

Follow Me

Mark 1:14-20

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, February 4, 2024

All right, well, in order to begin our sermon this morning and get you thinking about our passage, I want to say something to you. Are you a follower of Jesus? I ask you that because if you were to say that to some people, they would say, “Well, do you mean do I believe in God?” And no, that's not what I'm asking. I asked, Are you a follower of Jesus? Others would ponder that question. And they might say something like, “Well, I've heard of Him before because I grew up in church, and I've read the Bible.” But no, that's not what I'm saying. either. I want to know, Are you a follower of Jesus? Some would say, “Well, I do good things because I give money to charity and I'm nice and friendly and moral, and I meditate and do yoga and pray and hike in the woods.” No, I don't want to know that. I'm asking, have you ever given your life to the Son of God and told Him you would pursue Him to the ends of the earth. That's what a Christian does. A Christian is someone who follows the Lord Jesus Christ.

And with that said, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark this morning because that's the book we're in today. Please turn to the Gospel of Mark. And as you're turning there this morning, we're continuing our study in Mark by looking at the apostles who were the very first ones to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. In a sense, this is where the Christian movement or the church began, with these guys. And look at what the Lord says to them in Mark 1:16. It says, “As Jesus was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon” That's Peter, “and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, these words, ‘Follow Me.’”

Now that may not come across in its full meaning when you just read it like this, but that means follow Me and be My disciple. Follow Me and be saved. Follow Me and be a Christian, follow Me and begin the work of the church. And as you read it, it makes you say, follow you where Jesus? Anywhere. Where are you taking me? Wherever I want? What will it cost? Everything? When do we leave? Now. How long are we going to be gone? Forever, the rest of your life. The disciples understood they're getting a one-way ticket here. There's no turning back after this. Once they lay down those nets, step off that boat, put one foot in the sand, that's it. Jesus is going to change their life forever. And look at what the next verse says. It says, “Immediately, like that, they left their nets and followed Him.” They didn't wait. They didn't hesitate. They didn't say, “Hold on a moment, Jesus while I go home and think about this.” They just went.

And as you read a story like this and put it that way, it makes you say this is amazing. What an incredible amount of faith these guys had. And you're right, because they did. But the truth is, you're gonna have to have the same thing too if you want to be converted. The standard is the same for everyone. If you want to be a child of God and have your sins forgiven, you have to give everything to Him too; you can't hold anything back. You have to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. This is their call to apostleship, but I'll show you in a moment, this is a call that Jesus gave to everybody. The fact is you

don't see two sets of disciples in the New Testament. Those who followed and those who don't, there's only one. And they follow. It's all or nothing with Christ. If you want what He's offering here, you have to surrender your whole self to Him.

The reason I mention this is because this is not the way a lot of people look at the Christian life, is it? They don't see it as an all or nothing kind of thing. On the contrary, they think that Jesus will accept them if they're just nice. We all know people who profess to be Christians and they live in sin, right? They think they'll get away with it because they're good people; they give to charity, but they cheat on their wife. They lie at work, or they mistreat their children. They don't think it's a problem, but they're wrong. It is a problem. Jesus hates it because when you profess to be a Christian, what you're saying is that Jesus is Lord. And everything that I have belongs to Him. There's no part of your life over which He cannot reach out and say, "Mine. Your marriage is Mine. Your job is Mine." Your kids are His. And that's why you have to change in those areas. You're not being legalistic; you're acknowledging that it all of it belongs to Him anyway. And you just want to give it back to the Master. Which is hard to do, right? Let's be honest, this type of commitment is very difficult to follow Jesus as your master. Nobody's perfect, we all fall short.

And that's why you have to go back into the Bible and study the lives of men like this because they give you encouragement. When you study the lives of the apostles, you find something very interesting and that is that these guys are not perfect, are they? They're normal people with flesh and blood just like you and me. But they kept going in order to show you you can too, if you follow their example. Just out of curiosity, how many of you have studied the 12 apostles before? Anybody? A few? Okay. Were you helped by it? Absolutely. Because when they failed, you said, "I've done that." And when they blew it, you said, "I can relate to that guy." They don't have halos around their heads. That's why this story has been recorded for us to go back and look at this and be encouraged this morning.

And that's what we're going to do by looking at three lessons we learn about following Jesus from these guys. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline this morning, but in Mark 1:14 through 20, we're going to look at three lessons we learn about following Christ from these first disciples. They get the ball rolling for all of us, so let's learn some things from them.

The first one you learn from looking at their lives is that following Jesus begins when you listen. First lesson we learned about following Christ from these men is that following Jesus begins when you listen. Which means this is where your relationship with Christ starts and that is with humility.

And let me just say, as you come to this passage, I want to remind you Mark doesn't write like the other apostles do because he's very concise. And what I mean is he just goes through the book like this at a lightning pace. That's just sort of his personality or many believe he wrote this with Peter's help. And that was Peter's personality, certainly. You see this in verse 14, because there it says, "Now, after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee." Now, I don't know about you, but when I read

that, I have a lot of questions, right? Like John who and taken into custody where and why and how long and when did he get back? And what reason? Come on, Mark, give me some information. But he doesn't do that. That's not his reason for bringing this up. He's mentioning this to give you a timeline for the story, to say that between verse 13 and verse 14 in your Bibles, some time has passed. Now, we don't know exactly how much time, but one minute you look, and John the Baptist is there and the next minute you look and he's not because he's been thrown into prison.

And not only this, but something else happens between verse 13 and verse 14 in your Bibles because the next part of this verse says, "After John had been taken into custody, Jesus comes into Galilee doing something specific." What is it? He's preaching, right? Before, He's getting baptized. Now, He's preaching. And that's important because if you want to write this down, scholars have divided Jesus' life into three phases. The first one is the time of obscurity when nobody knew who He was. So if you want to summarize the first part of Jesus' life, just write the word obscurity. The second phase was the time of popularity when everybody seemed to know who He was. He was well liked; crowds followed Him. The third phase is a time of adversity when everybody hated Him almost, and they wanted Him dead and that ended up in the cross. But here, you're seeing Jesus moved from the first phase into the second. He's going from a time in the shadows in Nazareth into the public spotlight by becoming a traveling preacher. Carpenter to preacher, it's quite a change in a profession, isn't it."

We don't have this in our world today, so much. But in the ancient world, the Jews had a few ways you could hear the Word of God on a regular basis. One was in the synagogue. Go on the Sabbath, sit in the synagogue, you can hear the Word of God preached, temple as well. The other one was through itinerant ministers who would journey from one place to another giving sermons. And the way it worked is they would go into a pre-disclosed location, speak to the people without a copy of the Bible because the Old Testament was written down in scrolls, and you're not about to wander all around the Galilean countryside carrying a massive scroll in your hands. So they would just quote it from memory. I wish I could do that for you guys, I cannot. But what they would do is if they were going to teach from the book of Genesis, they would just recite it. And if they were going to explain the book of Isaiah, they would just announce it in the fields, and the hills and the meadows. And they would do it by the streams and the lakes and the rivers.

And Mark brings that up here to say this is at the heart of Jesus ministry. Now, this is what he's doing. He's a *kēryssō* in Greek, a herald, a teacher of the Word of God. In fact, it gives us a summary of Jesus' preaching in verse 14 when it says He preached the gospel, which means good news. He came telling the Jews how to be saved. And He also told them that the time is fulfilled, or the time of the coming of the Messiah because that's who Jesus was. He's Christ, the son of the living God. He also said here that the kingdom of God is at hand because Jesus coming took the Jews one step closer to the Millennial Kingdom they've been longing for. So as a result, He tells them to do two things: repent, which means turn. The Jews were going this way with their sin and their lies, so Jesus told them to go that way. And it says that He told them to believe. That word, "believe" may seem kind of obvious to us. But what He's

saying here is, it's not enough for you to be Jewish, and think you're gonna go to heaven because your parents went to heaven. You need to believe yourself in the Gospel. If you want to be born again it has to be a personal thing.

Now, I tell you this because as Jesus is saying this to the people in Galilee, there's four men in the crowd that take it to heart. And you're going to meet them in a moment. But let me just tell you here, their names are Simon and Andrew, James and John. They're four men, two sets of brothers, that would not have stuck out in the crowd; they look like everybody else. Everybody else was Jewish, they're Jewish. Everybody else is Galilean; they're Galilean. But they do something unusual and that is that as Christ is preaching, they listen. Can you believe that? And as He's going around teaching all these things from place to place, they pay attention. They make it a personal thing like Jesus told them to do. They didn't say, "I'm going to heaven because my parents are going to heaven." And they didn't tell themselves. "I'm saved because I'm Jewish." They believed the gospel themselves.

Mark doesn't tell us when the disciples first met Jesus, but it was before the event you're about to read. John 1:41 says, they actually met Jesus, when John the Baptist first pointed Christ out to Andrew. And right away, Andrew, came home and told his brother Peter, "We found the Messiah," and you can hear the excitement in his words, "just like we've been looking for Him. Here He is, Peter. This is the one that prophets wrote about."

But the point I'm trying to draw to your attention here is that the call to discipleship starts with this. You have to listen. This is the call to follow Christ. You don't have to work for it, and you don't have to earn it, but you have to do something to get it. And that is to pay attention with a humble heart like these guys did. The Bible says, "Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ," which means that in order to be saved, you have to let the word of Christ go through your ears into your brain until it penetrates a deep down within your soul. There needs to be a constant effort to take what Jesus is saying and apply it. So when He says "believe" here in verse 15, you hear that word and say, "Have I believed? Is that something I've done in my heart before the Lord?" And when He tells you to repent, you want to go home saying, "Have I repented?" Never mind everybody else, I don't want to be the kind of person that comes to church and say, "I'm glad she heard that. Are there sins in my life I need to get rid of? I need to deal with them right away."

I mean, it sounds so simple, but apparently it wasn't simple. I mean, most of the Jews at this time wouldn't do it because they just wouldn't listen. So when Jesus told them to repent, they said, "We don't need to do that." And when He said, "believe" they shrugged Him off. They said, we've heard this all before. In fact, historians have determined there were several million Jews living in Israel at this time. How many disciples that He picked? Twelve out of over a million. You know why? Well, one reason is because most of the rest of the country ignored Him. They shrugged Him off. But these men responded differently because they were humble.

Just to show you how humble the disciples were. In my studies this week, I came across a letter that really highlights this. It was created by a fictional company that was hired to do a professional evaluation of the 12 apostles. And maybe you've heard of this before but let me just read to you what it says. This is the company writing to Jesus. This made-up company It says,

Dear Jesus, thank you for submitting the resumes of the 12 men that you've picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have taken our battery of tests, and it's the opinion of our staff that most of your nominees for discipleship are not qualified. For example, Simon Peter is emotionally unstable. That's an understatement, isn't it? Andrew has absolutely no leadership abilities whatsoever. The two brothers James and John are selfish and prone to violence. Thomas is depressed and doubts everything. Matthew is a tax collector and barred from the synagogues. James, the son of Alphaeus, is a political dissident with radical leanings who's probably committed murder. But there's one candidate who shows great potential. You know who it is? Judas Iscariot. He's a man of ability and resourcefulness. He makes a good impression and has a keen eye for business and money management. We highly recommend you hire him immediately.

It's probably not what you're expecting, was it? Right, the rest of the world would have looked at these guys and said they're losers. There's only one that would amount to anything. It's Judas. What did Jesus say? He said, "I know they're losers. I don't care. They're humble. That's what I'm looking for. They listen." Listen friends, you can be a loser and be saved if you listen. And you can be a nobody and follow Christ if you're humble. Not if you don't. If you're not humble, you can be the greatest rabbi in the world. Jesus doesn't want you. It all goes back to this.

This is important because most of us grew up in church and we've listened to so many sermons that we're used to just shrugging it off, ignoring it. I've heard that before. That's dangerous. It's very dangerous to have that attitude. You don't want to do that. Following Christ begins when you listen.

That brings us to another lesson we learn about following the Lord from the lives of these men. And that is that following Jesus always leads to action. It begins when you listen, but it always leads to action and obedience. Because as these men heard Jesus preaching, they didn't just sit there and do nothing with it. When the Lord called them, they went.

And at this point in the sermon, I need to stop for just a moment and say a few words about where this occurs. Because verse 16 says, if you follow along in your Bibles here, as Jesus was preaching in the land of Galilee, going from place to place, by the way Nazareth was in Galilee. So this is essentially His backyard. Some believe 90% of his ministry occurred in Galilee, or 90% of His life anyway. He comes to a specific landmark, and that is the Sea of Galilee. See that word there? That's going to play a major part in this story, so we need to understand what Mark is talking about. If you remember previously, in our sermons on John the Baptist, I told you about another body of water called the Dead Sea. Remember that place? It's a body of water located 20 miles east of Jerusalem. I'm not sure if this is east, but in my

map in my head, this is East. It was called dead because it was full of salt, nothing lived in it. The Sea of Galilee, or you could call it the Lake of Galilee, is different because it's not salty at all. It's a body of water located 70 miles north of Jerusalem, that only had fresh water in it causing it to be home to more than 20 different species of fish, which were caught at the risk of your life by the way. Because the sea itself rests 700 feet below sea level, and some of the hills on one side are 2,000 feet above it. Now if you do the math there, that's a massive drop. That causes sudden storms to appear on the water as the cooler air of the Mediterranean hits the warmer air down below. If you read through the Gospels, and you come across times when the disciples are out in the water, and they just get caught in a storm. You think these guys are bad fishermen. Well, no, that's the way that the geographic area was set up. There's nothing they could do about that. Apparently, the people thought the risk was worth it because fishing was a major industry there. The first century historian Josephus said, "Anytime you look on Lake Gennesaret, or the Sea of Galilee, you can see as many as 250 fishing boats out there catching anything from sardines to carp to tilapia, which they would take and sell at the markets of Bethsaida, which means house of fish. Or they would sell it at a place that's lesser known called Tarichaea which means place of fish. Some of the merchants would take those fish all the way to Jerusalem, there are some stories that they would even salt them down and stick them in boats and sell them in Rome.

With that said by way of background, verse 16 tells us as Jesus is going along this body of water, He saw Simon and Andrew because He's looking for them. That's why He came to the Sea of Galilee on this day because He knew that's where He would find them. Because the end of the verse says they're fishermen. And when it says that he's not saying they're hobby fishermen who go down to the Vedder river after work and drop a line in the water. They're commercial fishermen, full time fishermen, they fish for a living from a boat that was a little larger than two pickup trucks worth in size and propelled by oars on the side. They found the remains of one of these boats in Israel, they believe it was from the first century, it was sunk down in the mud. But it would be propelled by oars, you could raise a mast and the wind would catch the sails, which Simon and Andrew aren't using at this time because the middle of the passage says they're casting a net into the sea. That means the boat is sitting idle while they're doing this with a big net that you would throw so that it unfolds in the air and lands flat on the water surface. And then as the edges sink to the bottom, because there were weights around the perimeter of this massive net 20 feet wide, it would catch whatever fish were swimming underneath it. Then one of the two men or however many men are in the boat would dive into the water whereby they would pull the bottom of the net closed using a rope and haul it back with the help of the boat. Which is quite an ordeal as you can imagine. I mean that net would get really heavy if it's full of fish. But the picture Mark is giving you here is of two hard working men. Again, whenever you read the gospels, you can get the wrong impression about these guys that they're just lazy or foolish or they're not. They're very industrious individuals here. Which is why the words that Jesus said to them would have hit them like a ton of bricks in verse 17. When it says "And Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me.'"

Now there's been some debate as to why He says this to them at a moment like this when they're fishing, but the reason could be because He wants them to feel the full weight of what He's telling them. When

Jesus says Follow Me, He means Follow Me and leave that behind. Follow Me and get out of the boat. Follow Me and lay down the nets. Follow Me and give up your former way of life that you've worked so hard to establish for yourself all these years. Follow Me and lose everything but Me.

Anytime somebody wanted to follow a teacher like Jesus in the first century, who traveled so much, you couldn't do it from a distance, you had to literally follow them. They didn't have radios back then, no podcasts. If you wanted to hear His sermons, you had to go wherever He went, live with them, eat with them and sleep nearby. That's the call here. You've probably seen pictures of a teacher in the Middle East walking with his disciples through the fields and kind of explaining things as they go. That's the concept here.

If you notice in the verse, it says, "Do this, and I'll make you fishers of men." Which means do this, and I'll change your profession from catching fish to catching sinners. That phrase was used at this time to describe the office of a pastor or evangelist because that's what evangelists do. They throw out their nets and they catch lost souls. They do this with the Word of God and try to rescue people with it. And I don't know about you, but when I read this, in my mind, I would expect the next words to be, "No thanks. Because Jesus, you know how long it took us to build up this business? You know, how much boats cost nowadays, Jesus? Nets? I had to buy a spot in the water, had to compete with that guy, I can't give that up and become a pastor. Right? What's wrong with You?" Look at what the next verse says. It says, "Immediately." Mark loves that word. Immediately, instantly, right away, they left their nets, and followed.

And to be honest, it's kind of hard to put yourself in their minds as they did this. What are they thinking about? Let me just say if you are a Jew back then and a rabbi came to you and said, "Follow me." What would you be thinking about? Follow the law. All right. Follow the commandments. Go to the temple, make a sacrifice, visit a priest. What does Jesus say? He says, "Follow Me." Don't follow the law first. Don't follow the commandments first. Fix your eyes in My direction. What does Jesus want from them here? He wants total obedience. What is He telling Simon and Andrew to do? Submit yourselves entirely to My hands. I'm not telling you where you're going. I'm not showing you where the road leads. Wherever I say, that's where it goes. The call here is to make Jesus Lord of everything.

If you say that sounds serious, when we're talking about salvation, it is very serious. And if you think that's too much, let me remind you, it's not too much because Jesus said this sort of thing over and over again in the Bible. For example, if you want to keep your finger in Mark 1 for a moment, look over in Mark 2:14. Because there it tells you about another time when Jesus called a disciple named Matthew, a tax collector. He's probably the most hated person in Israel in the first century. They hated these guys. And listen to what He says to him. Says, "As He passed by. He saw Levi Matthew, the son of Alphaeus, sitting in the tax booth. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.'" Does that sound familiar? Yeah. It's the same call He gave to Simon and Andrew. Word for word. Jesus didn't tone it down because Matthew was a tax collector. He didn't soften the blow because this is a wicked evil man. And He said, why he probably can't do this. He said, If you want to be saved and be an apostle you need to do exactly what they did.

If you want another example, look over in Mark 8:34. Now you're going to see Jesus going from the 12 disciples so that He says this to the crowds. As you read the first passages I just showed you, you might say, "Well, that's the apostles, Pastor Jeremy, I'm not an apostle." Okay. We'll look at what He says to the ordinary Jews, says And He summoned the crowd together with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." That couldn't be any stronger. Because now He says not only do you have to follow, you have to take up your cross. And they all knew what that meant. They'd seen someone crucified before; you've never seen that. They'd seen a man take up his cross and go die. Jesus says, "That's what being My disciple will be like. It will be brutal, excruciating, and painful."

Just to give you one more instance of this in Mark 10:21. This is where Jesus meets the rich young ruler. And the guy says, I've kept all the commandments. By the way, he's a pretty deceived individual. But Jesus looks at him, He feels a love for him, cares about him and says, "One thing you lack, go and sell all you possess, give to the poor, you will have treasure in heaven and come Follow Me."

Whether you're rich or not, you follow Me, whether you think you've kept these commandments or not, you follow. You can't do whatever you want to and go to heaven. You can't live however you please and be saved. You have to let Me lead you. That's the only way it works. Give up everything for Me.

The reason I'm making such a big deal of this is that there's a movement out there right now called the Free Grace Movement. Now free grace is a term that can be kind of confusing. It doesn't mean free grace, like the reformed theologians would preach, it means that God's grace is so free you don't have to repent to get it or let Jesus lead you or follow. You can just live your life of sin and be saved. It's also called the doctrine of Carnal Christianity, which says there's two types of Christians. There's the carnal, and there's the spiritual. Let me ask you, as you read this in here, where do you see that? You don't. Where does Jesus give you two types of Christians in the Gospel of Mark? There's not, there's one: they follow.

In fact, these men, if you want to go back to Mark 1, church history says, they followed Jesus everywhere from this point onwards. After leaving this boat, they're going to follow Jesus around the Sea of Galilee. They're going to follow Him around Israel. When the Lord dies and is resurrected, they're going to follow Him into other countries to spread the word or to other towns in Israel. And they'll eventually follow Him to martyrdom. That's how Simon and Andrew are going to die, they're both going to die on a cross because they will follow Him there. And it makes you say, what an amazing faith. Let me remind you, it starts with something simple. They just get out of the boat, and follow, one small step of obedience. In fact, if you would have been standing by the shores of the Sea of Galilee on this day, this is what you would have seen, you would have seen Jesus approach these two men and have a conversation with them. And then He would do this. And they would do that. They're not leading the way. They're not calling the shots. They're following.

I think so many times we make it harder than this because we read a passage like this one, and we say, “I can't do this. I'm not that holy.” Yeah, you can. Can you follow? Anybody can follow. Old people can follow. Young people can follow. A two-year-old can follow, maybe not a two-year-old. Bad example, but you get the idea. Charles Spurgeon used to say, “It doesn't take a lot of skills to follow. You don't have to go to college or graduate school, look to Jesus and go.” That's what these men did. What an encouraging story.

It brings you to one more lesson we're learning about following Christ from these guys. Let me remind you of the other two. The first one that we learned is that following Jesus begins when you listen. And you're humble. You take His word to heart. Secondly, it always leads to action and the action is so simple here. They just put down their nets and follow. Now they're going to put down those nets and stumble from time to time, let me tell you that. And they're going to step out of those boats and fall, but that's okay. They keep going. That's why they're a good example for us. Friends, there are going to be times when you stumble in the Christian life, right? And there are going to be days when you put down the nets and fall. But the trick is to keep going. Pick yourself off the ground. And by the grace of God, keep walking after Jesus. Don't give up and say, “I can't do this.” You can do it because of Him. These men are proof of this.

And it brings you to one more lesson we learn about following Christ from their lives, and that is that it established a pattern. The third lesson we learn about following Christ from these men, is that it's going to establish a pattern, which means the high call to follow Christ, it doesn't stop with Simon and Andrew. It carries over to these other men, like we just said.

And if you look down in verse 19, it says, “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.” Now I wanted to read that verse to you right away. So it's in your minds. But let me slow down briefly to explain what you're seeing here. If you remember, I just told you that people used to fish at this time by doing this and throwing a large net. So that it laid flat on the surface of the water and sank down to the bottom allowing it to catch the fish swimming underneath. But I didn't tell you those nets would often tear as they were hauled back to shore. As you can imagine, you know, the fish would swim around and pull at them, and the net would get dragged on the bottom of the lake. So it was a major part of a fisherman's job to go back and repair that. It's a painstaking process because the nets were 20 feet in diameter, causing the fisherman to have to fiddle with them for hours. I don't know if that's better than trying to fix a fishing line or not. Fishing line are the worst things in the world to try to fix. But these nets were bad too, which is what you're seeing James and John do here. Because the word mend is the Greek word *katartizō*. It's a medical term used in the first century to describe the process of mending a broken bone. Mark is using it to describe how meticulous they are about this. James and John are not fixing the nets, haphazardly, they're putting a lot of effort into this.

And if you're wondering why, it might be helpful to turn to one more passage this morning, we've been flipping around a little bit, we don't always do this. But I think this is helpful, because you need to see this from someone else's perspective. Just to add some color to this, if you look in Luke 5, this is Luke's description of this call to discipleship. And it sounds different from Mark's in some ways, but not in others. Because it seems like Mark is just summarizing this; Luke gives you the full picture. Luke 5 says,

Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little *distance* from the land. And He sat down and *continued* teaching the crowds from the boat. Now when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon responded and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say *and* let down the nets." And when they had done this, they caught a great quantity of fish, and their nets *began* to tear; so they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, to the point that they were sinking. But when Simon Peter saw *this*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and likewise also *were* James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

I wanted to read that to you because I think that fills in some of the missing pieces in the Gospel of Mark. If you want to turn back to Mark 1 now. I think that helps to see what it means when Mark says James and John were *katartizō* mending the nets, it means they're mending them after this. They're fixing them after the miracle. That's why there's so meticulous. The nets got damaged; the whole thing almost ruined them. It probably traumatized James and John as well. I mean, they gotta be thinking, "Who is this right? Who would do such a thing. We've been fishermen our entire lives, we've never seen anything like this. It's like all the fish in the sea of Galilee, got dumped at one time on our boat." I mean, in order for Jesus to do that miracle, He would have had to know where the fish were, He would have had to know where the nets would be at exactly the right moment. He would have to know the speed of the boats, the movement of the wind, the fluctuation of the waves. And that's the point; He did. He knew all of it, He's sovereign over every detail. It would have shaken these guys to the core.

Imagine Jesus going into your job and doing that in your workplace. By the way, some scholars believe that the calling of the disciples in Mark 1 and Luke 5 are not the same. They're two separate events. John MacArthur would have that view. And then others believe that they are the same. That would be the view of John Calvin and a lot of the reformers. If you have a different view on this, that's fine. Personally, I tend to agree with the Reformers on that one. I think it explains what really happens when

you see next, that immediately Jesus called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants. And they went away to follow. I think they did that because they saw the miracle and they couldn't help themselves. They had to follow. What choice do you have? They look at their father and they look at Jesus and they say, "We gotta go with Him. We love our dad, love our jobs." These guys were very good at their jobs. They're mending the nets right away. Some of you are that hard working. The nets get broken, you fix it right now." What they're saying is that my love for Christ supersedes everything else in my life.

It's interesting, because James and John were a handful. I mean, if you do a study of these guys in the Bible, they're the pair that Jesus nicknamed Sons of Thunder, remember that? Because everywhere they go, the thunder rolls. They're like the two brothers that break everything in your house. And then they come into church on Sunday and say, "Good morning, Pastor Jeremy, how are you today?" That's the kind of guys they were. They wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans when they rejected Jesus. They are the ones whose mother asked Jesus if they could sit by Him in the kingdom. That's their attitude in life. Are the Samaritans giving you trouble? Burn them! Are there two seats open in the kingdom? We'll take them. But like Simon and Andrew, they had an amazing love for the Lord. And that's why Christ chose them.

And at this point, I want to point out to you that this is it. I mean, this is as far as Mark goes into naming the first disciples in this chapter. He's going to go on and describe other ones in the rest of the Bible, and he'll say lots about the disciples. You're going to be reading about them continually in this study. But at this point, this is where the calling stops. And it shows you this is an unusual group. It's not what you would have expected. Where's the rabbis? Where's the priests? You see any Levites in here, Sadducees, Pharisees, Herodians? Any rich people, politicians? They're not in here because Jesus wants to send the message to the religious establishment of the time. "I'm not going to build my kingdom with you. I'm going to build it with them." Fishermen. Who would have thought of starting a church with fishermen?

One commentator said that Judaism of this time had become a corruption of the true one. It had begun to trade grace for works. And so in choosing the 12 disciples, Jesus is in effect, rebuking that and sending a message to everyone. If you want to be part of what He's building, you have to look like them, sinners saved by grace. Nobody would have looked at the disciples and said these guys are special. They're ordinary. That's the point.

And having said that, I really can't in this sermon without going back to the way we started in just asking you the question. Are you a disciple today? Are you a follower of Jesus? I asked if you believe in God, asked if you followed. And I don't want to know if you know about Jesus Christ because you've read the Bible. I want to know if you've ever intentionally, personally deliberately made this decision to give your life to Him and pursue Him to the ends of the earth. Wherever He leads you go. I ask you that because you can't make up your own ideas about Jesus and be saved. You have to believe what's taught about Him in the Bible. And the Bible says right here, His followers follow Him. That's the way it

works. So the issue is, are you doing that? So when you come to something like your marriage, can you say you're following Christ there? Even though it's hard, even though it's not easy? Are you making an effort every day to honour Him in the way you interact with your spouse? Or when it comes to something like work, are you doing it at work? So when you go into the office on Monday morning, it's not just about money, money, money with you; you're interested in something greater: the glory of God, even at the workplace. And when it comes to your kids, are you making an effort to train them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord? I'm asking you that because you have to. If you confess to be a Christian, you don't have a choice because remember, all that belongs to Him. There's no corner of life over which Jesus cannot reach out and say, "Mine. Your marriage is Mine. Your job Mine. Your kids, Mine. Your life is Mine." That's why you take it so seriously.

I feel like I need to say that because there's a danger in studying a passage like this. And that is that some of you are going to read this story, and say, "That's great for Simon and Andrew, but that's not for me. And it's wonderful they made such a decision to follow Christ like they did, but I don't want to do that. I want to believe in Him and follow later. If you're saying that this morning, I want to say something to you. And I want you to listen very closely. You ready? You can't do that. It's not an option. You can't say, "I'll put my faith in Him now and follow later." You follow Him now or you can't have Him at all. Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, He will keep My word and My Father will love him." But the flip side of that is that if you don't, He won't. If you don't love Him, keep his word and follow, God will have nothing to do with you in a salvific sense. Listen, friends, your salvation is free. And it's a gift that you do not earn. Jesus Christ paid it all. But at the same time, if you want it, it will cost you everything you have. What did He tell the rich young ruler? Go and sell your possessions and follow. What did He tell Matthew? Get out of the tax collectors booth. Can't stay in there and be my disciple. Get out. What is He telling you? Fix your marriage, shepherd your kids, learn how to be a good testimony at work, so you can honor Him there. You're not doing it to save yourself. You can't save yourself. You're doing it as a result of the salvation He has given. It all goes back to that.

The story is told at the time, the fourth century Pastor John Chrysostom saw a slave he knew in the marketplace. He was all dressed up one day, all cleaned off nice clothes looking very happy. And he went up to the slave and he said, "What happened to you?" He said, "I got a new master."

Friends, when you became a Christian, that's what happened to you. You got a new master. And now you need to go live like it. And the good news is that you can live like it by the grace of God and His mercy, if you call out to Him this morning.

Next week, we're going to be continuing our studies in Mark and we're going to look at the next verse is the time Jesus cast out a demon in a synagogue. Did you hear what I just said? He cast out a demon in a synagogue. How did it get there? Well, that's what we're going to talk about next week. So come back next time. And we'll study that. It's a very interesting passage, and the Lord will use it to edify His church I trust. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, these are very sobering things we're considering today, but they're very good things to see how the Lord Jesus Christ interacted with normal people. He gave them the chance of a lifetime, and that is to be saved, born again, converted, life turned upside down, sins forgiven, iniquities covered if they follow. Lord, may that be a reminder to all of us today. Lord, many of us have been Christians for so many years, and it can be easy to get distracted, and want to follow other things. We want to follow the world, follow the culture, follow sin, follow compromise. We just need to follow Christ. May You remind us of that this morning.

Lord, and as we consider the high calling, I pray this sermon would have been an encouragement to all those who are born again. Lord, that their life has to be lived in continual pursuit of one thing, and that is Jesus. There's nothing else. Our jobs aren't that important. Our goals in life and our pursuits and hobbies are simple things. They're not worth pursuing like this. This is on the top shelf. Would we remember that this morning?

And if there's any who are lost today because they've not trusted in Christ, and as they're looking at their lives and saying, "My life is definitely not going in the direction of Christ. It's going in a whole different area," Lord, would You draw them to the Saviour this morning, so that they can be saved?

Father, thank You for Christ. We're just here in the very first pages of this book and we've already learned so much about who He is, His greatness and goodness and glory. We will look forward to learning so much more in the weeks ahead. May He be glorified in this study? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.