

The Cross Shaped Life: Shaped by Kingdom Action (Mark 1.14-20; 3.13-19)

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Dominant Thought: Jesus calls us to Him to advance His kingdom.

Objectives:

I want my listeners to understand the call to follow Jesus.

I want my listeners to feel excited to advance the mission of Jesus.

I want my listeners to choose to follow Jesus with more passion this week.

When someone calls you on the phone, you have two choices. You can pick up or hang up. When you receive a phone call, if you don't recognize the phone number or the caller, then you are likely not to answer the call. You may push that red phone button to end the call and the ringing. However, if you recognize the number or the caller, then you are likely to swipe the green phone icon and answer the call.

Today, we will explore times when Jesus calls disciples. We will explore the commands He gives and the desires He has for His disciples.

Please turn to [Mark 1:14–15](#), which reads, “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’”

The word gospel means good news, but this verse does not begin that way. John, the cousin of Jesus, is arrested. Not good. Jesus begins His preaching ministry in Galilee. Galilee was my favorite part of my visit to the Holy Land in 2016. It has the Sea of Galilee. Outside of the major city of Tiberius, it felt like a smaller, more rural area. But for those who want to make a name for themselves, you want to go to Jerusalem or today you'd go to Tel Aviv. But Jesus starts in His hometown region of Galilee. The same place He will meet His disciples after He rises from the dead in [Mark 16](#). Those from Galilee talked differently. They were viewed as country folks, uneducated, ordinary folks. It is here that Jesus begins His preaching ministry and the announcement of the Kingdom of God.

I describe the **kingdom of God as God's reign through the gospel of Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.**

As we look at the initial call Jesus gives His disciples, He offers two pairs of commands and three desires from [Mark 1](#) and [Mark 3](#).

The first pair of commands Jesus gives is Repent and Believe ([Mark 1.15](#)). Something that one can't easily see in English is the impact of these two commands. Both are intended for a group of people. In other words, Jesus is saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; You all repent and You all believe in the gospel" ([Mark 1.15](#)). This talk works in the south. Jesus says, "Y'all best repent and believe this good news." In some places, you'd hear people say, "You'uns." This command is not meant to be a solo action, but a group repentance and trust in the gospel of Jesus.

The prophet Isaiah gives us a picture of God's heart for repentant people in [Isaiah 57:15](#) "For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.'"

To repent you change your mind. You realize the way you are living is not working. You make a U-turn and come to Jesus.

Jesus is preaching His first sermon and commands His audience to change their allegiance and trust His good news. The kingdom has come. His kingdom has come.

Jesus also commands His followers to believe and keep believing. I like to use the word "trust" to describe belief. One of our four B's of Discipleship here at Berlin Christian Church is "Believing in Jesus." We want to help people believe and keep believing in Jesus. I'm so thankful for the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to give us such a detailed picture of Jesus.

Jesus wants us to believe and trust His good news. Do you trust Him? Are you trusting Him? Jesus commands His followers to repent and believe.

The second pair of commands Jesus gives is Follow and Fish ([Mark 1.17](#)). Jesus also commands us to follow and fish. I think it is important to see these initial calls to follow as the result of a relationship with Jesus. I think Simon and Andrew and James and John knew Jesus. I don't think Jesus was a

stranger to them when He calls them to follow Him. They may have even been friends with Jesus.

Interesting, in the ancient world, a Rabbi wouldn't call followers to Himself. The followers or students would ask the Rabbi if they could follow him. It's a picture of God in Jesus reaching out to humanity for a relationship.

Our mission at Berlin Christian Church is to make more and better followers of Jesus Christ. [Mark 1.17](#) gives us a clear Scriptural reference for our mission statement. Are you following Jesus?

Then, Jesus transforms these fishermen into fishing for men and women.

"As Charles Smith points out, 'Fishing is a congenial diversion and perhaps occupation—for the fisherman, but scarcely for the fish. For them his coming is ominous'" (quoted by Brian K. Blount, *Preaching Mark in Two Voices*, p. 24. Blount is quoting Charles F. W. Smith, "Fishers of Men," *Harvard Theological Review* 52 [1959]: p. 187).

Jesus says, "I will make you become fishers of men" ([Mark 1.17](#)). Jesus will make us or create us to become fishers of people. He will transform our hearts and minds and give us the power to invite people to His kingdom.

In [Mark 1.18](#), we see the response of these sets of brothers, "Immediately they left their nets and followed Him [Jesus]."

Are you following Jesus? Are you fishing for people? Who are the people you know that need Jesus? Who are the people in your relationships that are separated from their heavenly Father? We need to lean into Christ's command to follow and fish.

As we turn to [Mark 3.13-19](#), Jesus calls the twelve apostles to Him with three desires.

The first desire Jesus has for His followers is to be with Him ([Mark 3.14](#)). On this mountainside, looking like Moses from the Old Testament, Jesus calls those he wants and they came to Him. It's a good thing to come to Jesus if He calls you. He appointed twelve whom he also names apostles. The word for "appointed" is the common word for "make." "And He made twelve..." Our mission statement once again aligns with the mission of Jesus, "Making more and better followers of Jesus."

Apostle means “one who is sent.” James S. Stewart in his book, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, calls the Twelve disciples “The First Twelve” (the title of chapter VII). It is helpful to see the first twelve as those who paved the way for the rest of us who accept the call to follow Jesus. In comparing us with the first twelve, it may be helpful to view the first twelve as Apostles with a capital “A.” And all who follow as apostles with a lower case “a.” We are all sent, but those first twelve were in a unique category. And yet, we follow in their footsteps as followers of Jesus.

Jesus’ first desire for those first twelve was for them to be with Him. He wanted to spend time with them. One of the ways we spell love is T-I-M-E. It takes time to build a relationship. As you read through Mark, we have the opportunity to read the accounts of the time the disciples spent with Jesus. It’s almost like Mark is sitting around the campfire and telling the stories of Jesus and His disciples.

Dallas Willard said, “I am learning from him [Jesus] how to lead my life in the Kingdom of the Heavens as he would lead my life if he were I” (<https://dwillard.org/resources/articles/how-does-the-disciple-live>).

What are some ways you can spend time with Jesus? A friend of mine recently reminded me of Henry Blackaby’s book, *Experiencing God*, which challenges you to look where God is working and go and join Him.

The second desire Jesus has for His followers is to speak for Him ([Mark 3:14](#)). Jesus wanted to send these first twelve out to preach. The word for preach is to announce a message on behalf of the king. It’s like the newspaper boy on the corner announcing the headlines for the day. We saw this same word in [Mark 1:14](#), “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God.” Then in [Mark 1:38](#), we hear the reason Jesus came, “And He [Jesus] said to them, ‘Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.’”

God wants to make Himself known in all the world.

In [Mark 6:12](#), Jesus sent them out to preach, “So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.” They preached the same message John the baptizer and Jesus preached in [Mark 1](#), “repent.”

What’s it look like for you to speak up for Jesus? In your family? With your friends? In your workplace? Let’s pray for opportunities to speak for Jesus.

The third desire Jesus has for His followers is to throw out evil (Mark 3:15). The first two desires make sense: be with Jesus and speak for Jesus. This third one appears much deeper. Jesus wanted to send the first twelve out to have authority to cast out demons. The words “cast out” means to “throw out.” Mark gives us several pictures of Jesus casting out demons. We don’t get out of [Mark 1](#), before Jesus casts out demons ([Mark 1:25-26, 34](#)). Mark gives this summary statement in [Mark 1:34](#), “And he [Jesus] healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.”

It should not surprise us that Jesus wants His followers to cast out demons. I describe a demon as a fallen angel. Other descriptions of demons may be unclean or impure spirits.

In [Mark 6:7](#), Jesus called the twelve and sent them out “two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.” Then in [Mark 6:13](#), we read, “And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.” It is important to note that Jesus never used any incantations or formulas. There is no power struggle. He simply takes charge and tells the demon to leave.

I can still remember sitting in Lakeview Lodge at Lake Springfield Christian Assembly visiting with the summer missionary. I don’t remember his name, but I remember he was serving in Africa. He quoted these verses as the heartbeat of his mission. He wanted to raise up disciples of Jesus to be with Jesus, preach, and cast out evil.

Was the authority to cast out demons only given to the first twelve, Big A-Apostles, or is it given to all followers of Jesus? Here’s my opinion based on scripture. Christ has all authority ([Matthew 28:19](#)). We are in a spiritual battle against the forces of evil ([Ephesians 6:10-18](#)). It appears that some Christians are given the gift of deliverance to cast out evil spirits or demons. I believe all Christians are called to confront evil. It is not something to play around with or take lightly. I believe confronting evil spirits or demons is best done with other followers of Jesus with even more followers of Jesus praying for you. I believe the best way to confront evil is in the name of Jesus through the Word of God with fasting and prayer.

Let’s be honest, if Christians don’t confront evil and cast it out, then who will? I don’t think it is best done with signs and protests. We speak truth with

love. We embrace the kingdom mission of Jesus: repent and believe, follow and fish.

As we read [Mark 3.16-18](#), we read the list of the first twelve apostles. It is a diverse group. We have two sets of brothers: Simon Peter and Andrew and James and John, sons of Zebedee. James and John have a nickname “Boanerges” or “sons of thunder.” That may describe their passion and personality. We have Matthew, a tax collector who worked for the Romans. He probably had some explaining to do when he met up with the others, especially Simon, the Zealot. Some we don’t much of anything about them: James, the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot. And then, there’s the one who’s listed last in every listing of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.

Have you accepted the call of Jesus? Are you repenting and believing? Are you following and fishing for the King? Are you embracing His desires to be with Him, to speak for Him, and drive out evil?

James S. Stewart highlights three stages on the road to full apostleship (*The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, p. 58). I’ve adapted his stages as follows: 1) Friends with Jesus, 2) Surrendered to Jesus, 3) Sent by Jesus. Where do you see yourself?

Jesus calls us to Him to advance His kingdom. Will you accept His call?