

Mark 1:14-20

Date: Sunday, 3 January 2021

Scripture: Mark 1:14-20

Sermon: Following Jesus

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Passage

Mark 1:14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Mark 1:16 Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

Transcript

The Kingdom of God

Well, 2021 has come now, 2021 has drawn near, we are now in a new year. Rachel earlier this week asked me whether I had any New Years resolutions. And I wonder whether you have made some for yourself? Maybe it's health, fitness, food, family

or friends. But I wonder, whether we make resolutions for the New Years for our relationship with Jesus?

As you know, we're going through the gospel of Mark. And we're told here in verse 14 and 15, that Jesus after he's been baptised by John, that he goes out to preach the gospel of God. He declares this, have a look with me.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;" Mark 1:14-15 (ESV)

Do you notice what Jesus proclaims? He says that the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Or to put it in another way, the kingdom of God is near. To declare that God, the king, is near simply means that he is fulfilling his promises. The good news of God involves the fact that the promises made in the Old Testament are now being fulfilled.

With the kingdom of God near, just like 2021 is upon us, we are to respond. What we see in this passage is Jesus calling people to follow him as king. What we see in this passage is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. So I thought that as we start this new year, I thought it would be good to lay down the challenge of following Christ. And from the passage, I want to draw out three basic things that we are to do as disciples of Jesus. Jesus himself calls his disciples to do these things. These are three basic things we are to do as followers of Jesus Christ.

We are to firstly, repent.

Secondly, believe.

Thirdly, disciple.

Repent, believe, disciple.

Repent

Let's have a look at the first one. Repent for Jesus. Verse 14-15.

*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.**" (Mark 1:14-15 ESV)*

Jesus calls us to repent. I alluded to this last week, for us to enter into the kingdom of God, we are called to repent. In other words, Jesus calls us to change our minds. We are to stop living lives for ourselves, and we are to live lives for Jesus, the king. We are to live lives as his servants.

Repentance involves a number of things. I've got four things about repentance.

Firstly, repentance is turning from sin. The Scriptures tell us to turn away from evil, to stop sinning. We are told that we are to stop doing evil. For example, Stephen tells a crowd in Acts 8,

Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. (Acts 8:22 ESV)

Repenting means turning away. Maybe you're someone who has chosen not to follow Christ. Can I encourage you, that those who don't follow Christ, those who don't repent will not be spared the wrath of God? Maybe you thought you were a Christian, but you realise that you're not. Can I encourage you, it's not too late to turn to Jesus Christ.

Secondly, repentance is not just once off. I suspect, though, the majority of people that I'm talking to here have trusted in Jesus Christ. When you decided to put your trust in Jesus, you repented. You might have been at a Billy Graham conference and you said the prayer of repentance. Did you know that repentance isn't a once off thing? It's a continuous thing that happens in our lives. When Mark uses the word repentance, he's actually using a form of the word that means to continue to repent. It's repentance on an on-going basis. We repent whenever we are confronted with our sin. We keep turning from our selfish ways. Jesus, then, encourages us to continue repenting as a life long act of worship. Let me lay this challenge down, How often do you repent in your prayers? Sometimes, I believe that God brings to mind things that we may have done where we have wronged him. It's an opportunity for us to confess them, to repent, to turn away from them.

Thirdly, repentance is about godly sorrow. And let me ask, do we have godly sorrow over our sins? Paul talks about the need to have a sorrow from God.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:10 ESV)

When I was younger, I would say sorry to a person. Not because I was actually sorry, but because I was caught. The type of sorrow that I felt wasn't because I felt bad about the way that I had treated a person. Repentance is the same. Repentance because we've been caught is not true repentance. True repentance comes from the fact that we mourn because we've hurt God because of our sins. Do we see that our sin hurts God?

Fourthly, repentance starts with the mind.

It's kind of like what Paul talks about in Romans 12 when he talks about not being conformed to the ways and patterns of this world, but instead, through the renewing of our mind, you are being transformed so that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable and perfect. Let me ask, how often do you immerse yourself in the Word? If you're not letting the Word of God change you, then the world is going to change you. It's like you're swimming upstream, if you stop, the current, the world is going to drag you back.

Believe

But the second thing that a follower of Jesus does is believe. Again from verse 15, we're told to repent and believe in the good news.

When I hear believe, I'm tempted to think that believe is just mental assent. Like, I know that $1+1=2$. It's possible to believe that Jesus existed, it's possible for us to believe that Jesus walked on earth, but at the same time, not trust in him with our lives. So when the Scriptures talk about believe, it's not just a mental thing. Belief is not a mental thing, if I could describe it, it's more of a commitment. Commitment to the good news of Jesus Christ. J.C. Ryle, 19th century Anglican pastor, says this about this passage. "Have we laid hold on Christ, and believed? We may reach heaven without learning, or riches, or health, or worldly greatness."

I suspect that many of us here do put our trust in Jesus. But I want to challenge you about your commitment to Jesus.

Recently, we were at Kirrawee South Village ordering take away food. All of a sudden, the fire alarms go off. Evacuate. Evacuate. Did you know what I did? I just stood there thinking to myself, "If I have to evacuate, I'm going to lose my food." That was just ridiculous! But that's the exact thought that went through my head.

Let me ask you, Did I believe the fire alarm? No. I didn't trust it. I didn't want to lose my food. Which is absurd considering I could have lost my life. There was no fire by the way, it was a false alarm.

We do that with Jesus. We believe that Jesus exist, but we don't trust him with our life. I loved John's prayer last week when he said, "Let's trust in Jesus. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else." That's such an apt saying because what we do is we trust in Jesus + something else. What's the something else you've trusted in? Maybe it's money. It's how big your savings account, your retirement savings are, or even your house. Maybe you trust in Jesus + your smarts. Maybe it's Jesus + your good looks. You say to yourself, "Well if Jesus doesn't come through with me, (fill in the blank) will never let me down." Maybe it's "Jesus + church service + prayer meeting + bible study." Don't get me wrong, church services, prayer meetings, bible studies, aren't bad. But that's not what saves you. What saves you is Jesus Christ alone. What makes you a disciple, a follower of Jesus is that you repent and believe the good news of Jesus Christ. His life, death and resurrection. But you might be attending church service, prayer meetings and bible studies thinking that you are saved, but if you have not thrown your commitment behind Jesus then it's nothing.

When we read through Acts of the Apostles, we're confronted by disciples who follow the risen Lord Jesus. And I am astounded by their commitment to Jesus. For example, Stephen in Acts 7 and 8. Here is a man who was chosen as a deacon for the church, and yet he speaks by the Holy Spirit. But what strikes me is his willingness to speak for Jesus without fear of people. So much so that he's willing to die for Jesus. That's what believing the gospel of Jesus Christ can look like. Mind you, in our country, we don't get persecuted that the point of death. But I wonder whether our belief in the gospel has become an intellectual one rather than a 'the house is on fire' belief and you better get out of there! I'm not saying that to be saved you must have strong faith, you are not saved by the strength of your faith. You're saved by the strength of the object of your faith, Jesus Christ. But I wonder whether we really show our belief in our actions, in our words.

Repent. Believe.

Disciple

Finally, disciple. Let's have a look at how Jesus calls his first disciples.

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. (Mark 1:16-20 ESV)

I love what Jesus says to the disciples because it's really clear. What does he say? "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." To follow Jesus, means you become a fisher of men. You help to draw people out from darkness, and into the light. That's what James and John are called to do.

To be a follower of Jesus, isn't about church services, prayer meetings, bible study meetings. These are good things. But if you had to whittle it down to the essentials, to what is absolutely necessary, it's really about repenting, believing in the good news of Jesus Christ. And then sharing that good news with other people. The reason why we get together is to encourage each other with the good news of Jesus Christ, to remind each other of it, and spur one another on in love and good deeds. The love and good deeds are done in *response* to the good news of Jesus Christ! That is what we are called to do! To make disciples of all nations.

I don't mean you need to be a missionary to another country. There are plenty of people in our backyard that need to be discipled. That need to be brought out of darkness and into the light. That need to be taught how to be a follower of Jesus. I'll give you an example. Many of you here have kids, some of you have young children. Do you know that you are helping your children to be disciples of Jesus Christ? You know, it's not primarily the church's responsibility to make your children disciples of Jesus. We only get them maybe 1-2 hours a week. The main responsibility to make disciples out of your children are you, the parents!

One of the things that I really admire about Rachel's extended family is the fact that the parents take discipling very seriously. One family, they will read the word of God right after dinner and the parents will encourage the kids to share prayer points so that they can pray for them. I'm in awe of that, and so encouraged by that. I want to encourage you to do the same, show your children Christ's love by reading God's word with them and praying for them.

And husbands here, love your wives by helping them to follow Jesus too. You can do that simply. Rachel encourages me to read a devotional book right after breakfast and then we say a short prayer.

“Oh, but I’m nothing!” You might say. Well, the disciples were nothing. The disciples were fishermen. They were common men (Acts 4:13). What is necessary? Do you see how the disciples respond to Jesus? They leave everything and follow Jesus. They commit themselves to Jesus whole heartedly. I’m not saying that we leave our family, but what it says is that Jesus becomes number one. Jesus uses us, even if we’re nothing. I mean, let me ask, “Doesn’t God use the weak things of this world to shame the strong?” (1 Corinthians 1:27). Doesn’t God choose what is low and despised in the world so as to bring to nothing things that are, in order that no human being might boast in the presence of God?

I mean, there’s a plethora of people you can disciple. Can I lay down a challenge? Look out for just one person you can disciple. That’s this year’s new year’s church challenge. Find one person you can disciple. All you can do to start with is meet once a week, and read God’s word. Talk about what you are learning and finding encouraging from the word of God. And then pray for one another. Take it seriously.

Closing

I used to love my Apple products. I’ve been a Mac person for about 14 years now. I remember when I first bought my first apple product. It was the iPhone 3G. And it was amazing that I could log onto the internet, and get access to emails. It was so easy to do. I thought it was amazing. So I got myself a MacBook Pro. It was great. But what happened was I would share with others how great apple products were. Without being compelled by other people, I would tell them how much I loved Apple products.

I wonder how much I love Jesus to the point that I would share Jesus with those around me? If God would show his love to me through Jesus Christ, how much would I be willing to share the love of Jesus Christ to those around us? That we would be able to have eternal life if we only believe and repent, how much would we want to share that good news to those around us?

Let’s pray.