



THE GOSPEL OF JESUS WHAT THE SON OF GOD DID

Mark 1:1-20

Every relationship we have either helps or hinders our walk with God. The stronger the relationship, the greater the influence, for better or for worse. Is that statement too strong? This sobering assessment of our relational influences doesn't mean we disconnect from or avoid everyone that isn't a positive influence. It means that we are aware of how the people around us are bringing us closer to God or leading us away from Him.

This is more than just a lesson to help parents guide their children in making better friends. It is a lesson for everyone. We should not simply be aware of the influence of our relationships; we should intentionally seek out and associate with people who will love us by speaking the truth to us about ourselves and mostly about God.

Everyone needs a prophet in their life.

The great prophets of Israel's history were called by God to warn His covenant people about their unfaithfulness and God's righteousness. They acted like signposts pointing people back to God. Prophets preached an unpopular message of repentance and judgment. For this reason, most people didn't like the prophets and so they were typically rejected and persecuted. No one wants a prophet as a best friend.

Everyone needs someone like "John" in their life.

John the Baptist is one of the most important people in each of the four Gospels. He stands and shouts as the link between the Old and New Testament worlds. He looks and behaves like the prophets of old, and yet there is something unique about him. Luke informs us that John's call happened before his birth. Like the Messiah he was called to announce, his life was set apart beginning at his conception.

What did John do? John was sent by God *to prepare the way for the Lord*. Before Israel's king would arrive, God promised that He would send a messenger to announce his coming. John helped prepare the way by *calling people to repent of their sin*. Sin is not popular to talk about, but there is also something attractive about someone willing to speak up about what is broken and wrong in the world and in our lives. John was someone who *stood against the way of the world* and called the people to go against what everyone else was doing and to obey the Word of the Lord. Most importantly, John *pointed people in the direction of Jesus*. Most of us are satisfied with societal or personal reformation. We are content with small changes and are willing to make slight improvements. John's ministry served one ultimate and glorious purpose: to direct people to the only One who could save them from their own sin and, therefore, the judgment of God.

It is important for each of us to have someone (or many someones) who function like John the Baptist did for his people. We should seek them out, listen to them, and finally, submit to their instruction.

But it is more important for everyone to have Jesus in their life. We are not called to devote ourselves to listen to good teachers and do good things. To be a Christian is not to follow John, but to follow the Christ, Jesus! That is why the gospels talk a little about John and a lot about Jesus. It is why John testifies that Jesus is greater than him (John 3:30) and why he felt unworthy to baptize Him (Matt 3:14). It is why God spoke directly about His love for His Son (Mark 1:11) and not His love for His servant. It is why even the disciples of John leave him to follow Jesus (John 1:35-37).

And John isn't jealous because he gets it! It is all about Jesus.

Mark 1 teaches us that Jesus is the one and only Son of God. It portrays Him as the One, the only one, who when tempted by the devil is able to overcome the temptation to sin. Our text concludes with Jesus calling others to follow Him. Think about how bold that statement is. John, as far as we know, never called others to follow him. Other rabbis in Jesus's day did not seek out disciples and then command others to follow them.

There is something different about Jesus. He is different than every other teacher and friend. He is greater than every other prophet and king. The disciples He calls to Himself He calls for a purpose. He invites them to share in the new life they will find with Him and to rescue others from God's coming judgment. This is what it means to become fishers of men.

When we find Jesus and experience the new life that only He can give, it is our duty and privilege to help others know Him. We become like John and speak the truth about our sin and God's forgiveness through Jesus. We must remember that we are not able to fix everyone's problems or satisfy everyone's needs. But we can take them to Jesus, the only one capable of doing all of that and more.

Discussion

1. Do you have a "John" in your life? Why is it important for you to have someone who is willing and capable of speaking difficult truths to you?
2. Some people are willing to have a spiritual guide (John) but not a Savior (Jesus). They are willing to listen to life lessons from a spiritual teacher (John) but not words to obey from the Lord (Jesus). Are you avoiding dealing with Jesus by being content with your relationship(s) with "John?" Think through the implications of that question.
3. We often talk about "giving our lives to Jesus." Let's ask the same question in a different way... Have you pledged your allegiance to Jesus? Are you obediently following Him and enjoying life sustained and led by the Holy Spirit?
4. How has this particular lesson encouraged, strengthened or challenged you?

Our Corporate Prayer

God, we thank you for the different people you put in our lives. We thank you for our parents, teachers, and spiritual guides. We ask you, as our Heavenly and perfect Father, to empower and guide our leaders to speak the whole truth to us. May they speak the painful truth about our sin and the joy-filled truth about your forgiveness. Help us to listen to them and give us humble hearts that will submit to their leading and guidance. May the greatest and strongest influences in our lives lead us to you!

But God, we need more than a helpful teacher. We confess that we need Jesus! We need the life that only He can offer. We need the forgiveness that only He can give. We need the Spirit that only He can send. We thank you for Jesus and for sending Him for our salvation and the salvation of the world.

In Jesus's name, Amen!