



Mark 3:7-19
Called To Be With Jesus

Summary: Jesus calls us to spend time with Him before giving us anything else to do.

If you're like most people, even many church people, you have some thoughts and ideas about God and about yourself, but they're not always clear and they're not always correct. So, if you leave here this morning knowing only one thing, I hope you know: God wants to spend time with you. This is actually the entire point of the Christian faith.

If you'll allow me to grossly oversimplify things, Christians believe God created people to take care of this planet and enjoy a relationship with Him. But pretty early on we decided we didn't need Him telling us what to do or how to do it and we rebelled assuming we know what's best. The problem is, we don't, and now all the negative things we experience in life from anxiety to depression, to fighting and friction in our relationships, to diseases, natural disasters, and eventually death, all of this is the result of turning our back on God.

And yet, instead of retaliating, or leaving us alone with the consequences, God offers to help us. He calls us back into relationship with Him through the gospel – the good news that Jesus hit the reset button – that He is rebuilding our relationship with God, rebuilding our relationships with other people, rebuilding us, and one day He'll rebuild this planet and those who love and prioritize God will live in perfect peace again, forever.

Said another way, everything that is wrong in your life has its roots in being separated from God. So, His great goal is to reverse the trend, drawing us closer and closer to Himself. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter if you're here because you came on your own or because someone asked you to come, or drug you here. It doesn't matter what you've done in the past or who you think you are. My assignment is to tell you: God wants to spend time with you.

Turn with me to Scripture and you'll see what I mean.

When we jump in this morning we pick up where we left off last week. You remember Jesus has been gaining a lot of attention for both His message and His miracles. That's caused conflict with the Pharisees, but it's also captured the attention of the common people, a fact which is causing its own problems as the crowds begin to swell.

Mark 3:7 But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. (That's the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel) **And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea 8 and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him.**

The point is word is getting out about Jesus and people are walking for days to come see Him.

9 So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him.

People are pushing and jostling to try to get near Jesus. After all, this is the guy who has healed people of leprosy and all kinds of other injuries and illnesses – all without asking for a referral or co-pay. People are desperate to see Him and touch Him. But desperation can be dangerous, especially in large crowds.

You could be knocked down and trampled in a crowd of this size – **crushed** is the word Mark uses and it's the same word used for crushing grapes to get the juice. Not a pretty picture, right? So, Jesus taught with His back to the water and one of the disciples was behind Him in a small boat so Jesus had an escape route if necessary.

10 For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. 11 And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." 12 But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.

13 And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him.

We learn from Luke's gospel that Jesus spent the night alone in prayer up on the mountain. And after that extended time of prayer, He's ready to take a significant step in His ministry, calling certain people to be with Him.

14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, 15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: 16 Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; 17 James the *son* of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"; 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the *son* of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite 19 and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

Now, the number twelve might be familiar to you, because you've heard it before, but it's actually very significant and full of meaning. As part of His plan to reverse the course of our lives and re-establish relationship with mankind, God had chosen a man by the name of Abraham and promised to use him to establish a nation. Well, Abraham had a son named Isaac. Isaac had a son named Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. And he had twelve sons, who had families of their own which became the nation of Israel – a special nation established by God meant to have a special relationship with Him.

The problem was, even though God was trying to re-establish relationships and bless this nation, they repeated the choices of their ancestors and wandered away from God. I'm leaving out a LOT of details here, but basically, as a result of their repeated drifting away from God, the nation broke apart. Ten of the twelve tribes were conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC and basically lost to history forever. The tribes of Benjamin and Judah lasted a little longer because they drifted a little slower, but eventually, in 586 BC they were also conquered by the empires of modern-day Iran and Iraq.

They spend 70 years in captivity but were eventually allowed to return to their homeland, because God hadn't given up on the possibility of restoring relationships, even with people who perpetually turn away from Him.

That's roughly the background of where things are when Jesus shows up on the scene. What remains of the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are back living in the land that God gave to their forefathers, but they're nothing like the twelve tribes that God led out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. They're nothing like the united kingdom God once established and prospered under King David.

So, imagine the shock when this miracle worker from Galilee, whose family can trace its roots back to King David, begins to announce that God is building a new kingdom only, it's not the Kingdom of Israel, it's the Kingdom of God. And then that miracle worker calls twelve men to form the core of a special community. It's all meant to show that what's happening right now is a continuation of what God has always been doing.

Oh, and by the way, did you notice, that Jesus is not one of the twelve? That's super, super, important because it's signaling – He's not just one of the leaders chosen to help re-establish things. God called the twelve tribes of Israel into a relationship with Himself. Now, Jesus is calling these twelve men into a relationship. They're the community, He's God.

There are other similarities as well. For instance, there was nothing special about Abraham when God called him – that was kind of the point. It wasn't about him; it was about what God would do through him. And there's nothing special about these men either. They've often been referred to as 'twelve ordinary men.'

A few years ago, a friend, someone from this church, went into the FBI and invited me down to Quantico for his graduation. I remember being stunned by the accomplishments of these brand-new agents. They were former district attorneys, criminal detectives, CPAs, combat veteran helicopter pilots, and my friend, a Marine who had been a guard at Camp David, the Presidential Retreat compound and then commissioned and spent several years as a Communications Officer. In other words, these men and women were already well established in previous careers and now they were being selected to serve in the FBI as entry-level special agents.

The twelve men Jesus called had far less impressive resumes. No one was selected because of their proven track record or potential for future performance. They weren't religious

scholars, or from famous families. None were noted for their exceptional leadership ability or talent of any kind. Even after they joined Jesus, some were never heard of again. We know what happened with Peter, James, John, and even Judas, but men like Thaddeus and Simon kind of fade into the background of history.

Even the guys you're familiar with aren't that amazing. Peter denies Jesus three times publicly. James and John ask if they can call down fiery judgment on a Samaritan village that doesn't receive them with hospitality. Thomas doubts the resurrection. Judas betrays Him. Again, this is not an all-star team.

And yet, Jesus called *these* men to Himself. In fact, it says in verse 14, He **called... those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him.** That's probably worth underlining in your Bible and coming back to. He **called those He Himself wanted.**

Now, if Jesus wanted men like this, isn't it entirely possible that He might want you? Of course it is. In fact, I have no doubt some of you are hearing His voice this morning. God is calling you closer, because He wants to spend time with you. He wants to reassure you. He wants to lead you and direct you, He wants to shape and inform your life. He wants you to be marked by your relationship with Him. So, let me point out three things we can learn about this calling.

1. The call is from authority. Jesus called **those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him.**

When you hear God's call, you need to come. Don't put God on hold. Don't ignore Him. Don't assume He means someone else. Face up to the call and answer. But let me address something head on. Responding is not always easy, don't expect it to be. Sometimes it's hard to turn to God, sometimes it's hard to follow Him, the difficulty doesn't mean you're wrong.

Let's say you also know you need to get more exercise, you know it, deeply know it. But you also know you're likely to talk yourself out of it. So, you do all these tricks you read about or hear about to boost your willpower. You put your shoes and your workout clothes in an obvious spot to remind you. Maybe you pack your bag for the gym and leave it by the front door so it's right there and easy to grab in the morning. You employ all these tricks to help you overcome the resistance to doing what, at a deep level, you know you want to do. And then, if you let yourself off the hook and don't exercise, you're disappointed in yourself.

Well, there's some spiritual parallel there. Don't assume that just because you hear God calling it's going to be easy and there won't be any opposition or that you won't talk yourself out of it sometimes. We all self-sabotage, even in the spiritual aspects of life. So don't listen to the things that are trying to talk you out of it. When God is calling you, it's because **He wants you.** The proper response is to **come.**

2. The call is to community. This is something we've been seeing a lot of lately, because it's everywhere in Scripture. Jesus calls each of these men individually, by name. But He's

not only calling them into relationship with Himself, He's calling them into relationship with each other. And that's going to be hard at times because not everyone is like you.

Jesus called [Simon the Cananite](#) – he's not someone from the land of Canaan, he's a patriot, a nationalist, your Bible may use the term zealot – he was part of a resistance movement that wanted to overthrow the Romans and now he's going to spend the next three years hanging out with Jesus AND Levi the former Roman tax collector. You know they had a few tense moments as they both learned what it meant to serve the Kingdom of God.

And yet, Jesus would later tell this diverse group of men,

[John 13:35](#) *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

They will experience a total transformation as they follow Him, it will shape not only their attitude and approach toward God but also their attitude and approach to each other. Because,

3. The call is **a call for formation**. Not ranks and columns, we're not talking about a band or a military formation, but spiritual formation – being shaped and formed by God. Scripture says He is like a potter and we are a lump of clay that He forms into something of His own desire and design.

Scripture is full of examples of God calling people to Himself and then making them something that they were not. You may remember Jesus' original call to Andrew, Peter, James and John, "[Follow Me and I will make you become fishers of men](#)" (Mark 1:17). God told Abraham follow Me and I will give you a land and make you into a nation. He told Moses, I will make you a leader of My people. He told Saul the Pharisee, 'I have appointed you as a minister of the gospel.' My friends, *God is in the business of making us what we are not* as He calls us to formation, to be formed by Him.

How does that happen? Well, I'm glad you asked, because that's what I want to point out next. Jesus calls these men to Himself so that He can give them three things: **presence, purpose, and power**.

Now, the order there is important. In fact, it's everything. Jesus calls the men to [be with Him](#), to be in His presence, then He gives them a purpose – to preach the gospel, and finally, He gives them the power to do it.

It all begins with **presence**. This is the plan. Notice with me [14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him](#). The word [that](#) is a conjunction, a linking word, it tells you why or what – and since it links two things together, I like to circle words like this in my Bible, like wrapping them with a link of chain that holds two thoughts together. He appointed the twelve [THAT they might be with Him](#).

Do you remember what we said earlier? Everything wrong with the world is a reflection of our drift away from God. But He's calling us back, He's calling us close. He's saying, come, be with Me. This is the ultimate cure for everything - to be close to Jesus in your relationships, at work, wherever you go, whatever you do - to be with Jesus, there.

That's important because Jesus isn't just calling these men to come sit with Him on the hilltop for a while. He's calling them, and us, to be with Him *in all the things of daily life*.

Over the next three years, they'll be together in storms, in crowds, while traveling, in the city, in the country, in groups with Him and in groups waiting for Him, in foreign territory like Samaria and in their hometowns, in places that thought they were heroes and places that thought they were traitorous losers, at feasts and weddings and in the wilderness with 5000 people and nothing to eat. They'll experience it all, as they spend time with Jesus.

Over time, it will have an effect. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension two of these men will be brought in by the religious authorities. One of my favorite verses in Scripture says:

Acts 4:13 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.

Time with Jesus changed their lives. That's still true today when the call to be with Jesus is more about the orientation of your heart and mind than the location of your body. Scripture tells us God is omnipresent, in other words, there is no where you can go where He can not. You can always be near God - don't think the only place to experience His presence is in some silent or distant place or up on some hilltop. He is there, but He's everywhere else too.

Some of you are getting ready to experience a significant move. You're headed cross country, or overseas, or to Hawaii (no shame, that's where God called you). Remember, Jesus is there just as much as He is here - so if He is calling you, go and be with Him. Learn to pray, Jesus show me where You are here so that I can be with You.

Which may lead you to ask well, how do I spend time with Jesus?

There are the obvious answers like, spend time reading Scripture - this is one way that God clearly speaks to you.

Ps 119:105 Your word *is* a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.

If you don't understand what it's saying ask God for help. There are going to be plenty of times when these men don't fully understand what Jesus is saying. But they stick with Him and learn.

Also, spend time in prayer. Short prayer. Long prayer. Prayer while you're not doing anything else. Prayer while you're driving or making dinner. Prayer during a meeting. Prayer when someone says "hey do you have a minute?"

Prayer is talking to God. Well, these men are going to be talking with Jesus under all kinds of circumstances, sometimes when it's quiet and no one else is around, sometimes as they're walking down the road. Talking to Jesus is going to be a normal, natural part of their lives, it should be the same for us. And as you spend time in His presence, you'll begin to discover your purpose.

The **purpose** these men were given was to share the gospel – Jesus **appointed** them as **apostles**, we would think of them as ambassadors, representatives commissioned with a message, to represent the Kingdom of God. Your purpose is going to be different. I don't know what it is but we all have one. There are things God wants to do for us, of course, but there are also things He wants to do with us and through us.

Another one of my favorite verses, one God has used to shape the course of my life is:

John 15:16 [Jesus tells these disciples] **You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.**

Jesus is asserting His authority – I called you. I'm appointing you. I have determined a purpose for your life. You don't need to figure it all out on your own.

Friends, Jesus is calling you, choosing you, because He wants you – and He is appointing specific tasks for you to take on in His name. Are you listening? And are you letting Him in? He wants to make a mark through you, at home, at work, in the lives of your kids and your clients – *He wants you to bear fruit.*

There is a divine purpose for your life. Do you know that? Do you believe it? Have you accepted it? Do you rejoice in it? God chooses you, appoints you, and He doesn't make mistakes. He calls you because He **wants** you. He calls you into to His presence, to be with Him and He gives your life purpose.

And finally, it all happens through His **power**. Jesus will give these men **power** to work miracles. He might give you the same. He might not. They're His tools, He can loan them out to whoever He wants, *but He will give you something.*

According to Scripture *every* Christian receives the Holy Spirit who is a source of wisdom, comfort, guidance, ability, and strength for the life God wants us to live. *Every single Christian* has this gift from God, there's no such thing as a Christian without the Holy Spirit. Which means there is no such thing as a Christian living on their own without access to divine power.

How could there be? Remember, Jesus calls us into His presence, gives us purpose, and equips us to operate in His power. It's who He is and what He does. It is His divine plan for human history – to draw us back into relationship with Himself. So I'm right back to where I started this morning, promising you: God wants to spend time with you. With you.

That's what life is really all about. He is calling you. Because He wants you, He has chosen you. He's calling you to be with Him, in His presence – wherever that leads, whatever else is happening and from Him to learn your purpose and receive power for it. Listen for His voice. Let Him lead. He is calling you near. Life is going to be an adventure, He wants you close at His side.

Let's pray



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Mark 3:7-19 Called To Be With Jesus

Summary: Jesus calls us to spend time with Him before giving us anything else to do.

- How have you experienced God's calling on your life?
- From your own experience, why is the order important: presence, then purpose, then power?
- How do you spend time with God, time in His presence?
 - o How does your physical environment affect that? In other words, is it easier for you to be aware of God's presence on the mountain than in daily life? What's the benefit of spending time with Jesus away from the mountaintop?
- It is possible to be with someone and yet not be with them. How often are we with people and get distracted? Is this true of your walk with God?
- Who are you with? Literally, where are your thoughts, physically, where is your body? Financial question where do you use your time and money?
- Jesus called twelve disciples to be with Himself and each other. What about being in a group helps you follow Jesus? (Who in this group helps you follow Jesus, what do you learn from them?) What are the benefits of being alone with Jesus? (Who in this group would you like to vote out so that following Jesus would be easier for you? Just kidding! Though you have to know the disciples thought about it at times. ☺)
- What have you learned about Jesus' purpose for your life? Where are you clear on it? Where are you unclear? NOTE: It may be helpful to realize that sometimes God's purpose for us is as precise as a dot and other times it's as general as a circle. So, God's purpose might be for you to become a lawyer and practice whatever kind of law captures your imagination (circle). Or His purpose might be for you to become a missionary, as a pilot, flying in East Africa (dot).