

October 30, 2022

“The Response of the Disciple, Part 2”
Mark 1:16-20

FCF: Lack of meaning > anxiety

PROPOSITION: (anchor) “The King has come!”

(magnet) We must rightly respond to this news and follow Him.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

We are a privileged people. We live in the wealthiest most powerful nation in the history of the world. And yet we are a people riddled with anxiety and depression - especially in the younger demographic. How can this be? It’s partially explained by social media, the tyranny of expectations and comparisons, and rampant loneliness. But it actually goes deeper than that. We are untethered and without direction, exhausted from our search for meaning and purpose. It’s an impossible task - trying to create the reason for your existence. And the anxiety is inevitable.

There is another path here. And it is found in an invitation held forth to us by Jesus.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Mark 1:16-20](#)**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

What sets apart loyalty to Jesus from allegiance to a fanatic? We’re not too keen on fanatics - what they ask of us, where their ideas can lead, the harm they bring. Jesus comes off as a bit exclusive, a bit demanding. What sets this path apart from others? We could answer that by appealing to a contrast of results. That is, where these different paths lead. That might help.

But if we want to go even deeper, we need to understand something of the biblical reality that anthropologists have been confirming for years. We are all religious. We all have basic faith commitments that are foundational to our lives and choices. In the words of the theologian Bob Dylan ([READ](#)) “You’ve gotta serve somebody.” All of which is to say the question is not “Are we serving somebody or something?” but “Who and what?” In that sense, we’re all fanatics.

Which brings us to our text and the basic point here. Jesus’ message is that the kingdom has come. With His coming, God’s rule and reign has come from heaven and touched down here on earth. The King has come. He has come to rescue His people and to renew His creation. That’s the news He bore. And we must rightly respond to this news. What would that look like? Last week, we considered part of the answer. Part of the response to this news is our repentance and belief. That’s part of it. But pushing further, we see something else. Part of our response to the coming of the King is our following Him. The King has come and we must follow Him.

What would that mean? There are two sides to this - the negative and the positive.

I. NEGATIVELY - DYING

First, the negative. There is a dying in following Jesus - a forsaking and renouncing.

A) Forsaking All

This account here in Mark 1 sets forth a forsaking all. What does that mean?

1. Security

It means a new security. They were called to leave behind their livelihood. These fishermen were not poor. James and John had hired servants. It was a family business. Simon and Andrew were self-employed but possibly in partnership with James and John. All indications are that things were going well. There was familiarity and security. And Jesus said, “Leave it behind.”

2. Identity

They were to have a new security. And a new identity. They were called to leave behind their families. In such cultures, the family was everything. It defined who you were. It was both your status and identity. And Jesus said, “To follow me, you’ll need to leave all that behind.”

To follow Jesus is to find our security and our identity in Him and Him alone.

B) *Renouncing Self*

So part of following Jesus is a forsaking all. But also a renouncing self. Mark records three separate instances of Jesus’ predictions of His death. And with each one, Jesus presents His followers with lessons on discipleship. The first of these is in Mark 8 ([READ Mark 8:31-34](#)).

1. Deny yourself

This word “deny” is the same word used to describe Peter’s denial of Jesus in the high priest’s palace. “I never knew the man!” We are to do deny ourselves in the same way. We are to say “No” not just to things but to ourselves - to our self-interest, self-reliance, self-sufficiency.

2. Take up your cross

We are to deny ourselves and to take up our cross. What was a cross? It was a Roman form of execution adopted from Persia, the most horrifying form of punishment they could imagine, used as a public deterrent to all those who would want to deviate or protest Roman rule. It was an object of shame. And it was well known. Thousands had been crucified by this point. So what did it mean to “carry your cross”? What did it convey? It meant to be led away to your death. So what does Jesus have in mind with this image? He is calling us to sever our ties, to let go of our idols, and to completely surrender to Him. For we are no longer our own. We are now His.

This is the negative side of following, the dying, the forsaking and renouncing.

Illustration:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is best remembered for his classics *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*. Bonhoeffer stood against the tide as Nazis gained power in Germany in the 1930’s and 40’s. He participated in a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. And it cost him his life. Perhaps one of his most famous quotes is ([READ](#)), “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”

This was more than just talk. Bonhoeffer lived it. His stance against the Nazis was not just dangerous but unpopular. For that he was misunderstood and criticized. He took heat for leaving Berlin and going to London to serve churches there. His American friends could not see why he would leave the safety of the United States and return to Germany. His German friends could not see why he would work for the secret police. They could not know he was a double-

agent. In all of this, it wasn't that he didn't care what others thought. But he was willing to die to his desire to be admired. Before he was martyred, he lived a martyr's life. He followed Jesus.

Application:

What would this look like for us? Jesus goes so far elsewhere to say we are to hate our family and friends - not literally but comparatively. There are to be no rivals or even runner ups.

Perhaps a few diagnostic questions would help. Where might we have put conditions on our following Jesus? Is it possible that we might be saying, "If my health is good, if my career thrives, if my family holds together, then I will follow Him." What is it after the "if"? That is your condition, the ultimatum you have given. That is your real goal, your real god. But Jesus is not willing to be the means towards our goals. He must be the goal. He must have control.

"The King has come!" We must rightly respond to this news and follow Him.

II. POSITIVELY - LIVING

Which brings us to the second point. (READ Mark 8:34-37) Following Jesus, being a disciple, is not just about the cost, a dying, the negative. There is the positive, the gain, the life.

Illustration:

Think of it like this. What does it mean to be married? One answer might be to say, "It means you are no longer single and you can't date anyone else." Well, that's true but only part of it. The negative is for the sake of a greater positive - a life of flourishing with another person.

It's the same here. The cost is for the sake of gain, our following Jesus. And such a life bears certain marks, borne out in the experience and lives of the disciples. There are four things.

A) Listening

1. His teaching

It means listening to Jesus' teaching - the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, and other places. Some of it is direct, words to His followers. Some of it is indirect, words to His opponents.

2. Our response

Our response? As we hear, there must be a readiness of submission and obedience of behavior but also a readiness to have our cherished assumptions challenged. Following means listening.

B) Learning

1. His life

Following also means learning. Our attention must be riveted upon His example and model, His pattern as the Son who delights to do His Father's will. Our lives are to be lives of imitation.

2. Our response

And as we observe Him, as we spend time with Him, we will find ourselves being changed by Him and becoming more like Him. We need to be prepared for this. Following means learning.

C) Leaning

1. Our need

Following also means leaning. Our need for wisdom and strength becomes all too apparent as we continue in this life of listening and learning, of obedience and imitation. We need Jesus.

2. His supply

Our need is great. But it is overwhelmed by His supply. Think of the images He gives us to ponder just from John's Gospel. We looked at these a few weeks ago. Jesus is the bread, the light, the shepherd, the vine. With each, we come with our need and He meets it with His supply.

D) Lordship

1. Obvious meaning

Following means our listening, learning, leaning, and one more - His lordship. This should be obvious. By definition, for us to follow Jesus means that He has to be in front. He has to be in front and we have to be coming in behind, walking behind Him. And this is not to be reversed.

2. Challenging implications

There are challenging implications here. This means Jesus' desires for our lives and this world must become ours. Think of how He taught us to pray (**READ Matthew 6:9-10**). This is not something only to be waited upon in the future but is something to be worked out in the present. And as far as the curse is found. All the areas of disintegration we mentioned last week - with disease, emptiness, broken relationships, poverty, injustice, racism we are to hope for healing, fullness, reconciliation, abundance, justice, and peace. We are to rejoice in their coming one day and to participate in their coming this day. We are Robin Hood's band of Merry Men. We are the Underground. We are the Resistance. We are Jesus' hands and feet now. And so we must lay aside our interests for the sake of our King - whatever that means. For following means lordship.

CONCLUSION:

The reason for a good deal of the hardship we face is often something else - not just the hardship itself but healing. Case in point, I tore the ACL in my left knee a few years ago playing in a local adult soccer league. That led to doctor's appointments, an MRI, and surgery. That led to weeks and months of recovery and physical therapy. The first few sessions were the worst. Oh, the pain. But you have to push through it for your future mobility. Otherwise, scar tissue will build up in the knee. So you give yourself over to the therapy, the pain. Why? The reason for the hardship was healing, something far beyond the hardship itself. That stands to reason.

The same applies in following Jesus. The reason for the dying - the forsaking and the renouncing - is that we might live. The reason for the dying is something beyond the dying. It's the life we were created for, something Jesus wants us to have - a knowledge of and intimacy with our Creator, the fullness of life as it is meant to be. All the disintegration reintegrated, all separations undone, everything sad made untrue. This is what Jesus has in mind when He says, "Follow Me." And that is how we rightly respond to this good news that the King has come.

PROPOSITION: (anchor) "The King has come!"

(magnet) We must rightly respond to this news and follow Him.