

October 2, 2022

“The Call of Discipleship: An Introduction”
Mark 1:1-20

FCF: Our confusion about the decision

PROPOSITION: (magnet) To be a disciple of Jesus begins with hearing the call of Jesus.
(anchor) What does this mean?

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

By and large, most of us like to keep our options open. We want choices. The bigger the menu, the better. The greater the channel selection, the grander. This carries over to the spiritual realm and is reflected in the growing number who identify themselves as “nones” - without any decisive allegiance to any one faith. This is a relatively new trend and is worth conversation.

But it’s worth noting that to decide not to decide is to have made a decision. It is to have declined an exclusive path for the sake of keeping our options open. And that’s to have decided.

Into this decisive indecision comes the declaration and clear call of Jesus. This morning we are going to begin a mini-series on the topic of “discipleship” as found in Mark’s Gospel.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Mark 1:1-20](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

What is a disciple? The answer is important because to be a Christian, to be a follower of Jesus, is to be His disciple. It is not something added-on, a further stage of development, or an advanced special class of spirituality. To follow Christ is to be a disciple. So what is a disciple?

Disciples were common in the first century. Jewish rabbis had disciples. They were understood to be followers - students, apprentices, pupils - who were committed to a particular person so as to learn that person’s philosophy, teaching, or way of life. And then to follow it. The word is mentioned over 250 times in the New Testament. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? Looking at our text, it describes someone who has heard His call and follows Him.

That simple definition has some astonishing implications - for disciples then and now. And we’re just scratching the surface of this. But this is what we see. To be a disciple begins with hearing the call of Jesus. To be a disciple of Jesus begins with hearing the call of Jesus.

What does this mean? We will press further here in the coming weeks. But for now, let’s consider two things. First, the reality of Jesus’ call. And, second, the necessity of Jesus’ call.

I. THE REALITY OF JESUS’ CALL

First, the reality of the call. What causes someone to follow Jesus? They hear His call. Consider the text. Who is speaking to these men? Who is standing on the shore of the lake?

A) The Authority of His Voice

What was it that they heard? What moved them? It was the authority of Jesus’ voice.

1. Not by mere persona

It was not the charm of His persona ([READ Isaiah 53:2](#)). Jesus did not have the voice of Morgan Freeman, the looks of Brad Pitt, the body of Dwayne Johnson, or the aura of Denzel Washington.

2. But a deep persuasion

It was not mere persona. It was deep persuasion. How did this King first display His authority? Before any of the miracles, He calls disciples to follow Him. The miracles prove His authority.

B) The Power of His Voice

But beyond even the authority, there was the power of His voice. Again, who is this?

1. Evidenced in the text

This is evidenced in the text, from the start (**READ Mark 1:1**). From there, Jesus is said to be long awaited by the prophets. He is beloved by the Father. He is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

2. Demonstrated at the start

The evidence is right there in the text. And demonstrated at the start of His mission. Think with me. He spoke and something came alive in them. There was power at work in the very call.

So we see the reality of Jesus' call, an authority and power that is still at work today.

Illustration:

We were at a conference out west a few weeks ago and spent a few days at Yellowstone National Park. It's huge - larger than Rhode Island and Delaware combined. Over 500 geysers, 10,000 hydrothermal features, 200 waterfalls. That's the terrain. Then there are the creatures - grizzlies, wolves, and bison. It's like another world. But it's not. It's very much part of this one.

Application:

My point? This world of which we read here in which Jesus speaks, calls, and people follow Him is not another world separated from this one. Put another way, this is that world.

I wonder if we believe that the authority and power of His voice is still at work. That our experience of coming to Christ is the same as what we read here. How does that land on you?

To be a disciple of Jesus begins with hearing the call of Jesus. The reality of the call.

II. THE NECESSITY OF JESUS' CALL

Which brings us to the second point, the necessity of His call. There is nothing wrong with fishing. There is no hint of that or any discontentment felt by these men. If anything, we have signs of flourishing success. Why then leave it all to follow Jesus? What was happening?

A) The External Call

It's worth understanding that there are two types of call. The first is the external call.

1. The message alone

This is the message alone, by itself - who Jesus is, why He came, and how we should respond. This is the proclamation of the news that goes out broadly to each person in the same way.

2. The differing responses

And the responses differ to this external call. Some accept it. Others reject it and turn away.

B) The Effectual Call

But there is another call - beyond the sound in the ear to a power at work in the heart.

1. A simple definition

This is the effectual call. Meaning simply that it has or produces the desired effect. It's a supernatural working, the work of the Holy Spirit pressing in the external call in a deeper way.

2. The larger definition

Theologians have written much on this over the years. Well they should for it is a good thing to write about. Here is what we see in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* ([READ WSC:31](#)):

What is effectual calling? Effectual calling is a work of God's Spirit whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel.

There is a profound necessity to this call - not just the external but the effectual call as well.

Illustration:

Which reminds me of my own story. Back in high school, the reason I became interested in Jesus was I had been invited to a Young Life meeting. But I went to meet girls. True, I was not satisfied with my life. But I wasn't conscious of a spiritual quest either. Still, God used that to spark something. I was increasingly drawn and eventually gave my life to Jesus. That was the beginning. But not really since much had been going on leading me to that point - things that were good and things that were not, things I can see and things I can't. And Jesus was over it all.

Application:

So what's your story? Some of you can identify with mine - not necessarily the details but the sense of the Lord's working, enabling you to hear His call. Each different but the same.

Might I suggest something that could be of real encouragement? If you are a disciple of Jesus, take the time think about how that happened, how the effectual call played out in your life.

To be a disciple of Jesus begins with hearing the call of Jesus. The necessity of His call.

CONCLUSION:

There is something else about this call that is unique. It's not just the One we follow, the path He walks, and the totality of what that demands. It's also the initiative taken with the call. It's all His. That was not the pattern in the first century. The practice in those days was for a potential disciple to consider the options, weigh the demands, and make a decision. But that's not what we see here. This is Jesus' initiative. This was not the way such things were thought of in those days. Or in ours. Think about it. We're accustomed to being in the driver's seat, all our options open and the decision left to us. But what does Jesus say? ([READ John 15:16a](#))

This is all of His doing, His pursuit, His choosing, His grace. Our following Him is a work of His grace. Just as much as all His work for us. His living the life we should have lived, His dying the death we deserved to die, His giving us this time and opportunity now for our hearts to be reminded and refreshed, our compasses recalibrated and reset - this is all of grace.

Our life is found in Him, from the very beginning and every step along the journey.

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