

[following the leader]

:: mark 1.16-28 ::

So there I was. Senior year of high school. 3 friends of mine had picked me up and we were off to find something to do with our evening.

We had 2 vehicles that night. It was me and one friend in his car, a little truck actually, and the 2 other guys in a VW bug. We drove around Hanford and didn't really have any idea of what to do.

We stopped at a gas station to fill up the pickup, the other fellows being confident that they weren't going to need any gasoline that evening.

As we waited for our 2 friends to return from the snack counter, the guy I was with said, "how long do you think they'd follow us without knowing where they were going?"

The plan was hatched.

We told them to follow us and we were off into the night.

We drove *everywhere*. All over the place. Just taking crazy turns and ignoring their calls to our cell phones and pagers.

Yes, I had a pager back then.

We started our voyage on 11th avenue in Hanford and finally ended up in Coalinga, where we had to desperately look for a 24 hour gas station so that the VW could fill up with enough gas to get home!

The boys in the bug weren't too happy. They had followed us on a path to nowhere.

"Follow Me."

It's one of the most recognizable phrases in the Bible. When we hear it we instantly think of Jesus Christ speaking to His disciples in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The thing that I need constant reminder of is that, while I am a Christian, I can never forget that I am also to be a **disciple**. On Sunday nights at Cal-Tec Jacob is taking us through Greg Laurie's book, *Discipleship: The Road Less Taken*, which reminds us that though all disciples are Christians, not all Christians behave like disciples. We were reminded last week in our study of 1 Corinthians chapter 4 that Christ commanded us to go and *make* disciples. Not piles of money. Not big buildings. Disciples.

Discipleship is incredibly important, not only to the Church at large, but to us as individuals who are seeking after God.

What we need to understand is that discipleship is a position that we *choose* to follow in. It is a lifestyle that we accept or ignore starting right now. That's what we see in the New Testament.

When we come to the Gospels and we see how Jesus interacted with His disciples, with the 12, we must force ourselves to remember that the same *principles* apply to us, here in Hanford, in 2009. Though the office of *Apostle* ended with John, our position as *Disciple* continues today.

Thus, when Jesus commands them, He is commanding us. When Jesus teaches them, He is teaching us. When Jesus guides them, He is guiding us.

When Jesus says '**follow Me**' to them, He is saying it to us.

This morning we desire to follow Jesus. The question is, where is He going?

The first step on this journey we see in verses 16 through 20 of Mark chapter 1, where we learn to: *Follow Jesus Out Of The Boat.*

Mark 1.16 - Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, [Jesus] saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

This beautiful passage opens up with Jesus taking a walk on the seashore. He had previously been baptized by John in the Jordan. He had just endured His 40 days of temptation in the wilderness and now He was beginning His earthly ministry. A ministry that would last for 3 and 1/2 years, culminating in His capture in Gethsemene, His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave.

Jesus had been in Galilee, preaching the Gospel of repentance, and He goes looking for for some folks. He goes looking for disciples. First up: Simon, who we know as Peter and his brother Andrew.

The first point for you to meditate upon this morning is this: Jesus Christ is looking for you! The Almighty Son Of God is intent on drawing you to Himself. Perhaps this morning you are not a Christian, you are not a believer in Jesus Christ. Let me tell you that you are on your way to an eternity in hell, separated from God, but God is looking for you. His desire is to save you and to transform you from darkness to light. You can become a disciple this morning by trusting in His sacrifice on the cross, by believing that Jesus really lived, He really died and He really rose again and that He is sufficient to make you right before God. If that's something you want to do, then we want to talk to you immediately after this service.

Perhaps you *are* a Christian this morning. Be reminded that Jesus is looking for you and wants you to follow Him *as a disciple*. Why? Because He has a plan for your life and a work for you to do. And He doesn't simply want your affiliation, but He wants action.

Mark 1.17 - And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

Try to picture this situation. Here these guys are, casting their nets, doing their job, living their lives. They were born fishermen, they grew up as fishermen, day in and day out they lived their lives as fishermen.

And suddenly, this Jesus walks up to them and in a sense says, "I don't care about what you *think* your life is about, I want you to follow Me." He didn't say, "come see Me on your lunch break." He didn't say, "when the busy season is over, look me up and we'll do some side projects together." No, the call was much more personal and much more urgent, because Jesus Christ had a plan for these guys and presented them with that plan right then. "Follow me."

And what I love about Jesus, is that He not only gives us opportunities, He not only gives us options, but He presents to us the consequences of our actions. He says, "do this and *this* will happen, or do that and *that* will happen."

Follow Me and I will make you become fishers of men.

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.

Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.

He lays it out for us. Maybe we don't get to see each step in the road, but we can see the path beneath our feet and we can see the destination that we're heading towards. God supplies us with all of that very graciously and very plainly.

Here these men are, living their lives, and Jesus Christ gives them an opportunity for something amazing. The God of the universe comes to them and says, "do you want to really follow Me? To go where I go? To do what I do?"

This is an interesting word, 'follow.' He didn't say 'join Me.' He didn't say 'support Me.' He said 'follow Me.' It's a relationship of trust and submission and adventure.

Now pause. Remember what we've already said. We are called to be Christ's disciples. His offer to them is the offer that He makes to you. As you sit here this morning, you must deal with the fact that the God of the universe has placed a call in to your life to follow after Him in a wonderful, dramatic adventure. He has offered you a chance to live a life in complete trust and submission to the Creator of all things. He has offered you a new life. Not your old life with a few additions, no, a **new** life, more full of purpose and meaning and fulfillment than you or I could ever hope for. That was the offer that Jesus was making to these 2 guys and that is the same offer that He is making to you right now. A life of discipleship.

Understand, Jesus was asking them to make a radical decision. Jesus was telling them to leave those boats. To leave their nets and to start something new. "Follow Me out of the boat." He had something important for them to do.

I have a question for us this morning. Right now ask yourself this question: What is the most important thing? Because verse 18 says,

Mark 1.18 - And immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

Lot of focus on the nets in this section. These nets were their tools of the trade. The nets were their livelihood. It was their provision. They were *net fishermen*. But the life that Jesus was presenting them with would have no purpose for fishing nets. Those stayed with the boat, with their old life.

I think some of us try to take our nets with us when we decide to follow Jesus. It's as if we're saying, 'God, I want to go where You're going, I want to be who You want me to be, but this is my livelihood. This is my provision and I'm bringing these along just in case. In case things get rough, in case we're running low, at least I'll have my nets to get by.'

We talk about nets today, don't we? Net income. Net gain. Net losses. Safety net. Net worth. Internet. Sometimes we hold onto this idea that the most important thing in our life is to provide for ourselves and for our family.

Now, while I want each of us to understand the value of taking care of our families, today I think we can see something important in our text. Today, God reminds us that we are *disciples* and we are not our own provider. *We have a Provider. God* is your provider, you are not. And when Jesus calls us out of the boat, we are to leave our nets behind. That is what a disciple does.

So where are we going with this analogy?

As human beings we have our own plan for our lives. That is the boat. Your life before or apart from Christ. Life on our own. That is the boat. Now, we also have our own way of living, our own strength to survive and to accomplish whatever goals we've made. Those are the nets. When Jesus calls you as a disciple, He supplies *His* plan and *His* provision for your life. You leave your nets on the deck and follow Jesus out of the boat. That's what we're talking about. Surrendering your plans and your goals and your methods and your lifestyle to the Kingship of your Messiah, who has brought along *His* goals and *His* provision and *His* roadmap for the journey.

This call was urgent to these 2 men. It is urgent to you today. Jesus Christ says to each one of us, "follow Me," and that call is urgent. They immediately left their nets, they immediately walked out of that boat because the plan and the promises of God were immediately available to them, and they are immediately available to you and I today.

Mark 1.19 - And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending their nets.

It's an interesting comparison. Jesus has promised us living water. He has promised us unending grace and empowering. He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill us and to guide us and to help us.

The world offers you a net. You make a net, cast it, fill it, empty it, mend it. Cast it, fill it, empty it, mend it. It's a cycle that doesn't end. Because the provision the world doesn't last. Nothing on earth lasts.

And if we're trying to convince ourselves that we'll really start serving God when we just get a little more secure, when we get a little more comfortable, 'God, I'll devote more of my life to you when things are a little bit slower, I'll start giving to You when I have a few more fish in the net,' then we must remind ourselves that the opportunity to enter into discipleship is right now, and if we are unwilling to be a *real disciple now* then we will not follow as a disciple when we have a little more time or a little more money or a little more security. That is a myth that we tell ourselves, because those things do not last. They must be continually mended and regenerated and protected.

God wants to give you something that lasts. A calling and a purpose and a lifestyle that is above the decay and degeneration of this world, the little boat that we're in. That is the call.

Mark 1.20 - Immediately, [Jesus] called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed Him.

Understand what is happening here.

Jesus makes them a proposition. Follow Me and I will make you become fishers of men. They don't have any funding, they don't have any financiers, they don't have any fame, there's no five-year plan or fast track to financial freedom.

And look at James and John! They stand to inherit a thriving business. Their father was doing well enough to have a staff of people. But to them Jesus said, 'follow Me out of these boats, because I have something wonderful, something very important and meaningful that I want to do in your lives.'

What is the most important thing to you?

Listen, I'm not telling you to quit your job. Paul said, if you don't work, you don't eat. God doesn't call every believer to a life of asceticism, a life where you give everything away. Some people He does give that call. Not to everyone, but to some. So that's not what I'm saying.

What I *am* saying this morning is that we need to wrestle with the fact that our American values are not God's values. Our American sensibilities are not God's sensibilities. American goals are not God's goals. God wants something better for us. God has *provided* something better for us.

He has commanded His disciples to live sacrificially. Some to a greater degree than others, but all of us are to live sacrificially.

God has commanded us to **not** store up treasures on the earth, but to store up treasure in heaven, where our investments matter the most. **Matthew 6.19: "Do NOT lay up for yourselves treasures on earth."** I'm not saying you can't have a savings account or a retirement fund. For some of us in this room, perhaps God will ask us to give those things away. But that isn't the point.

Instead what we're talking about here is a mindset. You want to be a disciple? Follow Jesus out of the boat. Give up providing for yourself. Give up your life plan. Humble yourself and trust God. Leave the boat. Leave your nets in the boat. Follow after your King. Because Jesus Christ wants something better for you. Your purpose is not to make money and build up a savings account. Your purpose is to enjoy the life that God has created for you to live. A life that He has been developing and working on since before you and I were born. Isn't that better than just working to build an empire of wealth? Isn't that better than trying to be your own provider? Of course it is.

This morning Jesus is calling you to follow Him out of the boat. Out of our own provision, our own plan, our own methods and goals and desires and to start following after Jesus in the life and the power that He has provided for us today.

That's the first stop on our journey: follow Jesus out of the boat.

Our second stop is in verses 21-28: *Follow Jesus Into The Synagogue.*

Mark 1.21-22 - And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

The synagogue was simply the local meeting place of the Jews. It is very equivalent to a Church. They would meet, study the word, worship and spend time together.

First, let's address this remark about the scribes. How sad that these folks were so *used* to dead teaching. They were used to these supposed 'experts' on God's word getting up and preaching to them messages that had no effect on their lives. No impact on their thoughts or hearts.

Jesus astonished them because He spoke with authority. Now, what gave His message authority? Well, for one, He is the perfect, sinless Son of God, but secondly, Jesus words had authority because He spoke with the power of the Holy Spirit. He spoke words that caused personal challenge, personal transformation in the hearts of the hearers. He spoke with the anointing of God.

Pause and consider that, if you are a Christian here today, the Holy Spirit, the 3rd Person the Trinity, dwells within you. The inconceivable power and presence of God fuels your life. For the disciple, the Holy Spirit is the source of direction and guidance. He is the source of wisdom and peace. He is the source of patience and goodness. He is the source of our thinking and our speaking and our planning. That is who you are as a follower of Jesus Christ.

So when we follow Jesus into the synagogue, we should never have a lifeless interaction with God or with the Scriptures. No, our activity with the Lord should be astonishing. It should be powerful. It should be meaningful and anointed.

A disciple must not only read the word, listen to the word, but we must *apply* the word. We must allow the Scriptures to transform us, otherwise we too will become like these scribes; men who were supposed to be experts but had absolutely no power in their lives. No power in their message. They had religion, not relationship.

But we read here that the Sabbath came and Jesus went into the local synagogue to teach and spend time with the people.

What we find in Mark chapter 1 is that Jesus is all about teaching. We see Him teaching in verse 14, here in verse 21 and again in verse 38.

Here's some application for us as believers who desire to be disciples: if we're not learning, then something is wrong. If Jesus is all about teaching, then we should be learning. Ask yourself this question: am I learning anything about God? About His nature and character? About His word? About His plan for my life? Disciples learn. Day in and day out as they spend time in the Word of God and in prayer.

Second, we see in this verse that church attendance was a given for Jesus.

In Luke 4.16 we read this:

Luke 4.16 - And [when] He came to Nazareth...as was His custom, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

Coming together regularly to worship God and study His word **must** be a priority for the disciple.

It is becoming more and more popular to be disconnected from a local fellowship, to float around and make church an infrequent choice in our lives. This is not the model we see in the Bible. This isn't what we see Jesus doing. Disciples need to be taught God's word, they need to come together to worship God and they need to spend time with each other. That is where Jesus has led us. A disciple follows God into the synagogue.

Those aren't the only reasons that it's important. Look at verse 23:

Mark 1.23-26 - And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "what have You to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God."

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

A disciple follows Jesus into the synagogue, first to worship, second to be taught, but third to be used. Understand that there are people in this room who need help. We have among us those with real needs, real struggles, real hurt. And the church, is the place for all of us to come together and present ourselves to Jesus Christ, who has established His Church to be a powerful presence on the earth.

Maybe you are someone here who is hurting, Jesus desires to set you free. He knew the state of the people in the synagogue and He knows you this morning. He is the Provider, the Comforter, the Healer. He knows everything about you and will supply the grace that you need for any situation.

Maybe you're not really struggling this morning. Maybe you're in a time of blessing. God wants you to meet the needs of the people around you. He wants you to do what Jesus did. He wants you to be a source of encouragement and comfort and prayer and help for the weak and weary around you.

Look around. You are here for three reasons: to worship God, to be helped and to give help. God desires to receive our worship in this place. He desires to teach us. And then He desires that we join each other and minister one to another, not selfishly but selflessly. Sharpening each other. Encouraging each other. Bearing one another's burdens. Extending grace to everyone around us. Living sacrificially so that the love of God might be demonstrated to the world.

This church is where soldiers come for training and equipping. It is a hospital for the wounded. It is a school for the student. And you are here so that you can worship the King of kings, so that you can learn about Him and His plan for your life, and so that you can serve the people around you.

Follow Jesus into the synagogue and understand why He has brought you here.

It's interesting here in these verses. The Devil and his demons have a very limited understanding about what it is God is doing in the world. It's almost comical how little they understood about Jesus' work on the earth.

But they knew exactly who Jesus was.

Do we? I mean, if we understand who Jesus is, then we should understand who He has made us to be as His disciples, and *those* understandings should have profound impacts on everything we do. Do we understand who Jesus is and what He wants to do in our lives? Do we understand what He has asked of us and what He's given to us? We need to ask ourselves these questions.

Jesus made short work of this possession and healed the man of these unclean spirits.

Mark 1.27-28 - And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." And at once His fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

I think it's interesting to see how human beings act in situations like this. Something amazing has just happened, something life changing, this huge situation has just occurred and their first thought is to just talk to each other about who Jesus might be.

The guy is standing right in front of them! ASK HIM! You'd think they would start worshiping Him. You'd think they too would become disciples, but that isn't really what we see.

Why not? Because most of the time we're off focus. Most of the time we've got our attention on some **thing** instead of some **One**.

There should be a sense of wonder in our relationship with God. There should be a sense that we are following after a Person who does incredible things. There should be a sense that life is changed when He's moving. There should be a sense that at any moment Christ is willing to set us free from sin, that He is ready to do unimaginable things to bring glory to Himself. Disciples have faith. Faith in their Master.

Jesus came into this synagogue to teach and to heal.

What do we come for? We're here. There's no denying that. So what are we here for? For Jesus it was not just to fulfill some obligation or to make an appearance, it was for something much more important.

God is still showing up in the synagogue today. And it's up to us whether we're going to be like a scribe or if we're going to be like a disciple.

Follow Jesus into the synagogue, where He shows you who He is and how He desires to use you. Where He gives you opportunities to impact the lives of the people around you as you demonstrate His love and His grace and His power to them by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Do you know what God has done for you?

You are precious to Him. You are of such value. You are a person for whom God has planned incredible things. But He will not force you to follow Him. That's up to you. It's up to me. And He's come to us today and said, 'follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'

Look into the Scriptures and see the things that God has provided you. See the promises He has made to you. See the work that He wants you to be a part of. See the opportunities that He has saved for you!

God has done much for us. Our part is to follow. Not to simply affiliate but to activate. To leave our own plans behind, to leave our own little boats and nets behind and to follow Him on the path He's cleared for us.

This chapter has 2 more stops. The first 2 we've seen; follow Jesus out of the boat and follow Him into the synagogue.

Next in this chapter we see to follow Jesus into the home and into the wilderness.

This study will continue Wednesday @ our Ignite service. We'd love for you to come out and see what else God wants to do in your life.

Do not leave this place the same. Present yourself before your Savior and see what He will make of you.