

Drop Your Nets and Follow Jesus

Mark 1:14-20

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Introduction

Imagine with me for a moment that it is Monday, and you are at work. Perhaps you are a doctor so you are at the hospital. Perhaps you are a carpenter so you are out on the job building a house. Maybe you are a school teacher so you are actually inside the classroom. Let's pretend that you are a doctor for a moment and you are getting ready for a procedure. You are getting ready for surgery and you are getting scrubbed in. The patient has already been sedated and is lying on the operating table. The nurses have gathered around, you have your scrubs on and your gloves ready. The moment you are about to go into the room and start this operation someone comes by the door. It is a man and you hear his voice, and he says, "Follow me". Here you are scrubbed in, ready to walk into the operating room and perform this surgery, but something about this man and his voice tells you he is not just a mere man. Suddenly in the midst of doing what you do as a doctor, (you are where you are supposed to be, and doing what you are supposed to do) something in your heart convinces you that the only proper response to this man's command to follow him is to drop everything you are doing and walk out and follow him. So immediately you take off the scrubs and gloves. The nurses and everyone are shocked as they watch you walk out of the OR and follow this man who has just commanded you to follow him. Perhaps you are a teacher, you are in the classroom teaching and this guy comes by the door

and says, "Follow me". Your response is to walk out of the classroom and follow him. You are on the job, you are building a house and this guy commands you to follow him, and you lay down the hammer and follow after him. This would be crazy right? This would be something that we would say would be completely out of the normal. A lot of times our occupation is who we are. It is not that we operate on people; it is that we are doctors. It is not just that teach students; it's that we are teachers. That which we do becomes part of our identity, so to leave that behind to follow this guy who says to follow him would be absolutely crazy. But what we are going to see in Mark chapter 1 is that we meet 4 men who do this very thing. They abandon everything they know because this guy says to follow him.

Scripture

"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.' 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."

Fishermen

So in the text we are introduced to these 4 guys. We have Simon, whose name Jesus later changed to Peter. We have Andrew, James, and John. It says that Jesus 1st encounters Andrew and Peter (Simon) and they are fishing. But they are not fishing because it is their day off and they want to enjoy a recreational activity like a lot of us do. No, it says these men were fishing because they were fishermen. In other words, fishing is not just

something they did, fishing is who they are. They are fishermen; fishing is part of their identity, an extension of who they are.

Simon and Andrew are called

So here you have Simon and Andrew who are fishing, and it says they are actually casting out their nets in the Sea of Galilee. Now the Sea of Galilee was a sea (during that time) that had a lot of fish. It was a very lucrative business so a lot of people were fishermen. It was not something that would make you rich and famous but you could provide a good living for your family. Andrew and Simon decide that is what they are going to do with their lives to provide for their families. Now Simon and Andrew were casting out their nets, and that is a little different than how we fish today. When we think of someone fishing we envision someone getting in a bass boat and going 90 MPH down KY Lake to their favorite fishing hole. They get out an array of rods and reels, and all kinds of tackle and bait. They cast a line out with a baited hook and then they reel it in, or they have a trout line. But in Jesus' day and time, they would fish by casting out a net.

Now I have actually seen this type of fishing. It is one of those vivid memories that I have, and it was when I was in the country of Brazil on a mission trip. There was a man who was fishing in the Amazon River in this way, casting out a net. This guy, you could tell, was a fisherman. He knew what he was doing. When he would pull the net in he would take the fish out, and then he would fold the net in a certain way, and he had this whole routine on how he would throw it out. I thought to myself I could never do what this guy was doing. It was just amazing watching him fish! One of the reasons it is so engrained in my memory is because as he was fishing I was bathing in the Amazon River. You see the boats we were on have showers, but if you have been to Brazil you know the humidity is very high. So what happens when you take a shower is you start sweating profusely as soon as you get out of the shower. So it was almost counterproductive to take a shower. What most of us did was to get our swimming trunks on and jump into the Amazon River with a bar of soap and shampoo for our

daily bath. So here we are taking our daily bath, and we see this guy fishing just about 50 yards upstream from us. I notice, as he is pulling in his net, that there are a few fish that he is handling with care as he throws them out. I enquire to what kind of fish this man is throwing away with such delicacy, and one of the workers on the boat says those are the piranhas...so let me just say that was the quickest bath I have ever taken in my life! I do not even think I covered behind my ears or anything. I was just getting out of the water and into the boat! So I vividly remember how this guy fished because all of a sudden it seemed like my life was somewhat on the line!

This is how these people would have fished during that time. So here are Andrew and Simon in the boat and they have just cast out their nets. They had just thrown their net out in the sea. So perhaps you can envision that their net has just hit the water, maybe it is sinking a little bit. Perhaps there are fish that are being drawn into the net and they are going to catch a big school of fish. But in the midst of this, all of a sudden they hear a voice. The voice says, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men". Now here are Simon and Andrew fishing. This is what they do, this is who they are, and this man has approached them on the shore with a divine command. And we could sort of imagine what is going to happen, right? We know some background about Jesus, He was a carpenter. And here is this carpenter walking along the sea yelling at 2 fishermen to come with Him and He would teach them how to fish for men. You could imagine these 2 might laugh, or just politely tell this guy to get lost because they are fishermen. This is what they do...so go build a house or something! But what happens? It says that immediately Simon and Andrew, do not pull their net in, they do not put the fish away, they just leave their nets. They are in mid cast, the net is falling down, but upon hearing this Man's voice they all of a sudden believe that the only proper response to what this guy just said is to leave everything and follow after Him.

James and John are called

So now Jesus goes and walks a little further down the sea. So we have Jesus with Simon and Andrew following behind Him. That is what discipleship means, it means to come along, to follow after Jesus. Then Jesus comes upon another group of men who are fishing; James and John. They too are fishermen, that is part of their identity, it is who they are, they are doing what they do, they are fishing. But the difference in James and John is there are not actually in the act of casting, they are in the act of mending the nets. You see part of fishing is to take care of your equipment. The tool for a fisherman in that day was his net. You constantly had to mend, clean, and maintain your net. You had to take good care of it. Perhaps there was a tear in the net; it had just gotten caught on a reef. So John and James are now repairing this net. They are taking time because the net is important to them. The net, in a way, is an extension of who they are because they are fishermen.

You see, I can identify with John and James because I too have been in the business of mending. For a few years of my life I raced motocross. There was a point in which I reached the semi-professional level. Now what I mean by semi-professional is that racing paid for the bills, just not all of them...so I made a little bit of money but definitely not enough to make a living. But I was still at the level where I could call myself a motocross racer; that is who I was, that is what I did. So for me, a dirt bike was not just a dirt bike. No my dirt bike was an extension of who I was, it was part of me. So I spent countless hours mending my dirt bikes. After I would ride I would have to clean them, and labor to wash them. I would have to constantly maintain them, whether it was putting a piston in or changing the tires; I was always mending my bikes. Then of course I crashed a lot which meant I had to repair them quite a bit, but there was constant mending of my motorcycles. There reason I did this was because it was not just a bike, this bike was who I was. I was a motocross racer; this is an extension of who I was.

You see John and James are not just mending some net, this net is who they are, they are fishermen; this net is everything to them. We know something about James and John. We know that they are at least 2nd generation fishermen. You see they are in the boat with their father Zebedee. Zebedee was a fisherman, and perhaps his father and his father before him were all fishermen. Perhaps this net was Zebedee's net, maybe it was their grandfather's net. This net could have been a family net which would mean it was even more significant. But nevertheless this net was very important to them. Now the same call comes to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." And it says that they left their father in the boat, they left the nets in the boat, and they got out and followed after Jesus. I mean I hope you see how radical this is, how strange this seems for us. We have these men who obviously valued their work, and their family. It is not much different than us right? We value hard work, we value family. And these men are in the family business working for their dad, perhaps living the Galilean dream. Two of the strongest ties we have in humanity are family and work, so we can identify with them. So here, on the command of this Man to follow Him, John and James break those ties, and they leave family and occupation and go follow after this Man Jesus.

Jesus Proclaims the Gospel: verses 14-15

Now here is what I want to ask this morning. What in the world caused these 4 men to lay down their nets? I want you to see that these nets were not just nets, they were who they were. These nets were their very lives. They were saying we are going to lay down who we are. We are laying down our dreams, wants, passions, and what we want for our lives. We are laying them down to follow after Jesus. So what caused them to lay down their nets, their lives, in order to follow this man Jesus? As far as we are concerned, what would cause us, as we sit in our chairs listening to this message, to lay down our nets? Whatever it is that we are holding onto that says this is our lives, our wants; this is what we are about. What would cause us to give up control of that in order to follow after Jesus? What was it? What was it about the voice of Jesus, what was it about this

man Jesus to cause them to give up everything to follow after Him? The answer is because Jesus is the King, and the kingdom of God is at hand. You see, here is what we see a few verses earlier. It says that Jesus walks into Galilee preaching the gospel of God. So He is proclaiming the good news of God, He is preaching the gospel. He says "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." In the 1st part He says "the time is fulfilled". Now what does He mean? You see that word "time" is not the Greek word [a](#)***chronos*** which means "chronology". That is a succession of events where a certain amount of hours have elapsed. No, He uses the word [b](#)***kairos***. It is kind of funny because a couple of years ago we took a group of students to a camp called x-fuge. The theme of x-fuge was ***kairos***. I had not taken Greek then so no one knew what that word meant. So it took a few sessions for us to finally get what it meant. It refers to time, but it is more than just a succession of events. It means "this season that has taken place, this special moment that is going to change everything". It is this divine moment that when this happens, everything is different. Jesus says the ***kairos*** has been fulfilled. The season where everything is different now is at hand.

The Promise of the Old Testament

So what is He referring to when He says the ***kairos***, or time, is fulfilled? He is referring back to the Old Testament. In Genesis we see our Creator who creates the heaven and the earth, who creates us good and perfect to have a loving relationship with Him. He gives us everything, He is the king, we obey under Him, and we rule the world. But instead of obeying and loving God, we decided we would try to be God. So we sinned against our Creator, we disobeyed His word. So we go from creation to "the fall" in a number of chapters. From Genesis 1 to Genesis 3 we see "the fall". Man sins against our Creator. We see in Genesis 3:15 that we get this promise that God makes. It is the very beginning of how He is going to unfold what we call redemption. The text says there will be an offspring who will be born of the woman who Satan, the serpent, is going to bruise. There will be suffering upon this offspring, but through suffering this offspring is

going to crush the serpents head. In other words, this offspring through suffering is going to defeat sin, and He is going to defeat Satan, and death for His people. We have this promise that does not go into a lot of detail, but then we march through God's redemptive revelation to Genesis 12 and see this guy named Abraham. When God shows up to Abraham He gives him a little more information. He says through your family, through your line, this offspring is going to come, and in Him all of the families of the earth are going to be blessed. Then we march a little bit further to 2 Samuel chapter 7 and get some more information. This offspring will be in the line of David, which means he will be a king. But there will be something different about Him. He will be a King of a Kingdom that is never going to end! Then it pushes forward with more information from Isaiah 7. We see that this offspring will have a different kind of birth. He is going to be born of a virgin, which means He will have no earthly father. God will be His father, He will be the God-man and we will call Him Immanuel, which means "God with us". Then we see in Micah chapter 5 that this offspring will be born in Bethlehem.

Jesus is the Promise

Now going forward to Mark, Jesus walks onto the scene and says "the time has been fulfilled". All of those promises have found their "yes" in Me. He is saying that He is that offspring who will suffer, but through His suffering, He will crush death and sin for us. He is saying He is the One who comes through Abraham, the One who comes through David, born of a virgin, and born in Bethlehem. He says I am the Messiah, I am the King. Now if the King is here, the Kingdom of God is here. Jesus rolls into Galilee and preaches the gospel. The King is here, the time has been fulfilled; the Kingdom of God is at hand! That phrase "at hand" is [^c *eggizo*](#) in the Greek. It means "to draw near". It is in the perfect tense, which means it happened in the past but the results are ongoing into the future. So Jesus is saying the Kingdom of God has already come, but because He is still on earth here, it is still here right now. It also means the Kingdom of God is still coming. You have 3 things going on at once. The Kingdom of God has

come, it is here, but it is coming still in the future. This is what people talk about when they say "the already, not yet". You see the Kingdom of God is here. When Jesus came He inaugurated the Kingdom of God. The definition of the Kingdom of God is the reign and rule of God in the hearts of men. It has a lot more to it than that but that is the basic meaning. But there is still more to come, Jesus is still coming back to inaugurate the full Kingdom where He will truly rule over all men, and all places, and all people. But Jesus says here the time is fulfilled, all of those promises of God have been fulfilled in Me. I am the King, the Kingdom is here, so here is what you need to do; repent and believe in the gospel. That is our response to the King being here, to repent and believe.

Repent and Believe

Now when it says repent and believe, it is not saying that we need to do two separate, distinct things. This is really one event with two parts. This is almost a simultaneous act. You see repenting is to turn from something. Before we come to Christ, we are living in our kingdom. It is the "me" kingdom, we live for self, we love self, we trust self, and we do everything for self. So when we get the news of a new King and a new Kingdom, we must 1st let go of our kingdom. We must let go of the kingdom of me, and as we let go, as we repent, as we turn from sin and self, then our hands are open to embrace the Kingdom of God. We embrace Jesus by believing in the gospel, by believing that His death, burial, and resurrection were enough to truly save us from our sins. He is the only source of hope; it is in Christ alone that our hope is found. You see repentance is letting go of you, and letting go of sin, and your kingdom, and embracing Jesus by faith. It is only His work on the cross that can give us salvation, only in Him that we can stand, only in Him that we can trust, and it is only in Him that we are going to live for. That is what becoming a believer is. It is repenting from sin and self and trusting Jesus, and now following Him with everything you have.

Follow Me: verses: 16-17

That is what these 4 guys in Mark chapter 1 did. So now we kind of get some of the information of why these 4 men did this thing that we at 1st thought was a little crazy. Why would 4 guys give up occupation, give up family ties, and give up their very lives in order to follow this man named Jesus? We see now it is because Jesus is the King of a new Kingdom, and this command was not just a request, it was a divine command. He is the King of the universe, and when He says to come and follow Him, the only reasonable thing for us to do is to give up everything and follow after Him. That is the only reasonable thing. You see it is not reasonable for us to say, "But I have this, I like this, so no thanks, I am going to continue with my life and my kingdom". No, He is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. So when He says come, the only proper response is for us to come. You see the reason these 4 men dropped their nets and followed is because of the authority of Jesus. He is the King and when He summons we respond.

Authority of Jesus

If you read the rest of the chapter you see that Mark is big on the authority of Jesus. From here we see Jesus is the King. We see that when He tells people to follow Him they drop everything and they respond. Next it says immediately He goes into the synagogue and begins to teach, but everyone was bewildered because He teaches differently than everyone else. The text says He teaches as one who has authority. Then it says a man with an unclean spirit comes in and Jesus rebukes it and casts out the demon. It says they were bewildered because now they see that Jesus has authority even over the demons. Then Mark immediately takes us to Peter's mother-in-law who is sick with a fever, perhaps almost dying. Jesus walks in and rebukes the fever, so He has authority even over sickness. Then immediately Mark takes us to a paralytic man where Jesus heals Him, again establishing authority over sickness, but He also tells the man his

sins were forgiven, which means He even has authority to forgive sins. You see Mark wants us to know that Jesus really has the authority to tell us to follow Him and our only response should be to follow Him. He has the authority to cast out demons, to tell sickness where it can go, and He should be able to command us. And the only proper response for us should be to follow after Him.

Drop Your Nets: verses 18-20

You see, for these 4 men to really follow after Him, they had to 1st lay down their nets. They had to 1st lay down that extension of who they were in order to follow after Jesus. So my question for you this morning is what is your net? You see, we have seen that these nets were not just a net to these guys. This net was their very life. It is who they were; it is the path they had chosen for themselves. Now Jesus says to give it up and follow Me because I have a new plan. You see these men had to give up their own path in the "me" kingdom, and lay it down in order to find out what it meant to be in Jesus' Kingdom, and to see what He had for their lives. What is that thing that you have built? What is your security? What are your dreams? What have you chosen for your life that you are holding onto? You are saying yes Jesus I will come to church on Sunday, but you cannot have this, because this is mine. I chose what I do, I chose where I live, and I chose this. I will give You some, but I will not lay this down. Jesus says no, you have to drop it. You have to lay your net down in order to truly follow after Me. I think the response, as we all lay our nets down, is that 2 things are probably going to happen. For some of us, as we turn loose of our net, that life that we have projected for ourselves, the one that we so want, as we lay it down, God will never call us back to it and we will do something completely different. Perhaps some of you God will call to leave your current job to find a new one that is more fitting in His role for your life, and for the Kingdom. For some of you God might change things about your life because He has a different plan. Jesus is asking if you are willing to do that. Are you willing to lay down your net because you believe that following Him is more rewarding than keeping your life,

and keeping what you want to do? For others of us, as we drop our net and say, I am willing to lay down the life I have projected for myself, and do whatever He wants me to do, God will tell us to pick it back up. He will tell us to keep doing the exact thing we have been doing, but to do it with a new purpose and a new passion. Do not do it for you, but do it for His Kingdom. You see for some of you, Jesus is going to tell you to go right back into the factory and do the exact thing you were doing, or to keep your small business, but to quit doing it for you and now do it for Him and His Kingdom. I do not know what Jesus has for you. Either He will say keep that life you have except do it all for My glory now, or maybe He will say no, that is the wrong plan for your life, here is your new plan. We do not know that, the only thing we can do is to just drop our nets and say Jesus here is my life. It is no longer about my kingdom, my wants, my desires, my dreams, it is about You. I believe there is more joy and reward in following You than anything I could ever do in this life, so I will follow You no matter what. Then Jesus will lead you in the way He wants you to go.

Following After Jesus

So as we do that, what does it mean to follow, or to be disciples of Jesus? From the text there are at least 2 things. The 1st is that you follow Jesus. If you say I am a Christian, you are saying you are a little Christ. You are following Him, you are pursuing what He wants with your life, and you are obeying and living in accordance with what He says. The question for us is are you really following Jesus? Right now can you really say you are pursuing, and following after Jesus? Are you pursuing His will for your life, and seeking after what He wants, not just what you want? The 2nd thing is that we will be fishermen of men. Jesus says He is calling you into His Kingdom, and one of the Kingdom agendas is that you now call other people into the Kingdom. Here is what is amazing in this text, Jesus calls 4 very common people; they were fishermen. They were not high society, they were not the ones running Galilee; they were just blue-collared workers. They were common folk. He would use average Joes to do un-average things, things that would blow the minds of the world. In fact, if

you trace these disciples into Acts, there is a point where they are coming into the city and the leader says oh no! These men who have turned the world upside-down are coming here also! Here are 4 fishermen who are nobodies, and Jesus says drop your nets, come with Me, I have a new agenda. You can be part of a Kingdom, a part of something that really matters and they said we are all in. We believe that you are the God, the Messiah, the One who has come, and the King. Through those men, Jesus turns the world upside-down. I do not know what would have happened if these 4 men had just kept fishing. Maybe they would have made Zebedee's fishing business famous. But I am sure 2000 years later we would have never heard their names. Instead, they traded their little kingdom, their little k, to be part of the big Kingdom, capital K. In the big Kingdom they lived a life that truly mattered, a life that turned the world upside-down. But it took them believing that Jesus is the King, and He has all authority, and He truly is life. Upon that believe, they laid down their life, (their nets) to follow after Jesus.

Conclusion

For us, that is what it means to follow Jesus. We trade our lives to be part of the big Kingdom of Jesus because He is life. Where are you at? Do you have your nets in your hands? Are you holding onto your life, and your dreams, and your wants, and your passions, and your projection for how you want all things to go? Or have you really come to that place where you have said Jesus it is all Yours. This net, my life, it is all Yours, do with it how You please. If You want me to keep going where I am going and fish while I am at it; that is fine. If You want something completely different, that is fine because you are the King, and this is Your Kingdom. Have you dropped your nets at the feet of Jesus and truly followed after Him?