

# The Conception of Christ's Church



## Mark 3:13-15

Open to Mark chapter 3. We are going to be reading verses 13-15 in just a moment. Many of you know that the first Sunday in May, I will have been here for thirty-six years. If you've been here for thirty-six years, you know that almost thirty-six years ago, God called me to leave Calloway County where I was a Laker and come pastor a church in Marshall County where you're Marshals. We're red and blue and you are orange. The regional tournament is tomorrow night. Marshall County put our Lakers out of the district tournament; therefore, we will not be in the regionals tournament. I wish I could tell you the reason I'm standing before you with this orange tie is because this is Marshall County orange, but it's not. This is Tennessee orange. Can I just say my 'Cats let me down yesterday. My good friend, Jeff Green, is grinning from ear to ear because I'm wearing his University of Tennessee fall tie. It's about to choke me to death, I promise you! I'm struggling to be able to speak this morning wearing a UT tie.

We're actually going to be doing a section of Scripture starting with verse 7-19, but publicly, we will read verses 13-15. I want you to see that this

section of Scripture is going to break into two paragraphs. Verses 7-12 will form a unit of thought, and then 13-19 will be another unit of thought.

Do any of you remember the old Eggner Ferry Bridge? I am amazed at the new bridge we have that crosses from Marshall County into Trigg County and Land Between the Lakes. You've got to remember that I grew up literally in the Land Between the Lakes because ever since I was a kid, my grandfather, Papaw, and my dad farmed in Land Between the Lakes, so I've spent many, many hours at Land Between the Lakes. I just want to be honest with you; there were times when I was scared to death to be in a combine or on a tractor and drive that piece of equipment across Eggner Ferry Bridge. I was glad the bridge was there because it was the only way we could get to Land Between the Lakes, but I wanted to get off that bridge as quickly as I could because I wasn't sure if that bridge was going to hold me and a combine up to get me to the other side. I'm amazed now that nobody wants to get across that bridge fast. You go down to the new bridge now and there are people who actually cross that bridge on bicycles and foot, and their intention is not even to go to Land Between the Lakes, it is just to enjoy the bridge. That bridge is absolutely amazing. That bridge is an attraction in and of itself compared to the old bridge. Here is what you and I know. The only reason we cross that bridge, primarily, is because we're wanting to get from where we are, this side of the lake, to the other side of the lake. That bridge is put there to be a transition to get us from one place to the other place.

This morning, when we read our passage, know that we're going to be in a place of study in Mark. Mark is actually going to begin a new section of thought in verse 13 of chapter 3, but in order to get us from what he told us in chapter 2:1-3:6, he's got this bridge, this transition, which is verses 7-12. We could stop and just preach on this section this morning, but that's not the purpose. The purpose is just to tie what Kory said last week to what we're going to start to say this morning in the next section. So we're not going to put any emphasis on the bridge this morning; we're not even going to read about it. We're now standing on the other side, and that is verse 13. Let's begin reading in Mark 3:13 and listen to what Mark tells in his gospel.

## Scripture

***"And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons."***

(Prayer)

Father, we ask you to anoint us with Your Spirit to not only be able to speak but to be able to hear. Father, what a privilege You give me to live my whole life each day and each week, and in my pastoral responsibility to be ready for this moment to share Your Word. Thank You for a church that loves the Word so much, loves You so much that they want to hear on Sunday morning what You have to say from the text, not just to speak to us as a church, but to speak to us as individuals because we as individuals are who make up the church. Father, this is a beautiful, beautiful passage. I pray I've interpreted it correctly and I pray that our application will be beneficial to each and every one of us this morning. It's in Your precious, precious Son's name we pray, amen.

As we cross into this new section of Scripture, the transition, the bridge, verses 7-12, Mark tells us that Jesus is going to withdraw to the sea. The sea here is the Sea of Galilee. It was a sea that was seven miles wide, thirteen miles long, and it was surrounded by mountains; it literally formed a funnel. Jesus withdraws there. As He withdraws to the sea, He's not trying to get away from people because the crowd follows Him. Mark now tells us where everybody is coming from, and he lists several cities, several geographical locations, and if you and I were living there, it would be like him referring to the four state area. You know who the four state area is. Anybody who could get to Jesus from one hundred miles, not by car, but by foot is referred to in this passage. A great crowd is following Jesus. Please note that in the previous section, Jesus has been teaching inside,

and now He moves outside. In the previous section, He's been inside his house, inside a synagogue, and now He's by the Sea of Galilee. He's not trying to get away from people; He's trying to make room for more people. Earlier, people were trying to get to Jesus and they literally couldn't get to Him because of a physical building, so now He moves the ministry outdoors. Now they have the capacity to minister to more people, but there are so many people crowding Jesus that He tells His disciples to get an escape boat ready because He knew at any moment the crowd could crush Him and His followers. What Mark is going to do is introduce us to what's going to be called the boat ministry of Jesus. You're going to see in this next section of Scripture and throughout the rest of the gospel that many, many times something will happen in a boat, and that's big in the gospel according to Mark. Did you realize that one of the early symbols of the church was not a cross, it wasn't a fish; it was a boat, a literal boat. Wow! Mark is going to tell us about the boat ministry of Jesus. Now all of a sudden, Mark tells us that the crowd that's following Jesus is following Him because He's a healer and they've got someone who's sick that the doctor can't help. They know Jesus can help them so they're trying to get their loved one to Jesus so He can heal them, and He's healing many of them.

Now, as we get ready to get off this bridge, Mark wants us to be aware, as a reader, as the audience he's talking to, that it's actually possible for some of us to be in the group, but following Jesus for the wrong reason. That breaks my heart. Can you imagine what it would be like to be a pastor of this many people and realize that according to Mark's gospel some of us here this morning might be following Jesus for the wrong reasons. This gospel is going to be written to check our motives, so to speak. Are there some of us here who are just following Jesus for what Jesus can do for us? Mark is going to tell us that if we are, we're just like some of the ones in the crowd. Just before we get off of this bridge and get fully into the next section, he tells us again that every time a demon sees Jesus, the demon announces 'You are the Son of God.' Then, Jesus has to silence the demon and let them know He doesn't want them to reveal who He is. What is this bridge trying to say? This bridge is trying to tell us with Jesus silencing the demons that it's not God's will for the demonic world to announce to others who Jesus is, but it's going to be the responsibility of those who follow

Jesus to reveal who He is. You can't know who He is by seeing Him do a physical miracle. You can only know who He is by seeing Him come to save those who are spiritually sick. The only cure is for Him to go to a cross and laying His life down. This Jesus is going to go to a cross and He's going to die. In the midst of this great crowd where He's got a boat ready in case He needs to get away, literally, to save His life, to keep Him from being crushed, He goes up on the mountain. Because of where they were, Mark knows, all the readers know, the mountain, but he doesn't name the mountain. When He goes up on the mountain, He calls to them whom He desires. He appoints twelve, (whom He also gives the name of apostles) ones sent out, the sent out ones. He calls them to be with Him, so He can send them out, so that when they go out, they can preach and have authority to cast out demons.

I want to tell you what I see here. This is so important that you understand my thoughts. Sometimes when I send a text, if I'm asking somebody a question, I put a question mark at the end of it because I want to make sure they know I need a reply. Does that make sense? Question marks identify questions that we want someone else to answer. Sometimes when I'm doing my personal notes in studying God's Word, if I'm not one hundred percent sure of the conclusion that I'm coming to, I state the conclusion and then put a question mark at the end. That question mark reminds me later when I go back and review my notes that I wasn't one hundred percent sure about what I put on paper. If I'm one hundred percent sure of what I put on paper, I put an exclamation mark beside it, sometimes two or three exclamation marks. If you don't believe this to be true, you ask my personal executive assistant, Casey. She's the only one in the church who can read my writing. Celisa wants to publish my notes when I die, but she can't read them, Casey can. Casey will tell you that sometimes in my notes that she has to translate, there are question marks at the end of the statements, and that means Bro Ricky is not one hundred percent sure. When I sent the title to this message in this morning that will be put on the website, the title was "The Conception of the Church?". I'm not asking if you believe this is the beginning of the church in its conception; I'm saying to you as an audience this morning, to anyone who might listen to this sermon, I'm not one hundred percent sure that what

I'm saying this morning is right. So, can I tell you what I see here? When I read the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, here is what the Apostle Paul says. There was a mystery that was revealed to the apostles and him that wasn't revealed in the Old Testament to the prophets. Here was the mystery; God was going to bring Gentiles into the family. When He brought Gentiles into the family, He was going to break down the walls between Jews and Gentiles with the death of His Son. After breaking down the wall that divided them racially and nationally, He was going to take them together and create a new body, a church. Wow!

Do you remember when Abraham had the promise from God that in his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed? The Old Testament writers understood that to mean that one day God was going to raise up the nation of Israel and Israel would bring salvation to the Gentile world. Paul says that's not true! God's plan was never to raise up the Jewish nation to bring salvation to the world; God's plan was to raise up the Messiah who would be Jewish who would bring salvation to the world. But when He brought salvation to the world, He wouldn't just bring salvation to the Jew or salvation to the Gentile; in salvation, He would actually tear down all walls of hostility and create one new body from the two, and that's a church! When we did our Route 66 series, when the Old Testament ended, we were looking for the coming of a king who was going to rebuild the house of God. He was going to reign over the kingdom of David and sit on his throne forever and ever. Mark announces that king is here, and the kingdom is here. Guess what he does...in the life of these twelve men, he gives us an ultrasound view of the church.

Please hear this. Before the church is actually born, there's a conception, and Mark wants the reader to see this. It's just like my niece, Kelsey. She and Tyler got married and they've been wanting to get pregnant and they finally did. It took them a little while to tell us all because they wanted to be sure. When we first heard about Kelsey being pregnant, we all talked about it...yes, 'it.' Then one day they went to the doctor, and he took a picture. I'm still amazed at how we can take a picture inside a mother's womb. They showed the picture and we realized it wasn't an 'it' at all; it was a she, Hattie June. You could see little Hattie June's head, her little

arms, her little legs, and there was a real sense in which if you looked at that picture inside the womb of Kelsey, you were seeing Hattie June; Hattie June just hadn't been born yet. She wasn't here yet for us to physically put our hands on her yet and hug her, kiss her.

I think that's what's happening here in Mark chapter 3. Mark is painting a picture of the church, not in its birth, but in its embryo stage, in its fetal position, if I can say that. When you see the relationship these guys have with Jesus, each other, and the world around them, what you see is that's exactly a picture of us as a church. What we're getting to see this morning is us. Here's the picture. We are the covenant people of God. Jesus goes up on a mountain. He calls twelve. Why do you think He called twelve? Why do you think He went up on a mountain? It is because if you go back to the beginning of God's Old Testament covenant people, God took Israel out of Egypt, brought them Mount Sinai, went up on Mount Sinai, took the twelve tribes of Jacob, and constituted them His Old Testament people. I promise you, every reader in Mark's day would have understood the symbolism of what Jesus is doing. He's on a mountain, and He calls twelve. He's constituting the New Testament covenant people of God. Who are the New Testament covenant people of God? We're made up of Jews and Gentiles who have come to Christ and are not just right with God, but we're right with each other. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 the Apostle Paul says when it comes to the spiritual gift, God set the apostles in the church first. If you go back to Ephesians chapter 2, the Bible clearly teaches that when God broke down that middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile, created this one new body, and brought us into the family, we're built on the foundation of the apostles, Jesus Christ being the cornerstone. I'm suggesting that when you and I read this story of these twelve men, we're getting a picture of a church that will be born that you and I will be a part of. Everything you see in the church today, you saw in the beginning when the church was conceived in the life of these twelve people. Everything in the life of these twelve people will ultimately be fulfilled in your life and my life as the church of Jesus Christ. We are the covenant people of God, the church. Listen to this; it's right out of the Bible. Do you know who Jesus called to be a part of the church? He called those whom He desired. Wow! It was His choice first. Their choice was a response to

His choice. What's amazing is, later on the Apostle Paul is going to tell us the very same thing about you and I being part of the family of God, the church of God. He tells us that God made a choice of us. He didn't make a choice of us the moment we heard the gospel and put our faith in Jesus Christ, he had actually made a choice of us before the foundation of the world! He didn't make a choice of us based on us. He made a choice of us, just like He made a choice of Israel, because in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, God clearly told the people of Israel that the reason He loved them wasn't because they were mighty, or great; it was just because He loved them. God didn't love you because you were better than someone; God loves you because of God. When you and I get this, it takes the pressure off.

I was in Louisville, KY, this weekend and turned on the ballgame. In the middle of a ballgame, they went to ESPN Sports Center, and guess who was on Sports Center...Ja Morant of Murray State! Can you imagine being that kid? They had Zion Williams, RJ Barrett, Ja, and then they had the Reddish kid...two Duke players, a Murray State player, and then another Duke player being projected as the first four picks in the NBA draft. I cannot imagine the pressure that's going to be on those NBA scouts and NBA teams when they draft their team. I don't know about you, but the first pick...man, that kid's going to make it. What about Ja? We don't know. We think he's going to be great, but many players don't live up in the pros to their college billing. I'm not knocking Ja; I'm just saying this...that's not how it was when God chose His team. He didn't look at you and me and say, wow, he's got great potential! I wonder if he will live up to his potential. I think I'm going to take a chance on him anyway. Then, God has benched some of us. He put us down at the end of the bench because we never lived up to our calling, we never lived up to our draft status; some of us thought we were a number one pick. No, God knew who He was and knew He could take you, and me, and He could work in our lives and make us into His church. Wow! He called us because He made a choice of us that was in Him, not us. The purpose of His choice, the purpose of His call was so that we could be with Him, Mark says. Tell me you would have loved to have been there that day on the mountain and have Jesus look you face-to-face and say, come; I want you. I'm just



picking twelve; I want you. I want you. Tell me you would have been thrilled to be this embryonic assembly! Do you remember when God did call you? See, when He took this ultrasound of the church, He knew one day there would be a call to you because He had already made a choice of you. We ought to feel the excitement those guys feel to know that we've been drafted by God! Yeah, it took some of us years to finally repent of wanting to live life our way and accept the draft status of God, but this morning, I pray you have. Please hear this. The reason He's called you is so that you can be with Him!

I know we're in Mark's gospel, but do any of you remember what Jesus said that Mark didn't have time to record and Matthew did? He looked to a crowd of people and said, hey, you need some rest. You look tired. You look weary. You look worn out. Life seems to be beating you down. He said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Oh, wow! Can I just talk about us for a minute? Life is killing many of us. Yeah, it really is, because we've got an agenda. We're going to prove to everybody else who we really are, and by proving who we really are, we think we will prove to ourselves who we are. Really, our problem is not what other people doubt about us; it's what we doubt about us, and it's killing us. We're trying to perform at a flesh level that we just can't do. We can't keep all the balls in the air. Jesus says why don't you take off your yoke and put Mine on. Learn of Me. See, this call to be with Him is a call to learn about Him, to learn who He is. I can't imagine how hard what I'm going to say next is going to be to some of us, because in our flesh, we are so strong willed, we are so right, we know how everything ought to be done in everybody's life around us. Jesus is asking us to lay that down, take His yoke, and learn about Him, for I am lowly and gentle, humble. Whoa! A dagger to the flesh! But our flesh is killing many of us, and Jesus is asking us to learn who He is, it's why He called us to be a part of the church; and not just learn who He is, but to become like Him.

This is why at Hardin we remind ourselves from time to time that we are disciples who make disciples. If you first came to Hardin years ago, you knew that we had a corn plant as a symbol of our church to remind us that

we're supposed to be growing down, up, and out. Now, because of the maturity and wisdom of our staff, we now say we are disciples who make disciples, and we do this by growing down, up, and out. How do we grow down, up, and out? We do that by learning about Christ and living in a relationship with Him and letting His personality become our personality, and guess what; you just rest. It's not about you. It's about Him. The next thing you know, this yoke is easy. This burden is light. It's easy because we're just allowing the Holy Spirit of God to live through us the life that He intends us to live, which is to be a part of something bigger than ourselves, and that's the body of Christ.

He calls us to be with Him so that He can send us out. He is going to call the first twelve out, and He sends them out with the purpose of preaching and having authority to cast out demons. That's why in the gospel of Mark, in the beginning, you see so much demonic activity; you see so many demons announcing who Jesus is because they recognize Jesus for who He is. He's the Son of God; He's the King of the Kingdom and they know their fate is in His hands. Jesus keeps silencing them because He doesn't want them announcing who He is. He wants us learning who He is, and once we learn who He is, He wants us to announce like the demons announce who He is, and that is He is the Son of God.

See, we're sent out to preach. This word, preach, is not that traditional word we have for Baptist preachers who stand behind a pulpit like me. Well, I don't stand behind a pulpit, but that's what most of us think about preaching. Because this is to the first twelve, the apostles and it's about preaching, most of us in the church don't think it applies to us, but it does. This word for preach isn't the normal word for preach. This word literally means to herald, to proclaim, to publish. God has called you to be a part of something bigger. He's called you and I to be a part of a church so that we can learn from Him and become like Him so that we can be sent out, and as we're sent out, we publish who He is. I love that! Guess what dawned on me this week. It totally dawned on me; I thought I knew it, but I think I now know it more than I've ever known it in my life. God wants His story to be told, the story of His Son, and He's called me to be a publisher of this

story. You are a publisher, I am a publisher; we are publishers of the story of Jesus.

A few years ago, I had the privilege of going to Thailand and I met Aghan Thongchai, the leader of the Baptist people in Thailand. As we got to know each other and he gained confidence in me, he asked me before I came if I would write a book on Ephesians that they could use to teach all of their people with and disciple all of their people who would come to Christ over the next five to ten years. So I did my writing, I gave it to Casey and she looked for a publisher who would publish it for us. The publisher just took my writings and published it, but without that publisher, the Thai people would not have that material to interact with. Please hear me. You are a publisher. You don't make up the story, you don't interpret the story; you just live the story. You live the story of Jesus. He may not send you to Thailand, He may not send you to Brazil, He may not send you to Nicaragua, but He will send you next door, He will send you to your place of employment, He will send you to your place of education, and He will send you to your place of recreation. Hear me. Hear me. In every one of those situations, you publish who Christ is by the way you act. I'm not going to name a name, but I was talking to someone this past week, and they were describing a situation and said, "If I could do what I really wanted to do, here's what I would do." I said, "I'm glad you're no longer in the flesh, but you're now under the Spirit of God, so you're not going to do all those things your flesh wants to do." Why? Because when we do that, we misrepresent Christ. People are reading the book of Christ, not as much from the Bible, but as from your life and my life. I think a child learns far more about God from their parents than they learn from the Bible because a parent is the up early publisher of who God is to a child. If I can be honest with you, it's taken some of us a long time to get over the misrepresentation of God because our parents didn't have it right.

Now, why did He send us out? He sent us out so others could be called and be with Him and be sent out, so others could be called and be with Him and sent out, and others could be called and come to Him and be sent out. Wow! We have no idea today who God is using us to influence that will one day influence others, fifty to seventy-five years from now.

In closing, what does this look like? We have the list of the conception of the church. We have Simon who was also called Peter, Jesus named him Peter, we have James, son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, and then he says Jesus called them the sons of thunder. That gives some of us hope, right! Yeah, some of us are sons of thunder! Some of us are Peter, not a rock, but the potential to become a rock. Then there was Simon the zealot, Judas the betrayer, James the son of Alpheus, and then the others just have names. But there is a guy by the name of Matthew. Do you remember Matthew? He was a tax collector; Mark calls him Levi. He was pro-Rome. Then there's Simon the zealot, anti-Rome. Get this picture. Jesus didn't call people who were like Him; He called people who were not like Him so He could make them like Him. If you view this ultrasound, He took people who were not even alike. If I can say this, He took a democrat and a republican, and He said I want you to quit being like you and become like Me. He took someone who was on Rome's side and someone who was against Rome, and He broke that thought process down and said you've got a new identity. That's the identity that you and I ought to have. There should be no walls of division in this church because it's not about our agenda; it's about God's agenda.