

The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry Mark 1:14-20

Congregation: Hebrews 3:1-12
Daniel 2:31-45
Mathew 4:1-11

I have been finding that going through a gospel book has been quite a challenge compared to the other instructional books that we have gone through so far. One of the biggest issues is trying to glean out some sort of application from this historical record of Christ's ministry. I think as we progress through some of that will get easier once we get into the actual teaching's of Christ. But right now with it mostly being a record of historical accounts it has been an interesting challenge but actually kind of fun at the same time. So that being said, I am going to let you all off easy this week because I am probably not going to be my usual long winded self.

Last week looking at the first half of this chapter Mark records the account of John the baptist, and the baptism of Jesus. This week we will be looking at the start of Jesus ministry in Galilee, but there are a few things I want to draw out of last weeks lesson before we move on. First, is how this book can be broken up into sections, I was told I went over it to fast last week so those who keep notes couldn't keep up, so I will say it again. First, is what we looked at last week which is the Preliminaries of Jesus' ministry, chapter 1:1-13. Next, which we are heading into today, is the beginning of the Galilean ministry which spans from verse 16 in the first chapter, to chapter 3 verse 6. To summarize this section, we see the introduction to Jesus' ministry, then his calling of the disciples, Then Mark follows that up with a glimpse of Jesus' day to day ministry, teaching at the synagogues, casting out demon's and healing the sick. Then, rounding out the last part of this section we see the controversy that arises around Jesus' ministry over his claim of being able to forgive sins, over his fellowship with tax collectors and sinners and the controversy of how his disciples lack of fasting, and the breaking of Sabbath law.

So, that is the first 2 sections, the preliminary, and the beginning of Jesus ministry. Next is the middle of the Galilean Ministry Chapters 3-5 It is here that Mark focus on the rising popularity of Jesus with his healing and exorcism ministry. It is in this section we see that Jesus appoints his 12 of his disciples to be his apostles. And we also will see the controversy and continued opposition by the Jewish teachers of the law. Then we come to the 4th section, Chapters 6-8 which is the conclusion of Jesus Galilean Ministry. This is where we see Jesus moving away from the area surround the Sea of Galilee and moving toward his home town of Nazareth which was up in the hill country of Galilee. Here we continue to see the power of Jesus as he continues healing and the continued rising opposition he faces from the Jewish leaders as he criticizes their understanding of the Law.

The 5th section, is the way of Glory and Suffering. Chapters 8-10. It is here that Mark shifts his focus away from the crowds of people and Jesus' display of his power through healings and exorcisms and moves the focus to the disciples and the cross. Then in Chapters 11-13 we see the section of the Final ministry in Jerusalem. It is here that we see a direct confrontation with the Jewish leaders with the recounting of the cleansing of the temple which is a strike to the center of the Jewish faith. And finally closing out this book we see Marks record of the Passion of Christ, and the empty Tomb chapter 15 and 16. So, for those of you taking notes, that is 7 distinct divisions in this book, the Preliminaries of Jesus' ministry, the beginning of the Galilean Ministry, the Middle of the Galilean Ministry, the Conclusion of the Galilean Ministry, the Way of Glory and Suffering, the Final Ministry in Jerusalem, and then Passion of Christ, and the empty tomb.

So this section that we are going to be looking at today we will see 2 things, the passing of John the baptists ministry, and the rise and beginning of Christs. John preached that there was one coming after him who's sandal strap he was not worthy to loose. John was the one who Isaiah prophesied as the one crying in the wilderness preparing the way for the messiah. Now that Christ has come, Johns ministry was coming to a close, he had served the purpose that God set for his life and we find him here imprisoned and which we will later read leads do his death by beheading.

I think that there is an important lesson we can take from this fact of the rise and fall of John's ministry leading up to Jesus' ministry. We serve a sovereign God, John was doing what was set before him to do, his life, the decisions he made lead him all the point of him crying in the wilderness preparing the way for the messiah. When his purpose was fulfilled, when he accomplished what God had set before him to do we then see his imprisonment and subsequent execution.

Now by our human understanding, we would look at that and mourn that his life was cut short in such a violent and untimely death, but in the lens of God's sovereignty the truth is, it was God calling him home, his job was done, he accomplished what God had set forth for him to do, and it was God's time that John would be executed and at that moment caught up into heaven where he could stand face to face with God and hear him say, "well done my good and faithful servant." What I want to take away from this is the simple fact of God's sovereignty in each of our lives. We do not know what he has set before us, we do not know his plan and purpose for us, how he may use us for his Glory, but the fact remains that we are his children, who he cares for, whom he loves, and who he has given a calling, and a purpose to fulfill and it is not until then will he call us home.

We should take comfort and encouragement in this. Life can feel mundane, life can feel like it has no purpose or meaning, but it is not us who gives it meaning, it is not us who give it purpose but it is God working through us that we find purpose, and it is to this end that we strive, that we continue until he calls us home. We do not know what is set before us, we do not know the impact or ministry we may have on someone in our lives, or even someone one we have yet to meet. Yes, we will stumble, yes there are things that will be constant struggles in our life, God did not promise that we would one day reach sinless perfection in this life, he did not give us 7 easy steps to having a better life as Joel Osteen likes to preach, But God did promise to forgive us, to work in us and through us, to give us the grace to continue day to day going about our lives fulfilling the calling and ministry that he has set before each of us. Do not belittle or begrudge what you have, John the Baptist had a tunic of camel hair and ate wild honey and grasshoppers by all appearances he would seem to be a madman yet God had set before him a great ministry of preparing the way for Christ.

So now we see starting here in verse 14, the Johns ministry fading, God's purpose and plan for his life and ministry has been fulfilled and how Jesus' ministry is beginning. "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying. The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, Repent and believe in the gospel. This kingdom that is at hand, is the kingdom that was prophesied in the book of Daniel we read this morning, verse, 44 it says the God of heaven will set up and kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, it will not be passed on because it is an everlasting kingdom. Again we see another vision of this kingdom in Daniel 7:13-14 "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. Then to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

Israel misunderstood this prophesy, they were looking for the messiah to free them from Roman rule, to establish his kingdom here on earth and making Israel a great nation once again as it was under David. This is probably one reason why the Jewish leaders of Jesus day hated him so much, they were looking for a warrior, for a mighty king to rise up and lead them to victory over the Romans, but instead they got the son of a carpenter, whose teaching did not build them up, but rather tore them down, exposing their faults, their lies, their misunderstandings and hypocrisies. This prophesied kingdom was never a physical kingdom, it was not God's plan to reestablish Israel as a world power, his kingdom is spiritual, it is eternal.

That is one thing that I think is a flaw of the idea some hold to the second coming of Christ is to establish his kingdom here on earth, the old testament prophesies about the coming of Christ who will establish his kingdom, and we see right here in the gospels Jesus saying that his kingdom is at hand, it is coming, repent and believe the gospel. As we think about the gospel today, we are looking back at all the works of Christ, his death, burial and resurrection fulfilling God's demand for a sacrifice to cover the sins of his people, and the gospel that Jesus talks about here is one in the same, but it is looking forward to the Christs fulfillment of the prophesies and establishing his spiritual kingdom. John Gill explains Christ's gospel ministry in this way, looking forward, calling for repentance.

“he called them to repent, not only of their former sins and vicious course of life, but of their bad principles and tenets, concerning a temporal kingdom of the Messiah; concerning merit and free will, justification by the works of the law, and salvation by their obedience to the ceremonies of it, and the traditions of the elders: these he exhorts them to change their sentiments about, and to relinquish them, and give into the Gospel scheme; which proclaims liberty from the law, peace, pardon, and righteousness by Christ and salvation and eternal life by the free grace of God.”

In the following verse we see the account of Jesus calling his disciples. Verses 16-20 “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. Then Jesus said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.. They immediately left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther from there, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who also where in the boat mending their nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and went after Him. So I always thought this was interesting, that they would be out fishing and Jesus walks by and says “follow me” and they drop everything and follow him. I know that if I was at work and someone says “hey, quit your job and join me in my travels” I would probably look at them like they are a little crazy. But while studying this out this week, it all makes sense, Simon and Andrew were already aquainted with Jesus. First off, they were in the area that John had his ministry they had heard John and believed him which we find out in the book of Luke because they actually were John the baptists followers.

If we go to John, Chapter 1, picking up at verse 35 it shows that their following Jesus was not just on a whim. “Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said Behold the Lamb of God! The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and seeing them following, said to Them, What do you seek. They said to him Rabbi, which is to say teacher, where are you staying? He said to them Come and see. They came and saw where he was staying and remained with him that day. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peters brother.

So we see that they were already familiar with who Jesus was, and believed that he was the messiah. So when he approached them it wasn't just on a whim that they left but they were already aware of him. As I was thinking on what can we take from this, it occurred to me that these men acting on complete faith.

They left their jobs, their family, everything that they had, everything that was stable because the one they believed was the Messiah called them to follow him. There are a few different things I think that we can take from this. 1st, is the importance of Christ's calling and ministry. It supersedes our livelihoods, it supersedes our family ties, when God says follow me, or do this our reaction should be one of action, not excuses. This puts into perspective those who are called into the mission field, when God puts the souls of the unreached on a person's heart, when he calls them to this mission they must go. Which brings us to the 2nd point.

God's calling is sure, and effective. Notice there was no argument, in fact they did not even take time to talk it over, Christ said, follow me and they said sure, jumped out of their boat and followed him. And in the case of James and John they left their father right then and there tending to his fishing nets. Much is the same way when he calls an unbeliever to belief. An effectual call that can not be denied nor argued against. One may try for a time, one may in a sense struggle against it but in the end because of God's work changing their heart, they really have no choice but to follow him for it becomes what they want to do.

3rd, is the fact that this calling is a sacrifice. Sometimes our faith can put us at odds with our family and friends. Sometimes holding to this faith puts us at odds with those around us, and we suffer ridicule, and sometimes serious persecution. For these 4 we see recorded here in Mark, their ministry ended either in martyrdom, or exile. These men left it all, to follow Jesus and to become fishers of men, to seek others who are lost, to be a witness to the kingdom that is at hand. One more thing to put this into perspective is the fact that the souls of the lost are more valuable and precious than fish, or in other words, our jobs, our families, and as we see with the disciples who became martyrs, even our own lives.

When the disciples left everything to follow Christ, in their case it was a physical act. They literally, left everything and followed him. But there is more to it than that, it was faith working in them to act and to do. Just as when we studied in the book of James that faith without work is dead, Andrew, Simon, James and John didn't just say, Sure Lord, I believe you are the messiah, but you know I think we are good here, but we will pray for your ministry as you go! No, the faith they had that Jesus was the promised Messiah acted out with them following him both in a spiritual sense, and a physical sense. Much in the same way for us, God doesn't call us to just sit by and idly wait for him to return. He calls us to action, calls us to witness, calls us to be a light to the dark world around us. Our lives reflect the faith that we hold, our actions follow our faith.

So that is what I got for this week, next week we will be going into verse 20 which is going to start getting into the ministry of Christ in Galatia.