

“Stop, Drop and Follow”

Mark 1:14-20

Series: STEPS Week 1.

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January 7, 2024

“Good Morning, ladies and gentlemen. Flight 499 we will be boarding in a few minutes.” Last summer I flew out to Kansas City to see my Mom. Being by nature cheap, I bought the super cut rate economy seat. As you know, when they hand out board groups they give you a letter: A, B, C, etc... kind of like grades in school. What was my grade? F. So when it came to my boarding *pass* I failed.

The lady at the gate said, “Thank you for your patience we are now ready to board letters A through E. That’s our first class, elite class, gold class, star class, business class, upper class...” I watched everyone else get on ahead of me. Finally the lady said, “Alright F troop, our no class customers, listen up: you get to fight over the last spaces in the overhead bins. Let this be a lesson to you...next time don’t buy the cheap seats!”

So, after walking down the cattle chute and cramped airplane aisle, I finally arrived at my seat. The time had come: the time to depart, the time to take off, the time to mount up on wings like eagles and soar. We taxied out to the runway...and stopped. Then the captain came on and said, “Ladies and gentleman I have bad news and good news. The bad news is there are 10 planes stacked up in front of us. The good news? We are now half a mile closer to our destination.” The time had come...for me to pray.

The time has come Woodside to take a step. Today we begin the New Year with a new series called “STEPS: A Journey with Jesus through the Gospel of Mark.” We will launch the New Year by learning what it means to stay in step with Jesus. We will learn to walk our talk – to actually become what we say we believe. You see the problem is that Christians are good at talking about Jesus. We’re just not very good at walking like Jesus. That is the world’s number one complaint about the church: we don’t walk our talk. We don’t look like Jesus and we don’t live like Jesus. Woodside – what if we really follow Jesus step by step? What if we live the way Jesus lives? What if we love the way Jesus loves? How do we do that? Well, to walk Jesus’ walk, we need to learn Jesus’ talk. During the first months of the year we will:

- Read about Jesus’ steps in the Gospel of Mark. I ask you to read one chapter a week. Read one chapter every day for seven days using various Bible study methods.
- Study Jesus’ steps in Growth Groups every week.
- Learn about Jesus’ steps in worship every weekend.
- And most importantly: Practice Jesus’ steps every day of the week.

Every adventure begins with a first step. This is how Jesus begins His earth-shaking, world-changing movement:

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:14-15

Jesus’ whole message is summed up in 17 words. Let’s look at each phrase.

The Time Has Come. Greek has two words for time. The first is *chronos*. In English we have chronological and chronology. Chronos is the measurement of time. It’s clock time. It’s the answer to the question “What time is it?” The other Greek word is *kairos*. It’s not clock time, it’s the right time, the time you’ve been waiting for, the time of your life. It is a moment of truth, a turning point, decision time.

I’m going to let you in on a little secret: a lot of Christians are Chronos Challenged. It’s a Chronic Condition. Now don’t be alarmed – I hear this happens in every church. Here’s an example: If the service starts at 9 a.m. when do most arrive? 5 to 10 minutes later. I know it’s not your fault – you all came on the 9:10 bus right? Why are people chronologically late? They want to do one more thing before they go – get one more cup of coffee, read one more article on the sports page, solve one more fight between the kids. You can put off *chronos* time.

Kairos is different. If you put off a *kairos* time you will miss a critical moment in your life. It’s your time to make a decision. It’s the turning point of history. When Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves, it was *kairos* time. When Rosa Parks took her seat on a Montgomery city bus, it was *kairos* time. When Germans tore down the Berlin Wall, it was *kairos* time. And when Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and began to preach it was *kairos* time. The Jews waited seven hundred years for the promised Messiah. That time had come. John the Baptist proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me...I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. (Mark 1:7-8) That time had come. *Kairos* time: it’s the right time, the critical time, the time for a decision.

The time has come for you. Jesus asks, “Are you in? Will you sign up? Will you follow?” Oh. Well. Sure Jesus. But first let me drink another cup of coffee. I have to read a little more of the sports section. I’m sorry, Jesus. What were you saying? The kids were fighting in the back seat. I have a to-do list a mile long, my email inbox has 3000 messages, I have that soccer game, a zoom meeting and dinner to make. And by the way Jesus, what are you asking me to sign up for anyway?

The Kingdom of God has come near. Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God over 80 times. What does Jesus mean by the Kingdom of God? Usually kingdoms and governments have borders, bureaucracies capital cities, currencies, laws, flags, and armies. The Kingdom of God has none of those. This Kingdom includes people from every nation, tribe and tongue. So what unites the Kingdom of God? The King. You are in the Kingdom of God if God is your King.

The fact that God is King is not new. God is always reigning throughout the universe. But this planet is in rebellion. It is enemy occupied territory. The prince of evil rules this world. This is why after Jesus’ baptism he has a face-off with the devil in the

desert. This is why the demons howl when Jesus comes near. It's D Day. The Kingdom of God is invading enemy territory. The new thing Jesus announces is not that God is King but that you can join the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is not an institution it is a revolution. The Kingdom of God is not membership in a club it's a movement. It's not an administration it is an adventure.

Do you want to join the movement? Are you ready for the revolution? Are you willing to sign on for the adventure? Before you say yes, let me tell you what you are getting yourself into. Yes, being part of the Kingdom means salvation and eternal life. But it's more than that. Yes it's about the hereafter but it's also about the here and now. It's about restoration: restoring the people who are lost and broken, hurting and hungry, homeless and hopeless in this world, restoring the creation and restoring justice. Why? Because this is what we see our King doing. We are saved to be sent. We are saved to serve. We are saved to share. If Jesus is our King then we need to do what we see Him doing and walk what we hear Him talking.

I drank a cup of coffee on the airplane. On the side of the cup it said for every cup someone drinks the airline donates money to build up the communities where the coffee is grown in Peru. It finished by saying, "We believe doing the right thing is bringing light to the world." How did they get it right? An airline is bringing light to the world while most of the Church is asleep in the Light. What do we need to do to wake up?

Repent. When you hear this word you usually picture a preacher pointing a judging finger at a sinner. That's not what the word means. The Hebrew word *shuv* means "return." Repent to the Jews was to come back, to come home. It's what the prodigal son did. He went the wrong way, turned around and returned home. The Greek word for Repent – *metanoia* – means "to change your mind." Suddenly you wake up, realize you're going the wrong way, turn around and go the right way.

Now gaining a new perspective, turning around, coming home have a nicer softer sound than "REPENT!" But it's not going to be easy. It will take every bit of your being – all your heart, mind, soul and strength – to reorient your life so you can follow Jesus. The world has trained you that the most important things in life are more, bigger, better, faster, stronger, richer and you must do whatever you can to get them. The world has trained you to collect and accumulate. How many more technology gadgets do we need? How many more sports trophies? How many more awards? The world has trained you to please and impress people, to win their affection, affirmation and approval.

To repent is to wake up and go the way Jesus is going. To repent is to value what Jesus values. Where did Jesus spend His time? In Galilee – the poor, oppressed, culturally diverse, backwater of Palestine. He was one of them. He fed them, healed them, taught them, cared for them, loved them and invited them to follow him. He said I have come to preach Good News to the poor, bind up the broken hearted, open the eyes of the blind, set the captives free – physically and spiritually. That was not a popular message. The people in his hometown tried to kill Him for that. They weren't willing to wake up, turn around and follow Him. Why?

Believe the Good News. They didn't believe the Good News. What's the Good New? "God so loved the world He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). We hear that and we think it's only about our salvation. Believe the Good News and you will be saved. That is true. That will always be true. But it's not the whole truth. Jesus didn't come down here just to hand out a bunch of 'Get Out of Hell Free Cards.'

Say it again with me: "God so loved *the world*." God doesn't just love the Christians, the Americans, the suburbanites. He loves the world. Do you believe God loves the world? Do you believe He loves Muslims, Buddhists, atheists and agnostics and straight people and gay people and poor and rich and black and Hispanic and white and Asian and Indian? Do you believe He wants to have a relationship with everyone on the planet? Do you believe He wants to fill every life with love, joy and peace? Do you believe He wants His planet back? He wants to break the devil's hold on this world. He wants to stop hatred, prejudice, injustice, war, poverty and disease. That's what Jesus talks about. That's what Jesus walks about. That's the talk Jesus wants us to walk.

Do you believe it? Belief is not just something you have up here in your head or in here in your heart. It's something you do out here with your hands, down here with your feet and out there in the world. Belief means you wake up, turn around and follow the King who is calling you on the adventure of a lifetime. Belief means you put your life in His hands and say, "King Jesus, I don't know where you are leading. But wherever it is I'm going to follow you. I trust you."

What do people do when they are on fire? Stop, drop and roll. To keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in you, you do something else: Stop, drop and follow.

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. Mark 1:16-20

Jesus calls these fishermen to be fishers of men – to gather people to join the movement, to gather people to join the revolution. God is calling you to serve Him here and now with the gifts, skills and training He has put in you. What you need to do is:

- Stop – Stop living for yourself or the world.
- Drop – Drop whatever net has you entangled – pride, lust, greed, anger, addiction, fear, worry, resentment, hatred or self-hatred, prejudice, etc...
- Follow – Ask the Holy Spirit – what do you want me to do? Sign up for Alpha and bring someone. Join a Growth Group. Sign up for Code Blue, Cast Your

Cares, Urban Promise, Habitat, Recovery Ministry, Code Blue, the Dinner Ministry, a Mission Trip

Stop, drop and follow. It's our time church. Let's start walking.