

# **First Serve**

---

Studies in the Gospel of Mark

Text

Mark 1:14-45

Topic

Jesus calls two sets of brothers  
to go with Him and fish for men

Title

*"Go Fish"*

## Introduction

It was a cold winter day, when an old man walked out onto a frozen lake, cut a hole in the ice, dropped in his fishing line and began waiting for a fish to bite.

He was there for a long time without even a nibble when a young boy walked out onto the ice, cut a hole in the ice not too far from the old man and dropped in his fishing line. It only took about a minute and WHAM! a fish hit his hook and the boy reeled it in. The old man couldn't believe it but figured it was just luck.

The boy dropped in his line and again within just a few minutes pulled in another one.

This went on and on until finally the old man couldn't take it any more since he hadn't caught a thing all this time.

He went to the boy and said, "Son, I've been here for over an hour without even a nibble. You have been here only a few minutes and have caught about half a dozen fish. How do you do it?"

The boy responded, "Roo raf roo reep ra rums rram."

"What was that?" the old man asked.

Again the boy responded, "Roo raf roo reep ra rums rram."

"Look," said the old man, "I can't understand a word you are saying."

So, the boy spit into his hand and said, "You have to keep the worms warm!"

Fishermen are definitely enthusiastic about their pastime.

Seven of the original twelve disciples of Jesus were fishermen. Not shepherds, as you might have thought, seeing there are so many references to that occupation surrounding the Lord.

Why fishermen? Perhaps so the Lord could explain that following Him was like fishing for men.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 When You Follow Jesus, You Embark On A Lifetime Of Fishing For Men, and #2 When You Follow Jesus, You Enroll In Lessons On Fishing For Men.

## #1 When You Follow Jesus, You Embark On A Lifetime Of Fishing For Men

(v14-20)

I've been fascinated by something we discovered last week in our study of the opening verses. Unique to the Gospel of Mark is his characteristic of writing from what scholars call "the historical present." It is a literary technique that makes it appear you are right there as the story is being told.

Do you know what an embedded journalist is? That's when a reporter is attached to a unit in combat to give eyewitness reports of the action.

We are to read Mark as if we were embedded with Jesus and His disciples.

We pick up the action after Jesus was both water-baptized and Spirit-baptized, and after He defeated Satan in the forty-day wilderness temptation.

Mar 1:14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

If you were looking at a timeline of the life of Jesus, you'd see that Mark skips ahead about a year, saying nothing about what happened between Jesus' forty-day temptation in the wilderness and the beginning of His public preaching and teaching.

Scholars sometimes call that first year, "the year of obscurity." Some significant things happened, mentioned only in John's Gospel, but Jesus did not really burst onto the scene preaching the kingdom of God.

After His baptisms, and after blackening the devil's eye, I'd have thought it was the perfect moment to come from the wilderness preaching. God has a much different way of doing things than we do.

What is the "Gospel?" You might say it is Jesus Himself, since He is the One Who was promised to come and deal with sin so men might be saved. It is the Person and work of Jesus by which believing sinners can be declared right with God. It is Him dying on the Cross as our Substitute, then rising again on the third day, to draw all men to Himself and offer everyone the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life.

The "Gospel" as it relates to "the kingdom of God" is described in verse fifteen:

Mar 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

"The kingdom of God" Jesus was proclaiming is the visible, earthly kingdom that God promised Israel.

How is it that "the time" for offering the kingdom was "fulfilled?" The exact day that the Messiah would make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem was known, and it was not far off. It had been set by Daniel some 500 years earlier in his famous prophecy of the 70 weeks.

The day we call Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, hailed as the King, was coming quickly. This momentous occasion should encourage everyone to "repent, and believe in the Gospel."

Have you done that? Repented of your sin, and believed in Jesus Christ?

Mar 1:16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

Mar 1:17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

Mar 1:18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

Mar 1:19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets.

Mar 1:20 And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

These fishermen, two sets of brothers, already knew Jesus. Andrew had been a follower of John the Baptist. When John pointed out Jesus as the Messiah, Andrew took Simon to meet Him.

Simon, btw, is Peter; and that's probably what I'm going to call him, so don't get confused.

As for James and John knowing Jesus (and I quote):

From a comparison of Matthew 27:55–56 with Mark 15:40, it may be assumed that [Zebedee's] wife's name was Salome, and further comparison with John 19:25 indicates that she was the sister of the mother of Jesus. So, **James and John were Jesus' cousins.**

During the year of obscurity I mentioned, Jesus gathered his first five disciples - John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathaniel and Bartholomew.

He traveled with them to Galilee, where he performed the first of the signs recorded in John's Gospel, changing the water to wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. Afterwards the disciples returned to their own homes, where they resumed their normal lives, until the call we are witnessing here.

There is obviously a lot we could say about this call to discipleship, but there are three things I want to draw out for our consideration.

First, when Jesus says, "I will make you become fishers of men," Jesus was not calling them to the office of apostle. That would come later.

**That means this statement applies to all believers.** To follow Jesus means *you* are a fisher of men.

It's not a special gifting that only a few, e.g., evangelists, have from God. It is the normal Christian life.

Hold that thought for a moment while we look at a second thing.

When Jesus says "I will *make you become* fishers of men," it implies that it is something He will do.

- "Make" means it's His work; it's something He is forming in us.
- "Become" indicates it's going to continue over time.

Which brings us to a rather interesting third thing. Notice that Andrew and Peter were "casting a net into the sea," while James and John were "in the boat mending their nets."

I think their jobs that day have significance, and here is what I mean.

The first two brothers were casting a net. Andrew introduced Peter to Jesus; or, as we might say it today, he brought Peter to the Lord. Peter would go on to great evangelistic work, preaching, for example, on the Day of Pentecost when three thousand people got saved. Thus, Andrew and Peter were net-casters, not just by the Sea of Galilee in their fishing business, but in their ministry of 'catching' people for Jesus.

James and John were mending nets when called by the Lord. While we can't say much about James, since very little is written about him, and since he wrote no letters, John was certainly a mender in his ministry, preaching the love and unity of the brethren in his letters.

It's only an observation but, putting all this together, I think we can say that every follower of Jesus can expect a lifetime of being made into a fisher of men according to your own unique bent, personality, and gifting.

The question for us today is this: How avid a fisher of men are you? Whether you are more an *evangelist* or more an *encourager*, is fishing for men, i.e., serving Jesus, your one true passion in life?

Hey, love what you do; **just do it as unto the Lord.** Make sure people know He is your reason for getting up each day and doing what you do.

Always be casting, or mending, with the time and talent and things God has given you. Whatever it is you do, think of Jesus saying to you today, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

What would that look like tomorrow?

## #2 When You Follow Jesus, You Enroll In Lessons On Fishing For Men

(v21-45)

If you are going to "make" guys "become fishers of men," they will need lessons. Think of the rest of this chapter as *Fishers of Men 101*.

Mar 1:21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.

Mar 1:22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

For the sake of the first fishing lesson, look also at verse thirty-eight:

Mar 1:38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."

Jesus said He came to "preach" and to "teach." When He did, He spoke with an "authority" folks were not used to.



If you want to know the difference between "preaching" and "teaching," I'd recommend you listen to a week of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's regular *Thru the Bible* radio program. Then tune in to the Sunday broadcast. His Sunday preaching will astonish you compared to his weekday teaching.

First priority of fishing for men: Speak the Word of God with authority.

We're going to see Jesus try hard in this chapter to stay on task, despite folks pressing upon Him for healings and deliverance from demons. He did those things, in abundance; but His mission was the Gospel that changes hearts, not just bodies.

Mar 1:23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,

Mar 1:24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God!"

Mar 1:25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"

Mar 1:26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.

Calling it "their synagogue" tells us that this man was a visitor. A demon picked a bad day to visit the Synagogue.

The "us" and "we" make it sound like he was possessed by more than one demon, but the original words don't support that. Besides, the demon says, "I know Who you are."

"Unclean" speaks to him being vulgar, immoral, gross.

Jesus told him to be quiet. I find that interesting because so often, among those who practice exorcisms, they claim that you must get the demon talking, especially to tell you its name. Then they apply a whole bunch of spells and incantations, and holy water and such.

I know, I know... We've all seen the movies of 'real' exorcisms that 'worked' on account of these procedures. I say it's just demons messin' with the exorcists, lulling them into thinking that the power is in the ritual rather than in Jesus.

Mar 1:27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

Mar 1:28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

Exorcisms were not new. Jesus's almost nonchalant manner, and the obvious authority He had over the demon, was new.

Jesus defeated Satan in the wilderness in one-on-one, your-champion-against-my-champion, combat. Every time He encountered a demon, or demons, He commanded them, and they obeyed Him.

In the language of the Gospels, we would say that Jesus "bound the strong man," so He could plunder the strong man's house. He was delivering people from the kingdom of darkness to enter the kingdom of God He came to establish.

Is Satan bound today? Sadly, no.

Because Jesus' offer of the kingdom was rejected, the establishing of the kingdom on the earth was delayed until Jesus' Second Coming. In the mean time, Satan is loose, on the prowl as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, as the ruler of the kingdom of darkness.

What is the fishing lesson here, for us? It is for us to remember that, although loose and fierce, Satan is fighting from defeat. Though He may yet hinder and obstruct us in many ways; though he holds men captive to do his will; we do not fear him, or what he can do.

People seem really troubled as to why we don't encounter demons and demon-possession more often, since it was so prevalent when Jesus was on the earth.

All I can say is, "That's just fine with me!" I'm in no hurry for us to confront demons. But, if we do, we know that they are defeated.

This is huge. Satan is still the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, ruler over demonic forces. But his fate is sealed, and we can battle *from* victory, not *for* victory. We press on; we persevere, no matter the opposition.

Mar 1:29 Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

Mar 1:30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once.

Mar 1:31 So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

The boys came home from synagogue, after facing a demon, expecting a hot meal, only to find that Peter's mom had a raging fever.

Not a problem. Jesus healed her.

Fishing lesson number two: Bad things happen to God's people. In fact, God's people are singled-out for attack by the enemy, trying to stop or at least slow down the work of the Gospel.

You are going to need a strong theology of suffering in order to go fishing. Lot's of terrible things are going to happen around you, to people you love, and to you.

"Wait just a minute," you say. "Jesus healed Peter's mom, so isn't that what He wants to do for everyone?"

No, it isn't. Jesus was delayed by His Father from helping Lazarus, and Lazarus died. It was so terrible that even Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb.

Yes, He raised Lazarus from the dead... **But then Lazarus died again later on.**

The kingdom Jesus came offering the Jews got rejected, and the world we live in is still subject to the curse. The problem of pain, as C.S. Lewis called it, is something you need to factor in.

Mar 1:32 At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed.

Mar 1:33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door.

Mar 1:34 Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

Legalistic Jews that they were, they waited until the Sabbath ended to travel, and to see a work of healing, or an exorcism, performed.

Again, please note, "He did not allow the demons to speak." If you ever **do** encounter a demon, *don't talk to it*.

In passing we point out that these people knew the difference between diseases and demons. Many liberal scholars want to say that the cases of demon-possession in the Bible were all really mental illnesses. They were not.

I was thinking about the boys - Andrew, Peter, James and John. They must have assisted in some way, maybe acting as ushers, and seeing to it everyone was patient, with no taking cuts in line.

Just hang around where ministry is occurring and there will be needs to meet.

Mar 1:35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

Mar 1:36 And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him.

These guys had been with Jesus only a day and they already lost Him. They **slept-in** while Jesus **slipped-out**.

Don't you always go fishing early? Jesus was giving the guys another lesson. And it isn't that prayer is important (although it is).

The lesson is that you should rather want to be in fellowship with God than be anywhere else, doing anything else, with anybody else. Even if it means getting up during the early morning, which meant between 3am and 6am.

Mar 1:37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."

Mar 1:38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."

Mar 1:39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

Lesson number four (if I'm counting right): Be led by the Spirit and not by the demand of circumstances.

I must say, there *were* an awful lot of demons in the Gospels. Could it be that in the shadow of his defeat in the wilderness, Satan ramped-up his efforts to try to get Jesus off mission?

Mar 1:40 Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

Mar 1:41 Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."

Mar 1:42 As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

Leprosy seems mild, to us, compared to demon-possession, but not so among the religious Jews. This horrible affliction was regarded as distinct from other physical problems. Leprosy had a religious significance as a type of sin, the outward and visible sign of inward spiritual corruption. The leper was considered unclean, the very embodiment of impurity. Someone with a demon might be delivered by exorcism, but with leprosy you were the living dead.

Lesson #5 - Fishing for men requires you have compassion upon the very worst, the very lowest, the most afflicted persons, knowing that the Lord can make them whole.

The Lord's compassion manifested itself in a "touch" - the first human contact this man had experienced in perhaps decades.

Mar 1:43 And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once,  
Mar 1:44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Just because he was healed, it didn't mean he would be immediately received back into Jews social life.

You know how we joke, saying, "there's an app for that?" The Jews might say, "there's a ritual for that."

I'm glad that when Jesus 'touches' our hearts today, we are made whole, with no need for any ritual to prove we are saved, or complete our salvation.

Mar 1:45 However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

I can't say I blame him. It is interesting to see that being the recipient of a miraculous healing doesn't make you obedient to God. I'm not saying the former leper wasn't saved, but I am saying that people for whom God does great things can still ignore Him.

Jesus' teaching ministry was being hindered by people seeking signs and wonders. That's a twist on our way of thinking. Certain Pentecostal groups think that emphasizing the Word too much can get in the way of signs and wonders. I'll take my cue from Jesus and keep His Word our priority. If signs and wonders follow its teaching, that's up to Jesus, and I'll rejoice in them.

If you're like me, when you finally get an opportunity to share the Gospel, you feel like you have a mouthful of worms.

Remember that the Lord is at work, patiently making you become a fisher of men throughout your lifetime. **You** are His fisherman or fisherwoman in progress.

Take His lessons to heart and either cast the net or mend it, and "Go fish."

I asked earlier, "What is that going to look like tomorrow?"

In our response time, ask the Lord to fill and refresh you in His Spirit, and to show you how, today and tomorrow, you can fish more effectively.