



Temple Baptist Church
Wilmington, North Carolina
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The Lord's Day, January 21, 2018

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Why Jesus Came
Mark 1:29-39

No matter what you're doing, it's important to know *why* you're doing it. Knowing why you're doing it gives you direction, keeps you focused, and keeps you going. Knowing the *why* helps you determine the *how* and *when*.

As a child, one of my favorite TV shows was the old *Daniel Boone* series with Fess Parker as Daniel Boone, Patricia Blair as his wife Rebecca, and Ed Ames as his Cherokee friend Mingo. It ran from 1964 through 1970, then often played in the afternoons after school. It was one of Jo Ann's favorites, too. In fact, we both still like it!

In the first episode of the series, George Washington asks Daniel to go to Kentucky—"the dark and bloody ground"—to find a place suitable to build a fort to be a stronghold on the frontier against the British and their Indian allies in the coming war for independence. (Like most television dramas based on historical characters, the writers took a lot of literary license with the facts.)

Daniel and his friend Carolina T. Yarkin (played by Albert Salmi) go back to the fort at Cumberland Gap to enlist support for the idea. Despite many doubts and some outright opposition, Daniel is determined to go. He knows what he needs to do and why he needs to do it. He faces many challenges along the way, but he's determined to carry out his mission, the reason *why* he went to Kentucky.

Don't you love that kind of determination? We often see it demonstrated by missionaries or military. They know why they are where they are—and they live and act accordingly.

Jesus' clarity

Mark shows us in our text for today that Jesus was clear about why He had come.

The backdrop of this text is important. As we saw last Sunday, John the Baptist had been preaching **a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins** in the wilderness along the Jordan River, proclaiming that one greater than he would come and baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:1-8).¹ Jesus came and was baptized by John, not because He needed to repent, but to identify with those who did. When Jesus came up out of the water the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove and the Father spoke from heaven, saying, "**You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased**" (1:9-11). The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness for 40 days, where He was tempted by Satan. Sometime after that, when John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, saying "**The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent, and believe the good news!**" Then He called four fishermen—Simon, his brother Andrew, and James and John, the sons of Zebedee—to follow Him. And they did (1:14-20).

Jesus and His new disciples went into the nearby village of Capernaum on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus taught in the synagogue, astounding the people because He

taught with such authority. When the scribes taught, they established their authority by quoting their predecessors; Jesus *exuded* authority as He taught! He further demonstrated that authority by driving a demon out of a man who came into the synagogue. The demon first cried out in challenge. Jesus ordered it to be quiet and come out, and then it cried out in unwilling obedience. This amazed the people even more, so that His fame spread throughout all Galilee (1:21-28).

That brings us to our text, Mark 1:29-39. Mark tells us Jesus left the synagogue and went to the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. This was the Simon who would come to be known as Simon Peter, Jesus' disciple and eventually the prominent apostle. Simon's mother-in-law was sick with a high fever, so those who were there asked Jesus to help her. And help her He did! He came and took her by the hand and helped her up, and the fever left her! She got up and began to wait on them. Imagine that—one minute she's burning up with fever; after Jesus raises her up from her sickbed, she's asking Him, "Could I get You and your friends something to eat or drink?" (1:29-31).

Later that day when the sun was setting (meaning the Sabbath was now over), people who had family members or friends who were sick with all kinds of diseases or were oppressed by demons brought them to Jesus. He healed many of the sick and cast out many demons. Since the demons knew He was the Messiah, and He didn't yet want this known, He wouldn't let them speak (1:32-34).

When you look at what happened here, it quickly becomes apparent that *Jesus was very clear about His mission*. Here He was in Capernaum, *teaching* about God's kingdom—God's rule—and *demonstrating* God's rule as He cast out demons and healed those who were sick. His mission was to proclaim good news and bring freedom and healing to the bound and oppressed.

And the people were loving it!

At this point, Jesus knew He needed some solitude, some time to pray to the Father. So before daybreak He went out into the wilderness to a solitary place to spend some time in prayer. But Simon wouldn't leave Jesus alone. He and some others tracked Jesus down. When they found Him, they told Him, "**Everyone is looking for you!**" (1:37). It was obvious that they didn't want Him to leave them.

Now that kind of response can be distracting—people expressing admiration and needing you, *wanting* you to stay there with them. Jesus already had something of a following here. He *could* use Capernaum, not just as His base of operations (which He somewhat did), but could also set up shop there permanently as the place for people to come to Him. Who knows, as word got around, He might gain more followers this way than any other . . . He could be pretty comfortable and relatively safe carrying out a ministry of healing and exorcism right there in Capernaum—not really having to contend with Pharisees or Sadducees or the Roman government as much as He otherwise would.

But Jesus was clear about His mission. It was about God's kingdom, not His own comfort or success or being adored and wanted by the people. He told those who had tracked Him down, "**Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.**" So he traveled throughout Galilee, **preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons** (1:38-39).

"That is why I have come." Jesus was determined to *stay focused* on His mission, on why He had come. He was determined to do what the Father had sent Him to do—to proclaim and demonstrate the rule of God that was coming in Him! *That's why Jesus came!*

The clarity we need

But what does all this mean for us?

Simply this: *Just as Jesus knew why He came, we need to be clear about why God has placed us here.*

God has strategically placed us here in this city as this congregation known as the Temple Baptist Church *to be on mission with our risen Lord Jesus Christ*, extending His work in the world around us as He empowers and works through us by His Holy Spirit. God has placed each member of this congregation within the body for a specific purpose, gifting each follower of Jesus for ministry and mission. These gifts take many forms, but as my beloved teacher Charles Talbert describes them, they are the risen Christ's power at work in us to accomplish His work through us.

Now being on mission with Jesus isn't easy. Often it's messy. But if we're His disciples, *it's not optional.*

Often we don't know what we're to do. We feel overwhelmed by the needs around us. Or one thing becomes our pet project. How do we figure out what *God* wants us to do—or better yet, what *He* wants to do *through* us?

While the specifics can be difficult to discern, God has made it clear in His word that He wants us to do two things.

First, *He wants us to know Jesus Christ.* He wants us to trust Him, to yield our lives to Him, to spend time with Him in His word and prayer and worship (both corporate and personal), in such a way that we really begin to get to know Jesus—who He is, what He is like, why He came.

That's extremely important for two reasons.

For one, knowing Jesus is about being *in a loving relationship with Him and with His disciples*—His people, the church, especially the local congregation we belong to. Both individually and corporately, we know Him, love Him, walk with Him, serve Him, and become more like Him.

For the other, *understanding why Jesus came helps us understand what we are to be doing as His church.* And that's the second thing He wants us to do: we are *to make Him known* by bearing witness to the world around us about Him through our attitudes and actions, and by announcing the good news that God's kingdom has come and is coming in Him. Just as Jesus preached the kingdom of God, healed the sick, and cast out demons, so we are to proclaim this good news and minister to those in need. Sometimes those needs are physical. Sometimes they're emotional or even mental. Always they are spiritual.

As God in the flesh, the Son of God empowered by the Spirit of God, Jesus had the ability to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons, demonstrating that He is the King who has power over disease, death, and the devil. He demonstrated this most fully when He died on the cross, laying down His life for us, and then rose from the dead, defeating death itself. By defeating death through His own death and resurrection, He conquered Satan and sin, bringing our salvation!

So what does God want *us* to do? *To continue Jesus' mission!* To proclaim the good news of His victory and reign! To proclaim with our lips and demonstrate with our lives that Jesus is Lord, that those who put their trust in Him can be saved by His grace, forgiven of their sins, and live in the hope of the resurrection and the life of the ages in new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells and God will make all things right!

Jesus did what He did by proclaiming God's kingdom and demonstrating God's rule by healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out demons. In the book of Acts we see that the

early church continued to do those same kinds of things.

In our modern western mindset, do we really believe that God reigns? We often approach things with an attitude that the universe is closed and operates according to fixed natural laws, without any real reference to God's reigning in any real way in the world. We *spiritualize* His rule.

Do we really believe that He heals the sick and casts out demons and even raises the dead? We're usually skeptical at best, unbelieving at worst.

And then I think about Jo Ann's brother Fletcher. In May 2014, he broke his neck in an ATV accident—the kind of break you're not supposed to survive, much less be able to walk again. It was a long journey that included several setbacks, including a flesh-eating bacteria, but he works every day now running his small construction company.

Or I think about the little girl in one of our churches who was dying as her kidneys were shutting down because of an E coli infection, but a remarkable turnaround occurred *while the church was praying*, and she *fully* recovered.

Or about the February 2015 report in *USA Today*, not exactly a Christian faith-friendly media outlet, about John Smith, an eighth-grader who fell through the ice and was trapped underwater for 15 minutes. When they brought him out, he had no pulse or heartbeat. First responders, then emergency room medical staff did CPR on him for 27 minutes, then gave up. They brought his mother in the room to tell her he was gone, and she began to pray very loudly for God to bring him back. And God did! After being clinically dead for 45 minutes! The doctors thought John would likely have brain damage, but he doesn't, and he recovered at an astonishingly fast rate. Even the doctors said that this was “a *bona fide* miracle”!²

Now there are two very important things we need to understand about how Jesus fulfilled what He came to do.

First, though He regularly ministered in the synagogue, His ministry went beyond the synagogue, and beyond Capernaum. In the same way, while what we do here on Sundays and Wednesdays and other times is *very important*, it's not *all* that we're to do. We have to move beyond the walls of our church buildings into and indeed beyond our surrounding communities, to carry the good news of God's kingdom to those who need to hear and experience it!

Here's the second thing. Some Christians think it's all about sharing the witness verbally. Some think we simply need to show the gospel by ministering to those in need and working to right wrongs. The fact is that *Jesus did both*—He preached the good news of the kingdom *and* healed the sick, raised the dead, and cast out demons. We're joining Him on *His* mission, so *His* is the example we must follow! We must minister and proclaim; together these actions constitute a winsome witness to Christ as we both proclaim and demonstrate the good news that in Jesus, God's kingdom has come and is coming, and that in His time and way, He will make all things right and all things new!

Jesus knew why He came. And now we know why we're here!

†MEG

¹ Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® (2011 edition).

² <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/02/04/inspiration-nation-mom-prays-son-back-to-life/22883985/> (accessed 1/18/2018).