

## **Mark: Gone Fishing!**

**Mark 1:14-28**

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If you have your Bible with you, and if you don't there's one in the pew just in front of you, turn with me to Mark chapter 1. And we come this evening to the verses that begin at verse 14 and all the way down to verse 28, Mark 1:14-28. Before we read the word of God together, let's come before Him in prayer. Let's pray.

Our Father in Heaven, the grass withers and the flower fades but the word of our God endures forever. Holy Spirit, we pray that You would cause this word to be opened up to our hearts. Help us to see great things concerning Yourself, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Now hear the word of God.

Mark 1:14-28:

14 And after John (that is, John the Baptist) had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." 16 And as He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 And they immediately left the nets and followed Him. 19 And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. 20 And immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him. 21 And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. 22 And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 And just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 saying, "What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God!" 25 And Jesus

rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 And throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice, and came out of him. 27 And they were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." 28 And immediately the news about Him went out everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

Amen. May God bless to us the reading of His holy and inerrant word.

Mark, you understand, is giving us just a summary. Actually, almost a year has gone by since the last incident that Mark has recorded for us, the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist and the temptation in the wilderness that followed it. Jesus had gone back to Galilee and then He has come back down to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover; you read of this in John's gospel. And then you remember He travels back north again through Samaria, has that conversation with the woman at the well. And so a year, almost, has gone by. Mark doesn't actually tell us that. We're back up north again in Galilee, alongside the sea of Galilee. John, John the Baptist, has been imprisoned; his work is almost over. The reason for his being here has almost now been eclipsed, and it is time for Jesus—the servant of the Lord, the divine Messiah, the One whom God has chosen—it is time for Him now to begin His public work of ministry and preaching. It has taken some time, hasn't it? Jesus is thirty years of age.

And just think for a minute, the Spirit came down on Jesus at the time of His baptism. That was a year ago and then nothing, and it has taken a year to transpire. Jesus has gone up to Galilee. He has attended a wedding. God isn't in a hurry. God isn't in a hurry. There's nothing of a business strategy about the way Jesus builds and brings about His kingdom. There's no announcement by Jesus of some sure formula guaranteed of success in the work of kingdom building. Now we'll see again and again in the course of this gospel (as we see it in all four gospels) that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world, and He builds His kingdom according to different principles. Now I want us to see in this Galilean ministry around the Sea of Galilee and especially one of its principle towns, Capernaum, that Jesus is establishing Himself as King. And I want us to see the King's message and the King's disciples and the King's power.

## **I. The King's message**

### **The time is fulfilled**

First of all, the King's message, and it consists of several features. We read in verse 14, after the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus is in Galilee. He begins to proclaim the gospel of God and this is its content: "The time is fulfilled." There was a consciousness on the part of Jesus that history was at a turning point. The

time is fulfilled, and this turning point has to do with Himself and His coming into the world and His mission. He's talking about something that the Old Testament has been anticipating for hundreds and hundreds of years and has now arrived. History seems to have been anticipating, waiting for this moment.

John Stott has a new book out. It's called, *Why I Am a Christian*. He's replying to the philosopher Bertrand Russell who in 1927...it's taken John Stott a while to reply to it, you understand...but in 1927 he wrote a very famous book, *Why I Am an Atheist*. And this is Stott's reply after a lifetime, and he's eighty something...after a lifetime's reflection and discipleship in the kingdom of God: *Why I Am a Christian*. And his first reason is this text. It's this text. It's the fact that the first thing that Jesus said was that 'History has a turning point in Me. That all of the Old Testament in terms of its prophecies and anticipation has reached its culmination point in Me.' Jesus was conscious of that. You remember later He will go into the synagogue (it's recorded for us in Luke chapter 4) and He will read from Isaiah the prophet, and He will read that part of Isaiah chapter 61. And when He is finished reading, He'll roll up the scroll and He'll sit down and He'll say, "Today, this scripture is *fulfilled*"...using the same word. The message of Jesus is that all of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Him, in Jesus, in no one else. It's in Him and Him alone. The time is fulfilled.

### **The kingdom of God is at hand.**

The second feature is that the kingdom, the kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus didn't come announcing a blockbuster, a bestseller: *Living Your Potential*, by Jesus; *Seven Ways to Pep Up Your Marriage*, by Jesus of Nazareth. No, actually His message was all about the kingdom of God. There's a sense in which the entirety of the gospel of Jesus can be summed up in that little phrase, "the kingdom of God," or in Matthew's gospel, "the kingdom of heaven." It's all about the kingdom.

Now that's surprising that Jesus is saying, 'All of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Me, and the message that I come to proclaim is the message of the kingdom of God.' And do you know the expression "kingdom of God" only occurs seven times in the Old Testament? That's a little surprise. Four times in the Psalms, once in Obadiah, and once in Chronicles, and once somewhere else—there's seven times. But you know there's a sense in which the whole of the Old Testament is about the kingdom of God. It's about the rule of God, the kingship of God, the dominion of God, the sovereignty of God, that God is establishing His gospel in Genesis 3:15, that "the seed of the woman would crush the head of Satan," and from then on we see the King bringing His kingdom into fruition. And Jesus is saying, 'The kingdom of God has come. It's at hand. It's here.' In the coming of Jesus something of the fulfillment of God's plan, God's design, God's decree has come now to some fruition. There's a sense, of course, in which the kingdom of God is yet to come. Don't we pray in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come"? And we want to see the kingdom of God, the rule of God, the sovereignty

of God being stretched from shore to shore until that great day when Jesus in all of His glory will come again on the clouds of Heaven with a trumpet of God and the sound of the archangel. Yes, there's a sense in which the kingdom is yet to come, but Jesus is saying there's a sense too in which the kingdom has arrived and it's arrived in Jesus, the rule of God, the dominion of God. It's in Jesus Christ and it has come.

### **Repent and believe in the gospel.**

And there's a third aspect of His message and that's the command to repent and believe—to repent and believe in the gospel, in that order here, though the order can change in the New Testament. But the two go together, repentance and faith like two wings of a dove. The Puritan Thomas Watson said, “Like two wings of a dove whereby we fly into heaven.” Not one without the other, repentance and faith.

Jesus comes into the world; He begins His public ministry; and the first words out of His mouth are that you need to be changed, that you need to turn, that you need to change your mind and your heart and your ways and your attitudes and your predispositions and your habits. His first words are that there's something radically wrong that needs to change, and the need to embrace Christ and to believe in the gospel and to believe in the promise of God as it is freely offered in the gospel. That's Jesus message. It's a very simple message. It's a message about the rule and dominion and sovereignty of God that finds expression in this message of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. That's the message of Jesus. That's what He comes proclaiming.

## **II. The King's disciples**

And then, secondly, the King's disciples. Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee and He sees Simon (who later He will call Peter) and his brother Andrew. Now it isn't that these men had never seen Jesus before. You understand in John's gospel, immediately after the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, these have already seen Him. The disciples already knew Him. Jesus had already called Andrew, you remember, and Andrew had followed Him and actually gone to the place where Jesus was staying. No doubt over the months that have transpired these disciples have pondered and thought and deliberated as to who Jesus was, so that now back up in Galilee they see Jesus...perhaps this is not the first time they've seen Him up in Galilee. And He calls them. And so this invitation by the lake, it isn't a sudden invitation as though He was inviting them just to take a leap in the dark. They've had a year to think about Him and to gain information about Him. So He's walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and He sees Simon and Andrew and then James and John. Isn't it interesting that He calls two sets of brothers? It's an extraordinary thing.

And then, even more than that, He calls four fishermen. You know you might...you might think, "We know this story so well," but you know we might think He would call four lawyers. No. Doctors? No. He was the divine healer; He had no use for doctors. You might have thought He would have called some great teacher of notoriety in the synagogue circles of northern Galilee, someone whom He could take to Jerusalem. No, four fishermen, four fishermen...and I know it's easy to downplay the education of these men, and after all these men wrote the New Testament and they wrote some things that are hard to be understood. And Peter says that about Paul, but you can read some things in Peter that are hard to be understood too. By the Spirit, these men were transformed. God takes...Jesus takes them from their vocations, from their primitive, day-to-day, ordinary, humdrum livelihoods, and He calls them to be His disciples.

A.W. Tozer, oh, fifty, sixty years ago, gave a warning to the church about calling to positions of influence what he called "sparklers," people with personality and charm, good-lookers. But he says, "You know, the thing about sparklers on the Fourth of July is that they only last for a minute or two and then they're gone." And Jesus...isn't it extraordinary? He doesn't call "sparklers." He calls men of rugged determination. He calls them because of their character. He calls them because He sees something in them that you and I perhaps would not have seen.

## **Two parts of the call:**

### **1) To follow Jesus**

Now this call has two parts. It's a call, first of all, to follow Jesus, to follow Him. Before you can do anything for Jesus, you need to know Him. You need to know what He thinks. You need to know His priorities. You need to know what His opinions are on this and that and the other. You need to sit at His feet. You need to listen. You need to commune with Him. You need to talk with Him. You need to ponder His words and His actions. You need to allow Him to instruct you. You must love Him and be prepared to say, "Wherever you lead me I will go, and I will follow You." Think about it: they were fishermen. That's what they did. That's the level of their expertise. And Jesus is going to change their lives. Jesus is going to raise some of these disciples...He's going to raise them to positions of incredible influence. Think of Simon Peter on the day of Pentecost, preaching with all of his heart the gospel of Jesus Christ. He's come through a lot. He's going to be one of God's instruments in turning the world upside down. I imagine Peter would say for the rest of his life...you know, he'd have one of those moments and he would say, 'I'm just a fisherman from Galilee. That's all I am, but by the grace of God He called me to follow Him.'

### **2) To be fishers of men**

And it was a call to be fishers of men. "I will make you fishers of men." Here they are, Simon, Andrew, James, John, with their nets and they're mending their nets. And you can see this idyllic picture with the sea lapping on the rocks, on the pebbles of the shore of the Sea of Galilee with little boats and nets, and Jesus is saying to them, "I will make you fishers of men." One of the great theologians of Scotland, Thomas Boston—Oh, his works I think are in twelve volumes and some of them are deep and very deep—but he wrote one little small, small little book. It was his best seller; it was the one I think that his readers loved the most. *The Art of Man Fishing*, it was called, *The Art of Man Fishing*. And in that book he's asking the question, "Why did Jesus imply this particular simile that evangelism is like fishing?" Elsewhere of course Jesus will use different similes. He'll say, He'll say, 'evangelism is like farming,' you know, sowing a seed in the ground and watching and watching it grow. And in other places He'll talk about evangelism 'like a shepherd taking care of one's flock.' But here, "I will make you fishers of men."

How does Jesus make fishers of men? You know, we're coming up to the missions conference and if you didn't catch all of that at the beginning you were asleep. Missions conference is right on our doorstep within a couple of weeks. And it's not about missions in outer Africa necessarily but missions right on our doorstep, you and I as missionaries, as evangelists, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. How does Jesus make fishers of men? And we can answer that question by asking the question, "How were Simon and Andrew and James and John made fishers of fish?"

And the answer of course is simple: through watching their fathers, over a long period of time, learning the ends and outs of fishing. I know nothing about fishing and if I'm honest I don't really want to know anything about fishing. I did it when I was a little boy...but there's something, there's something here that is so profound because Jesus is saying, 'Look, if you follow Me, if you sit at My feet, if you listen to what I say, if you watch what I do—I'll make you fishers of men. Learn from Me. I'll instruct you about evangelism. I'll tell you how you witness to another soul.' They watched Him talk to a rich, young ruler and watched that rich, young ruler go away because he loved his riches more than he loved Jesus, and they learned something about evangelism. They watched Jesus talk to a woman at the well where that woman...yes, I'm convinced she was enticing Him. And they watched the King of Kings and Lord of Lords bring that woman down and down and down, exposing her sinfulness and her need and drawing her to Himself. And they learned. They watched and listened as Jesus spoke to one of the greatest preachers of the day, Nicodemus, in Jerusalem, the Billy Graham of the first century. No, that's not the right analogy because Billy Graham is converted, but you know what I mean. He was, he was noted as the great spokesman, the great preacher, the great expositor, and Jesus spoke to him and said to him, "You must be born again." "You must be born again." And they watched and they listened. They watched Him as He spoke to 5,000 and more all at once on the side of a hill, and they learned how to become fishers of men. You

know by the end of Jesus' ministry...well, according to 1 Corinthians 15, there were 500 brothers that Jesus revealed Himself to all at once, 500. That's over three people a week, I suppose. They learned from His example. They learned from His teaching and they learned what kind of fishermen Jesus employs in the work of spreading His kingdom: fisherman who are poor in spirit and who mourn over their sins and who are meek and who are pure in heart and are peacemakers and hunger and thirst for righteousness and are persecuted for righteousness sake.

God has called many fishermen since then: a Martin Luther in Wittenburg, a John Calvin in Geneva, a John Patton in the New Hebrides. And when he arrived in the New Hebrides there wasn't one fish that had been caught, and by the time of his death there was scarcely anyone who hadn't been caught. And God called this man, John Stott, born in 1921, and in 1958 he wrote a book, *Basic Christianity* it was called. And in 1971—Astonishingly, it was only his second publication. In 1971 a copy of that book came into my hands. It was given to me by a friend who said to me, “Read it. I think you'll find it interesting.” And read it I did. And it was like a lightning bolt out of heaven. And thirty—what is it? Thirty-three years ago, or four or whatever the math is...my life has never been the same since, because God raised up John Stott as a fisherman so that God's hook might be brought into this sinful soul. The King's message and the King's disciples, but there's a third thing I want us to see and that is the King's power.

### **III. The King's power**

Because Jesus gives them the first lesson in evangelism and it's in Capernaum and it's in the synagogue in Capernaum...and you know if you ever visit Israel you can go to this synagogue. And according at least to some very famous archaeologists, some of the tiles on the floor of that synagogue may well go back to the very time of Jesus Himself. There's a gaudy monstrosity of a church next door to it which you may turn your back on and just look at the synagogue and there imagine Jesus in that synagogue. And He's there as a Rabbi, reading from the Scriptures, and He's teaching them and He sits down, and they're amazed by His teaching. They're amazed! They're transfixed by His teaching. There was power in Jesus' words.

You know, every now and then in a sermon...hasn't happened that many times I have to say...but every now and then I've sat and I've been absolutely glued to my seat as I've listened to a preacher expound the word of God. There's a reformed Baptist preacher in this country. The story is said to have happened in 1990. He was preaching at a family conference in a building and about two-thirds of the way through the sermon, the lights went out. And the reason why the lights went out is because it had been electronically computerized, programmed so that if it detected no movement for a space of time, the lights would simply go out. So transfixed was that audience—there was absolutely no movement except in the

pulpit, but there was no movement. He continued preaching and it was only when he said, at the very end of the sermon, "Let us pray," and all their heads went down that the lights came back on again. That's the story; it happened in 1990.

They were astonished. They were astonished by the teaching of Jesus because it has authority—verse 22 and again in verse 27. It had authority. It wasn't like the teaching of the scribes. He taught as One that had authority and not as the teachers of the law...and then it happened, a man with an evil spirit. And Jesus commands the evil spirit to come out of him, and he comes out and he obeys, and there's a shriek and there's a convulsion and the evil spirit leaves him.

What is this story? What is it saying? It's saying that Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, has come into this world to reverse the demonic powers that have undone this world since the time of the Fall. He's come, according to John, as we've been thinking of in Sunday morning...He's come so that he might undo the works, destroy the works of the Devil. Do you remember later He will say to Simon Peter, 'I will build My church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it'? And here are the gates of Hell. They are in this individual and Jesus is saying, 'Part of what I do is to destroy the works of the Devil so that the kingdom of God might prevail and be triumphant.' So that here is Jesus on the very outset of His public ministry, and He marches into enemy occupied territory and declares His sovereignty and victory and triumph.

What you have here is just a little foretaste; it's just a little glimpse of what you will see in the later chapters of Revelation and in chapter 20 especially when the Devil himself—not just one of his spirits, not just one of his cohorts, but the Devil himself—will be cast into the Lake of Fire and Jesus will be triumphant.

Oh, you remember the words of Luther, "And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us, we will not fear for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for, lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him." Oh, may God give us a glimpse of Jesus in all of His greatness and glory at the very outset here of His public ministry and fill us with faith in believing. Let's pray together.

*Our Father in Heaven, we thank You for this glimpse of Jesus. We thank You for His sovereignty and kingship. We thank You that He lives with the power of an endless life and is seated at Your right hand in glory and ever lives to intercede on our behalf. Bless us, we pray, and hear us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Please stand, receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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