

Mark 1:12-20

“Following Jesus”

We left off last time at the spectacular scene of Jesus’ baptism; the heavens rending in two above Him, the Spirit descending down *upon* Him, the Father audibly affirming His approval of Him. What a radical scene, Jesus identifying w/sinful man, being identified by the Father *to* sinful man. He’s been *introduced*, He’s been *identified*, and now as we pick up today, He gets *initiated*.

But before we go there I want to draw your attention to just a couple more things out of this scene of Jesus’ baptism. Because as I stated last time there’s just so much here it’s hard to cover it all in just a couple minutes but we want to note just a few more things briefly before we move on. We noted as we closed last week the difference between Jesus’ baptism and that of every other person being baptized that day, they were baptized *confessing* their sins. When Jesus was baptized He didn’t confess *any* sins. Why? Because He didn’t have any, He’s the sinless Son of God. You recall from the gospel of John that when J.B. saw Him initially in the midst of those to whom he was ministering to collectively he stopped and pointed Him out specifically saying, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” John 1:29 “And By saying that he was saying, “This is a Man w/out spot w/out blemish absolutely sinless, completely perfect, a worthy sacrifice for the sin of the world.” Now that’s not to say that He wasn’t tempted like you are and I am, (we’ll note that today), but He didn’t succumb to the pressures of that temptation, He remained w/out sin.”

But what else are we able to glean from this scene at His baptism? 1 Thing I think that’s interesting to note is the transition from humility to glory, God showing His glory in the midst of humility. Everything about this scene is “common” at best, and only more humble beyond that. You’ve got a Man w/a common name (we developed that last time), “Jesus” wasn’t a *special* name in that day. It was common, that’s why He was distinguished by the phrase “Jesus of Nazareth” as opposed to another Jesus from another place. But think even of that, He was from a lowly and despised village. Nazareth was notorious for really not having anything good come out of it. You remember when Jesus called Phillip and Phillip went and found Nathaniel and said, “Hey we’ve found the Guy, the One of whom Moses and the law prophesied—Jesus of Nazareth!” and Nathaniel looked at Phillip and said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” John 1:46 “And Phillip answered and said, “Come and see.” And He was from the region of Galilee, not exactly the bible belt of His day. Judea was the bible belt, that’s where Jerusalem was, and all the pious Jews pretty much inhabited that area. Then as you went further north you came to the region of Samaria, and in Samaria were the Samaritans, and they had a long standing bad relationship w/the Jews, the Jews considered them no good ½ breeds, (they were ½ Jew) there was racial tension, religious conflict and the whole bit. Then as you went further north still you came to Galilee, beautiful in its topography, but it was on the outskirts,

lots of Jews lived there, but lots of Gentiles did as well. So Jesus was from the outskirts, and from those parts a village of ill repute, a common name being baptized in a dirty river. There's nothing real grand about the Jordan river, as a matter of fact early rabbinic tradition explicitly disqualified the Jordan river for purposes of purification, it was just too dirty. So there's humility woven all throughout this scene.

But then note the glory, the heavens parting, literally that speaks of a rending in two, a sudden type of an event. You have the Spirit descending in some discernible form (like a dove) not necessarily a bird, but descending in some way that was notable and alighting upon Him, coming upon Him.

And Then you have (like the grand finale) the Father speak forth from heaven saying, "You are My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." You don't get much more glory (this side of heaven) than to have the Father commend you *from* heaven audibly/publicly. God loves to place His glory on display in the midst of humble surroundings. In a setting of humility, God takes the lowly and glorifies Himself greatly through them.

Another thing we see here is the Trinity on display. You have the Son being baptized, the Spirit descending *upon* Him, and the Father speaking forth from heaven *about* Him. You see the Tri-unity of God on display all throughout the scriptures this is just one of the more prominent places, at Christ's baptism.

Finally we note God's testimony of Jesus, "...in whom I am well pleased." Jesus *always* did those things that pleased the Father. What a testimony, I wish I had that testimony, that I always did those things that pleased the Father, but I don't. I don't always do the things that I know I should, don't always follow the direction of the Spirit for my life. Jesus did, He never placed Himself as the priority, He *always* submitted His will to the will of the Father. Even to the point of death. There He was in the garden praying, "Father if there be any other way (outside of the cross) then let this cup pass from Me *nevertheless* not *My* will, but *Your* will be done." God help us to lead lives that are pleasing to our heavenly Father, that He might look *upon* us and say *to* us, "...in *you* I am well pleased." So after His baptism we notice...

Vs12-13

Now remember Mark is the gospel *on the go*, and so *immediately* this happened, and *immediately* that happened. Following Jesus' baptism, the Spirit came *upon* Him and then immediately began to *lead* Him regarding God's specific plan *for* Him. We read that that Spirit *drove* Him into the wilderness. There's almost a sense of violence about this word, it's the same word that's used w/reference to Christ *casting out* demons. There was a very specific agenda that was needing to be accomplished in Christ's life and the Spirit was leading Him directly to it. This word also means, "...to cause a thing to move straight on its intended goal." There's no swerving to the left or to the right here, it was straight out to the desert. He was to be tempted, tried and tested, He has to be brought through the "fire" humanly speaking, refined, made ready for His work as our Great High priest, sure He identifies w/us in baptism, but what about everything else in life? The bible says, "*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*" Heb 4:15 and His *initiation* into His ministry came through this time of testing and *temptation*.

There where it says that He was "tempted" that word tempted is in the present tense, that means the whole time He was there He was being *continually* tempted. We have a tendency to

think He was tempted intermittently during these 40 days 3 times because of the temptations highlighted for us in Matt and Luke. Whereby He was tempted to turn stones to bread to satisfy His flesh (He was fasting the whole time), or when He was tempted to cast Himself off the pinnacle of the temple to prove God's word, Satan twisting the scripture to encourage Him unto sin, testing the Lord His God. Of course Satan tried to get Him to side step the cross by offering to Him all the kingdoms of the world if He would only bow to him, and worship him. and In each case Jesus countered the temptation by a proper administration of the word of God, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." "It is written' You shall not test the Lord your God." "Away w/you Satan for it is written' You shall worship the Lord your God and Him *only* shall you serve."

and In that we have an incredible illustration and application for us in how important it is to know God's word and wield God's word accurately and w/specificity, it's the sword of the Spirit and we need to wield it well. The Psalmist said, "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.*" Ps 119:11 You see if Jesus didn't *know* the word how could He overcome temptation and resist the enemy *through* the word? We need to be students of the word of God. Actually there were 2 things about Jesus that equipped Him for the temptation that confronted Him. #1 The power of the Holy Spirit that had come upon Him, if the power of the Holy Spirit isn't residing upon your life, then you don't really stand a chance in the face of temptation. The power to be a witness resides in the person of the Holy Spirit resting upon your life. Jesus said it, we desperately need it. #2 He had a working knowledge of the word of God *in its proper context*. The power of the Holy Spirit upon you and a working knowledge of the word of God w/in you are 2 vital keys in overcoming temptation.

But w/regard to Jesus being tempted, don't think He was only confronted by 3 radical temptations and gaining victory that was it. This word "tempted" means that throughout the entirety of His time in the wilderness He was being perpetually and continually tempted. and Perhaps you're thinking, "Oh I believe He was tempted but c'mon, really, how bad could it have been, He was Jesus?" That's right He *was* Jesus, and because of that His temptation was much, much worse! We've talked about this before. I would dare to say that there is not a person here (or who's ever lived for that matter,) who's *ever* felt the full weight of temptation bearing down upon them. Because we all have very finite limitations, we get pushed to a certain point and we cave in, we deal w/the temptation by giving *in* to the temptation and then we're not tempted any more. and In Christ we've even been given a promise that God won't *allow us* to be tempted beyond what we're able to bear and yet we still cave in often times. However Christ never *gave in*, never *caved in*, and so the pressures of temptation just kept mounting and mounting, and growing and growing. I suggest to you that the temptations that Christ was confronted w/were much, much worse than anything you or I will ever be faced by and yet He *never* fell prey to them, He was completely victorious over them.

Of course the fact that He was in the desert for 40 days rings a bell. In the scriptures the # 40 is often times related to a time of *testing* or *judgment*. It rained on the earth for 40 days and nights during the flood. Moses was the Mt for 40 days receiving the law of God that would be His standards of judgment for the people. Of course they were in the wilderness after the Exodus for 40 yrs. You may recall that Goliath taunted the armies of Israel for 40 days before

David came and slew him. and Of course here the Son of David, the greater than David overcoming the enemy in the wilderness through 40 days of temptation, emerging in victory.

There's 2 hints here that under gird His victory all the more. #1 We read in Vs 13 that He was *with* the wild beasts. Now that doesn't mean that they were surrounding Him, all snarling at Him and He was having to ward them off and defend Himself. It means that they were w/Him in perfect peace, as it as intended to be from the beginning, the lion lying down w/the lamb and all of that. Before the fall Adam ruled God's creation in perfect peace, remember he had the job of naming all the animals and all the rest. Animals have no contention w/a perfect/sinless man, its fallen man that presents the problem. (Let that bear witness to you the next time a dog growls at you, you have a sin nature, that creates a problem). and So by the fact that He was *w/them* in the context of having authority *over* them and not having any problems *from* them though they were "wild" shows that He was sinless both before and after His temptation, He never fell prey to sin.

The 2nd hint we're given is that the *angels ministered to Him*, He had authority *over* them. Again I can't command *anything* of the angels, they're not at my beck and call; however to the perfect sinless Son of God He has only to speak the word and they're at His service. So from the lowest to the highest order of creation we're seeing His authority in play bearing witness to His sinlessness and victory over temptation.

Vs14-15

Now in Ch 6 we'll get a fuller picture regarding the details of J.B.'s imprisonment and subsequent martyrdom and so we'll save that for then. But upon his being placed in prison Jesus makes His way back up north to the area of Galilee where He will spend the majority of His time and ministry. and Don't think of Galilee as some little Podunk outpost. As I mentioned earlier it wasn't exactly the bible belt of His day but the ancient Jewish historian Josephus documents that Galilee was an area of about 60 by 30 miles, had some 204 villages in it each having no less that 15,000 people. So there were over 3 million people in that region in which He spent the majority of His time ministering.

The summary of His ministry is given to us here; He was, "...preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." Saying (Vs 15), "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel." Now as I've mentioned the gospel of Mark is focused much more on the *works* of Jesus as opposed to the *words* of Jesus. However Mark wants to make it clear from the get go that the *focus* of Jesus was on preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. He was a *preacher* who did wonderful and incredible miracles, not a miracle worker who occasionally proclaimed God's word.

and This 1st thing I'd have you notice here is that He says, "The time is fulfilled," understand that God doesn't do things randomly w/out reason or purpose. He operates on a Divine time table. Paul told us in the book of Galatians, "*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son,*" Gal 4:4 The law had run it's course, it was the day of a new dispensation, and when things were where they needed to be prophetically, politically, historically, God sent forth His Son. God doesn't shoot from the hip, He moves strategically, very orderly and with precision. and Christ was walking in stride with the Spirit, God's plan for His life. and God doesn't shoot from the hip regarding your life either, He has a plan for you, and He'll bring it to pass *through* you as you just walk *with* Him and wait *on* Him.

But w/regard to this idea of the “time” being at hand, understand that the word used there isn’t one that speaks of “time” in general (*chronos*) from where we get our word “Chronological.” This is a word (*Kairos*) which speaks of “fixed and definite” time, a “limited period” of time, again a “strategic opportunity” or “decisive moment.” So that what Jesus was saying is that *now is the time, the opportunity for you to become apart of God’s kingdom is right here, right now, don’t let this opportunity pass you by.* and I think that may be a word for some who hear this message today. When God is dealing w/you, working on you and He’s seeking to apprehend your heart, understand that God is moving *strategically*, in a way that best avails itself to you *personally*, the opportunity for you to become apart of God’s kingdom is right now, don’t let the opportunity pass you by. That’s why the bible says, *“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.”* Heb 4:7 Because there’s a window of time that we have to respond to the gospel message, and then that’s it. and I don’t know what that window is for each person, you could get hit by a Mack truck on your way home today... That’s why it’s so critical that we respond when the message is presented to us and not put it off.

The 2nd thing He says is, “The kingdom of God is at hand.” Now this was a welcome message believe you me. Because Israel was *sick* of Roman oppression, they were ready for the yoke to be cast off, and the Messiah to rule and reign over the earth. However that wasn’t what Jesus was talking about, Oh that day is coming. But Jesus wasn’t speaking about freedom from the bondage of Rome, but freedom from the bondage of sin. He didn’t come to overthrow Rome, but to redeem us from our sin. The kingdom He was ushering in was something spiritual, not material, it was a kingdom of love not subjugation, grace, not law, it was for all men not just the Jews, and it was to be received voluntarily not imposed by force, and they didn’t get that.

Something else He emphasized about the kingdom was that it was *near*, it is *at hand*. It’s not some distant/dreamy concept somewhere out there over the rainbow far, far away. It’s very near to you, its right here at hand. You can extend your arm out as far as you like but your hand is still pretty close, the salvation of God is like that. Its not way out there, it’s near...

So the time is now, the kingdom is near, what do you have to do? “Repent, and believe in the gospel.” We talked about repentance last week (I’d recommend you grab that study if you weren’t here), what is it? It’s a change of mind, and a corresponding change of direction. and If you’re not in Christ, you can not enter the kingdom of God w/out changing your direction, w/out repentance. and I’m not sure why but somehow the word “repent” has almost become taboo in our culture, it’s a word that makes people uncomfortable. Because it implies there’s something wrong w/me. Well...there is something wrong w/me! I’m a sinner, I rebel against the holy standards of God by nature, and I need to change my direction of heading away from God and turn toward God if I’m to enter the *kingdom* of God. If I’m headed to St. Louis and am suddenly called to go to Tulsa I can’t do that apart from a change of direction. Well, if I’m leading the natural life of self and sin and God begins to call me to His Kingdom, I can’t go there unless I change my direction, I have to turn *from* my sin and turn *toward* Him. and It’s an obvious change, because it’s impossible for me to turn toward something w/out necessarily turning *from* something else. So to when you turn *from* sin, and *toward* the Lord it will become evident. It’s called repentance. It goes beyond simply feeling *sorry* for your sin, that’s all well and good, but I can feel bad about something and never change my direction, that’s not repentance. So repentance goes beyond emotion, its action.

The 2nd thing I need to do is *believe in the gospel*. and Understand that to *believe* something is far more than to give a nod to something, assent to it mentally, we're talking about trusting in it internally from the heart. The word *believe* here means I'm persuaded *of* it, confident *in* it and give total credit *to* it, we're talking about a relationship of trust and dependence. and So the kingdom of God that Jesus was calling them to was more than a simple moral renewal. It was about trusting God, taking Him at His word and living in a relationship of dependence upon Him. So, "Now's the time, God is dealing w/you desiring to *save* you don't let the opportunity slip through your fingers, turn from your sin, turn toward God and live in a relationship of whole hearted trust and dependency upon Him and His word." That's the message, believe that Jesus paid the penalty for your sin, and receive His righteousness accredited to your account through faith in Him.

Vs16-20

Probably the single most famous account of Christ's calling and man's committing is this scene right here. and As we read this if you weren't familiar w/John's gospel you would think this was the 1st time Jesus saw these guys.

In reality He met them several months prior to this when J.B.'s ministry was going strong, and John pointed them to Him then. and At that point they followed Jesus in what we might call a *saving* way, but now Christ calls them to follow Him in a *serving* way. Not just to believe *in* Him and so be saved *by* Him, but to commit *to* Him and follow whole heartedly *after* Him. and The same thing happens w/us, we *see* Jesus begin to take interest *in* Jesus, give our heart *to* Jesus and are saved *by* Jesus. But then there comes a point whereby the Lord challenges us to commit to Him in a greater way, not only to be *saved* by Him, but to begin now to *serve* Him, learn *of* Him, and follow intimately *after* Him.

and A few things you should be aware of as our time draws to a close here regarding this call of Christ upon their lives. #1 We should note just that, they didn't choose Jesus, Jesus chose them, same thing w/you and me. When we give our heart to Christ it's merely a response to the invitation He's extended to us. #2 They forsook all and followed Him, most people have excuses why they can't commit to Christ, can't really serve Him. These guys were busy like the rest of us, owned and operated a business. I don't know about all of them but Peter was married as well, had a family to consider, but when the call came they placed their priorities in the proper perspective and followed Jesus w/out reserve. They counted the cost and trusted that as they sought 1st the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and followed Christ wholly to the best of their ability that He would provide for their needs. But we just love how these guys abandon themselves to Christ, not irresponsibly, but whole heartedly. (Immediately they left their nets and followed Him) and That word "followed" speaks of following behind, it points to their discipleship, they became His disciples.

Vs 17 is the *command* "Follow Me" and then we see the *plan*, "I will make you become fishers of men." When God calls you He equips you, He has a plan for you and He will teach you and train you to excel in His call upon your life. He says, "I will make you become" there's teaching and training implied there, He's "caught" them, He'll teach them to "catch" others. and He wants to do the same thing w/me and you, He's got us, now He wants to take us and train us, equip us for His call upon us.

and It's kinda neat that we see the details here that when He called Peter and Andrew they were *casting* their net, and when He called James and John they were *mending* their's. Peter and Andrew would be used primarily in evangelical ways, bringing people to Jesus casting the net of the gospel and seeing who they were able to bring up from the deep.

James and John would go on to emphasize the principle and the practice of love, mending, repairing, and restoring people through administering the love of God. Jesus has a plan that peculiar or particular *to you*, what's important is that you and I be willing to forsake all that we might follow *after Him*. Because at its grass roots that's what it's all about... following Jesus.

And if you haven't made the commitment, understand that the time is now, don't let it pass you by, repent and believe in the gospel, Jesus died for your sin, so that you might walk in His righteousness. Don't resist it, welcome it, thank God for it, latch onto it, allow God to save you through it, for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Prayer Points:

Lord, help us to follow You fully, whole heartedly, more than in just a *saving* way (as awesome as that is) but in a *servicing* way. That we would learn what it means to abandon ourselves to You. To seek You first and Your righteousness, trusting that You're going to meet our needs and bring contentment to our lives. We just want to apprehend that for which You apprehended us, so use us for Your glory.