may seem shocking from a human perspective. But from God's standpoint, it isn't surprising at all. As Jesus explained to His disciples in Jn 15:16, **You did not choose Me but I chose you, & appointed you that you would go & bear fruit, & *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.** Clearly, the scope of Jesus' authority included the disciples whom He called to follow Him. It was through those redeemed & regenerated sinners & their proclamation of the gospel, that Jesus would advance His kingdom (Mt 28:18–20).

Jesus is still calling people today to follow Him & every Christian who's followed Jesus since then has had to make that same choice, to leave everything & follow Him. Peter says in Mk 10:28, **Behold, we have left everything & followed You.** This is what the disciples knew they were getting themselves into. We face the same thing. We must set aside everything else for the sake of setting our eyes, our goals, our ambition, our lives upon one thing, one Person, Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, & follow Him. We've been called by One who demands a response. Don't ignore His call. Jesus doesn't want you to check your phone & walk away. He wants you to respond by following Him. His call is a call to repent. Do you need to repent? It's a call to believe. Do you believe? It's a call to follow Him. Have you made this commitment?<sup>8</sup> Answer His call today. Follow Him today. Leave your nets & boat today & commit to Christ today.

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<sup>8</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant & Savior*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word, p 38