

06. The Gospel of Mark—1:16-20

“The Messiah’s Men”

(10/4/26)

Mark 1:14–20 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” ¹⁶ And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” ¹⁸ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. ¹⁹ When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also *were* in the boat mending their nets. ²⁰ And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

I am dividing this section into 2 parts:

I. The Messiah’s Ministry—v.14-15

II. The Messiah’s Men—v.16-20

Last week, we looked at the first part—“*The Messiah’s Ministry*”—and now today I’d like to look at the second part of the passage—“**The Messiah’s Men.**”

But before we look at that, I want to focus on the statement by Mark in verse 15 where he tells us that Jesus came preaching, “**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.**”

Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...

The idea behind the phrase “**the fullness of time**” is—“*when the time was right.*”

There’s an old expression that many of us have quoted—“*Timing is everything.*”

The problem is we don’t always know when the time is right for many of the decisions we have to make.

We wrestle with decisions like—is it the right time to change jobs, to sell our house or start a business?

But when it comes to God there is no such thing as being early or late—God is always right on time!

And this was especially true when it came to the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ!

Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...

Jesus came at just the right time in the history of the world to fulfill God’s redemptive plan—the time when the world was perfectly prepared for God’s work.

1. It was the right time Politically

When Paul wrote these words in Galatians 4:4—the Roman Empire was at its zenith of power and glory.

Rome had given the world good roads, a relatively fair system of government—and most importantly it had given the world peace.

For the first time in history, people could travel in safety with relative ease almost anywhere in the empire which meant—those early Christians could carry the message of the gospel all over the known world!

2. It was the right time Morally

One author—

“It was a time when the pax Romana (Roman peace) extended over most of the civilized earth and when travel and commerce were therefore possible in a way that had formerly been impossible. Great roads linked the empire of the Caesars...Add the fact that the world was sunk in a moral abyss so low that even the pagans cried out against it and that spiritual hunger was everywhere evident—and one has a perfect time for the coming of Christ and for the early expansion of the Christian gospel.”

3. It was the right time Culturally

Alexander the Great had conquered the world three centuries earlier and then ‘Hellenized’ it by imposing on it Greek culture, philosophy—and most importantly, the Greek language.

The influence of Greek culture and language was so powerful that even after the Romans conquered the world—people still spoke Greek!

Greek was the most precise and descriptive of all ancient languages—it was the language of the first century (and the NT).

It was the language everyone understood—it was a universal language perfect for the quick spread of the gospel.

So, the timing of Jesus coming was the right time politically, morally, culturally—but most importantly:

4. It was the right time Prophetically

For this I'd like you to turn to Matthew 4.

Matthew 4:12–16 (NKJV)

¹² Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁵ “*The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: ¹⁶ The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.*”

This was a prophecy of Messiah's coming spoken 700 years before Jesus was born!

Someone has said that God is never in a hurry in the work that He does—and the greater the work the more time He takes to prepare (Moses).

But when the time is right—He moves—and He moves suddenly, and things begin to happen quickly (think of Joseph in Genesis 41)!

As Americans we are by nature a very impatient people because we live in a society where everything is done quickly.

We communicate at the speed of light. We have fast foods, on demand TV, microwave ovens (who doesn't love instant mash potatoes and microwave popcorn!).

And while all that is great—there is a downside.

And that is we tend to bring this instant gratification and ‘*on demand*’ attitude into our relationship with God and expect Him to answer our prayers immediately!

In other words, we want an ‘*on demand*’ God Who works on our timetable!

And as such, when difficulties persist or we don’t see God moving—we become impatient because God’s timing is not our timing!

Paul reminds us that when it comes to the most important issues of life, whether we talk about our lives personally or world history generally—God is never too early or too late—He is always right on time!

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11 (NKJV)

¹ To everything *there is* a season, A time for every purpose under heaven...¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time...

Now that is a wonderful promise—one that God has proven to me time and time again is absolutely true!

Things have happened in my life at exactly the right time and yet it was not because of anything I had done—doors were opened, opportunities offered, help received—God keeps His promises!

No matter how difficult things may be, no matter how tough life becomes or how disappointed you are in your circumstances—God is still in control—God is still on the throne!

And as Jesus admonished us—“*My people must always pray and not lose heart!*” (Luke 18:1)

II. The Messiah’s Men—Matt. 4:18-22

Matthew 4:18–22 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰ They immediately left *their* nets and followed Him. ²¹ Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James *the son of*

Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them,²² and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

Now what you might not know from a casual reading of the gospels is that Jesus called these men to be His disciples three different times before they fully obeyed by leaving their jobs to follow Him full-time.

The first meeting took place in Jerusalem, as recorded in John 1:35–39.

John 1:35-39 (NKJV)

³⁵ Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. ³⁶ And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day...

The second call is found here in Matthew 4:18-22 and tells us that they did leave their livelihood and followed Him—however as we study the gospels further, we see that it wasn't permanent.

We know this because in Luke 5:1-10 we see them back fishing again.

And so, the third time Jesus repeats the call to leave their fishing nets and follow Him permanently to become "*fishers of men*"—and this time v.11 says, "*So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him*". (Luke 5:11)

This teaches us that once a person is saved it often takes time for them to leave the life they have known for so long to follow Jesus fully.

And I realize that not everyone is called to forsake their jobs and careers to follow Jesus into full-time ministry—the Lord doesn't call all of us who are His people into full-time ministry, but He does call all of us into full-time commitment.

This means that you should never allow your commitment to your jobs and careers to take precedence over your commitment to Jesus either.

In one sense we are all in full-time ministry as God's people whether you realize that or not.

Some of us get paid for it and others don't—but we're all in ministry. (Explain)

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NKJV)

¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry...

Now often when I teach on this the thing that Christians immediately think about is how unworthy they are and how inadequate they feel when it comes to serving God.

"Who am I" they say, *"that I should think I can serve God?"*—and to that I say that everyone who God has called into ministry has felt that way.

Moses said, *"How can I serve God—I stutter?"*

David, Jeremiah, Timothy and Mary were only teenagers when God called them into ministry—I'm sure they didn't feel worthy or qualified.

Even the great apostle Paul expressed his unworthiness at his call by God into the ministry—

1 Corinthians 15:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am...

Let me give you the only two things that are necessary for effective ministry.

2 Chronicles 16:9 (NKJV)

⁹ For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart is loyal to Him...

The Hebrew word translated *loyal* carries with it the idea of “*completeness*” or “*whole-heartedness*”—but can also mean, “*at peace with*.”

So first of all, God is looking for people to use whose hearts are fully given over to Him (not half-hearted commitment) and whose hearts are at peace with God—“*Yes, but what does that mean?*”

Well first of all it means that you’re at peace with God because you’re saved (Rom. 5:1).

But also, a Christian whose heart is not at peace with God signifies a heart that is restless, a heart that thinks that maybe the world still has something to offer in the way of pleasure, fulfillment and happiness—like King Solomon. (Explain)

So, the first qualification for ministry is a *loyal heart*.

The **second** qualification for effective ministry is found in Act 4:5-13 (paraphrase)—

Acts 4:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Today many in the church believe that Bible college training or a seminary degree is what qualifies a person for the ministry—nothing could be farther from the truth.

What qualifies a person for ministry is the call of God upon their life because, “*Whom the Lord calls He equips*”—or as someone has put it, “*God doesn’t call the equipped — he equips the called.*”

And how does He equip a person after He calls them—by them being with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

And how does a person hang out with Jesus—by staying in the Word:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This is the best “seminary” you can get—

John 14:25-26 (NKJV)

²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things...

1 John 2:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

And so, the attitude of God’s people should be like the prophet Isaiah who said—

Isaiah 6:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ [I] heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us [the Trinity speaking]?” Then I said, “Here *am* I! Send me.” ⁹ And He said, “Go, and tell this people [My Word]...”

→ Use my call into ministry as an example

J. Vernon McGee—

“The wonder of it all is that Jesus called men like this. I have always felt that since He called imperfect men like the disciples were, He may be able to use me, and He may be able to use you. It is encouraging to know that we don’t have to be super-duper saints to be used by Him... Whatever your talent may be, if you will turn it over to Him, He can use it”.

I mean look at the men Jesus chose to start the most important religious movement in the history of mankind:

- He chose one man who was impulsive and unstable—Simon (whose name means ‘shifting’ or ‘unstable’).
- A couple of hot heads (James and John—nicknamed “sons of thunder”);
- A skeptic named Bartholomew also called Nathanael. Nathanael was a skeptic who said, *“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”*
- A doubter named Thomas; a political rabble-rouser/assassin named Simon the Zealot; a hated tax-collector named Matthew—and these were the ‘good’ ones compared with Judas!

I mean would you have chosen these men for this ministry? I know I wouldn’t.

But you see, God never chooses a person to use based on what they are at that moment but based on what He knows they can become through His power and grace.

While David was out in the wilderness running from Saul word got out and suddenly men came from all over the land to join up with him.

1 Samuel 22:2 (NKJV)

² And everyone *who was* in distress, everyone who *was* in debt, and everyone *who was* discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him.

Not exactly the kind of guys you’d think would make a good army—but as these men spent time with David an interesting thing began to happen, a transformation began to take place.

This rag-tag group of misfits, malcontents and outcasts became a super-elite group of fighting men—possibly the finest soldiers the world has ever seen.

In the N.T. the Son of David, Jesus Christ is called our Captain and we who have joined ourselves to Him are called His soldiers in 2Timothy 2.

The more time we spend close to Jesus, the more we become like Him, and the more we can be used by Him.

However instead of praying for God to show them who He has put His Spirit upon and anointed for ministry—I have actually heard of churches that are turning to secular organizations to give their leadership candidates personality tests to determine if they have the right temperament and giftedness for ministry before they will hire them.

It reminds me of a spoof that imagines Jesus had done something like this before choosing His twelve disciples—it goes like this:

To: Jesus, Son of Joseph
Woodcrafter's Carpenter Shop
Nazareth 25922
From: Jordan Management Consultants

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them carefully. As part of our service, we make some general comments for your guidance...This is given as a result of staff consultation, and comes without any additional fee.

It is the staff's opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew had been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory. We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely, Jordan Management Consultants

This is how the world chooses leaders—by using outward criteria.

“Man looks at the outward, but God looks upon the heart.” (1Sam. 16:7)

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NKJV)

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.

No matter how bad your life has been, no matter how much of it you have wasted—surrender it to the Master and let Him lay His hand upon you and He will use you, His touch will transform your life—the only touch that can—the touch of the Master’s hand.

The Touch of the Master’s Hand

“T’was battered and scarred and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while to waste much time with the old violin— but he held it up with a smile.

“What am I bid, good folk,” he cried, “Who will start the bidding for me—a dollar once, who’ll make it two—two dollars, who’ll make it three?”

“Three dollars once, three dollars twice going and gone—but no” from the room afar back a grey-haired man came forward and picked up the bow.

And wiping the dust from the old violin and tightening up its strings he played a melody pure and sweet as sweet as an angel sings.

The music ceased and the auctioneer in a voice that was quiet and low said, “What am I bid for the old violin?” and he held it up with the bow.

“A thousand dollars once—who’ll make it two—two thousand—who’ll make it three?”

“Three thousand once, three thousand twice, going and gone!” said he.

The people cheered but some of them cried, “We do not understand, what changed its worth?”

The man replied, “It was the touch of the Master’s hand.”

And many a man with life out of tune and battered and scarred by sin, is auctioned cheap by the foolish crowd, much like the old violin.

A mess of pottage, a glass of wine, a game and he travels on. He’s going once, he’s going twice, he’s going and almost gone.

But the Master comes in and the foolish crowd never can quite understand, the worth of a soul or the change that is wrought by the touch of the Master’s hand.