

[let's get ready to disciple]

:: mark 3 ::

Mark 3.1-35 - And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.

And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."

So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.

"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" — because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."

Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.”

But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”

If we're looking for instruction on hitting the mark as disciples, we're in the right chapter. Because here, in chapter 3, we not only have Jesus calling the twelve, but we also see Him giving them specific instructions while simultaneously having a comparison to some other people, the Scribes and the people from Jesus' hometown, who were in opposition to what the Lord was doing.

Here we get a little insight into what discipleship is about and what sort of things break the Lord's heart.

We're not going to go in order because we only have a few minutes to talk about these things, so we'll start there with the calling of the 12. It took me a long time to understand that a whole bunch of people followed Jesus as disciples and that from among that group the Lord called out the 12 for specific purposes. At one point during the ministry, Jesus shares some hard teaching about what it means to *be* a disciple and, John chapter 6 says, that after that time many people turned back and walked with Him no more. Now, of course, at the crucifixion, everyone deserted Him. After the Lord was hanging there we see John standing at the foot of the cross, but throughout His ministry, many people followed Christ as disciples.

We see Jesus, however, climb up on a little mountaintop and separate out for Himself 12 specific individuals to do specific works for Him. Now, these guys had a special position during that time. We are not apostles. However, *like* these guys, we each receive a specific calling.

Look at verse 13:

Mark 3.13-15 - And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.

As we see this and as we step back and look at the rest of Scripture, passages like Romans 12 where it talks about each of us being specifically gifted by God, or Ephesians 4, it is made very clear that each individual disciple is *wanted* by God and is called by God to do a *specific* work that has been set before us to do. And the definition of a disciple is someone who is willing to stand up and follow the Lord and His Word. Jesus says so plainly down in verse 35:

Mark 3.35 - For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.

We see a great deal of intimacy here revealed in this text. It would be a mistake to miss it. First of all, we see that Jesus called to Himself those who 'He Himself wanted' the text says. Then at the end of the chapter He compares those who follow Him and the will of His Father to His immediate family.

And so, first and foremost, we need to understand that we are *wanted* by God. He *wants* to do something in our lives. He *wants* to take us on a journey where we can be used to preach and to help and to bring God's power to the people of the earth.

But, as we're often pointing out, that means that a disciple has to accept the whole of God's will and God's word, not just the easy parts. When we get to those portions of Scripture that challenge our selfishness and our pride and maybe even our 5-year plan, are we going to be the ones that turn away and walk with Him no longer or are we willing to leave those nets behind and go wherever the Lord leads?

The second thing that stuck out to me in this text is that a disciple must be compassionate and willing to help those who are suffering. We see this demonstrated up at the top of the passage, where Jesus heals the man with the withered hand. The Pharisees were there, excited to have a chance to trap Jesus. They didn't care at all about this guy who was crippled and suffering. In fact, they wanted to *use* him in order to find an excuse to destroy this Rabbi who was going around healing people and teaching people and turning their hearts to God and repentance.

Here's how Jesus felt about the Pharisee's behavior - verse 5:

Mark 3.5 - And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

It broke the Lord's heart.

When we lack compassion, it breaks God's heart. It angers Him.

These Pharisees, as God's people, were supposed to be people of compassion, people who called upon the Lord for help on behalf of others. They were to be a light to the Gentiles and the messengers of hope for all nations. Instead, they had become hard-hearted. They resented the fact that God was doing something in their midst. They rejected the Messiah! Because they'd rather the people around them think they were spiritual without helping anyone or sacrificing anything from their lives or following after the will of God. And *THAT* made the Lord angry. Because when we become self-centered, when we're using people in one way or another or when we stifle down the word of God and the Spirit of God and become discompassionate, then the Lord is angered. Because those things are the opposite of what God's people are meant to be and to do.

A disciple is someone who follows the Lord's will, and so far we've already seen that the Lord's will is to go and preach, teach and serve the people of the earth. Everywhere Jesus has gone there have been incredible multitudes around Him. And He spends Himself preaching the Gospel, calling people to repentance, healing and serving and loving others.

Remarkably, He never sends these crowds away. Instead, He and the disciples *don't* eat. They *don't* rest. They minister to the people who have been brought to them.

Now, in our case, things are a little different. Because, by and large, huge multitudes aren't coming to us to be healed or to receive revelation. This was Jesus we were talking about. But

the fact remains that the life of a disciple is not meant to be centered on recreation and isolation. It's meant to be centered on service. There will be times of rest. Even Jesus had a few of those. There will be times of recreation. Jesus attended weddings and had fun with His guys. But the physical focus of our lives isn't how we can do less and be served, but the opposite: How can we *do* more and *serve* more?

In fact, there's a little tidbit in this passage I really liked. It's there in verse 9, just something that I thought was a great phrase for us to meditate on as men who want to be found faithful in Christ.

It says:

Mark 3.9 - So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him.

As they did ministry around the region, Jesus called upon these guys to keep a small boat on hand. Keep it prepared. Keep it maintained. Keep it accessible. Keep it ready so that, at a moment's notice, they could use that boat in order to keep the compassionate ministry of Christ going. Because He wasn't going to send the crowds of people away. These crowds were actually crushing the Lord in their need for help.

It must have been an incredible spectacle to see these scenes, as Jesus and the disciples don't even have enough room to eat or to sleep or to pray or even to breathe because so many people were flocking there to hear the Christ and receive the life He was offering. But Jesus would not send them away, so He conscripted His disciples to keep this boat ready so ministry could continue.

If we want to understand what discipleship is all about in God's mind and in practice, this is a great chapter to look into. Because here we not only see God's heart, but we see how it plays out practically and we also see what can happen to God's people when they're not dedicated to living a life led by the Spirit and submitted to the will of God. How we become rigid and selfish and discompassionate.

A disciple is someone who is not selfish, not self-centered, not obsessed with comfort, not critical of what God is doing, but someone who wants to be *a part* of what God is doing. Someone who allows their heart to be softened by the Holy Spirit so that they can have a growing and sacrificial love for the people around them who are so desperate for eternal life. People who keep the small boats of their lives ready so that ministry can happen unabated at a moment's notice. People who understand that they are *wanted* by God and that He's inviting them into a special, family relationship and intends to do a specific work through them. *That* is discipleship.

Let's soften our hearts to those who are suffering around us today. Let's choose to do it! Let's understand that Jesus is doing something in this world and in our community and commit to being a part of it. And let's keep ourselves ready so that we can serve others at the very moment that God calls us to preach and reach and lift His name high.