

It's a joy to be together this morning and I hope you had a great time bringing in the New Year. I am excited to start 2021 in the book of Mark and not just anywhere but in 1:14-20, this passage is a heavy weight contender in the book of Mark, and I believe what Mark has for us will be a great challenge & encouragement to start 2021.

I was looking at a list of Time Magazine's most 100 influential people of 2020. They had some names I would expect to see but when I think about Pioneers, Innovators, & Trailblazers...these are people who change the world because they were willing to take a different approach to the way we live. When you think of pioneers, innovators, and trailblazers, who do you think of?

I think of S. Truitt Cathy, the founder of Chic-Fil-A. He thought outside the box and shaped the way the fast-food industry has moved forward. We've had first-hand experience of this at our Westside Chic-Fil-a...There's not been a formal announcement but I'm pretty sure we'll soon have a golden ticket scenario before long. Our Chic-Fil-a is like Willy Wonka's Chocolate factory...none of us have ever been inside of it but the lights are always on and there's delicious stuff coming out of it. S. Truitt Cathy took fast-food to new heights with the chicken sandwich. We think of people like Steve Jobs, He was a pioneer, rather than just selling computers, he sold the apple world. These are people who took different approaches to the ways we're doing things.

I wonder, when you think of a Pioneer, Innovator, & Trailblazer, do you ever think of Jesus? Just as Steve Jobs created an empire and the Apple Kingdom, JC went about building a different kind of kingdom and the approach he took was rather surprising. That's what we'll look at this morning so if you haven't yet, go ahead and flip over to Mark 1.

As we said last week, Mark is very direct in his writing and doesn't leave room for us to remain neutral in terms of answering who is Jesus, why did he come, and what does it mean to follow him. Today we'll see this to be true as Jesus takes the first steps into his public ministry.

Let's read **together Mark 1:14-20**:

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

¹⁶ Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were **fishermen**. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

So, this morning we're going to see Jesus as a trend setter, **in 4 ways**?

1. By using a Surprising medium
2. By giving a Surprising message
3. By Using a Surprising people
4. Giving way to a Surprising Response

Let's look at our first way, that Jesus **uses a surprising Medium**.

Mark starts right out of the gate being very direct and moving swiftly. **Look at v.14-15**, as quickly as John came on the scene, he is ominously moving off the stage by being arrested. We find out later on in Mark that he's arrested because he tells a ruler of the land something he doesn't want to hear, and we'll dive into this at a later time.

But here, Jesus arrives in Galilee and sets out on his mission to build the kingdom of God. How does he do this? He doesn't wow the crowds with miracles, He doesn't make it rain chocolate syrup or turn the sky red to get their attention...he proclaims...he preaches.

Look back at v.4, how did John come on the scene **"John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and PROCLAIMING a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."** Moving back to v.14 we see that Jesus takes up this surprising medium to build his kingdom. As we study the book of Mark, Preaching, Proclaiming, and Teaching form the foundation of Jesus' ministry.

We see this, let's quick look at:

1:38 **"And he said to them, Let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."** (why has he come? To preach the gospel)

2:2 **"And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door; And he was preaching the word to them."** (What was he doing? He was preaching the word)

15 times in 16 chapters, Mark is going to underline Jesus' teaching/preaching ministry. Why such a heavy emphasis on this?

Mark wants us to see all the miraculous works Jesus does through the lens of the preaching & Teaching of Jesus or else, we miss who Jesus is.

Eclipse example...those glasses are like His teaching. When we look at his miracles, we look at it, it's awesome and we don't quite understand it but when you put those glasses on you begin to see "Oh, all the miracles now make sense. Jesus is coming to declare his authority as the son of God, he's coming to build his kingdom."

See, the miracles aren't the point, the message is. The miracles are to confirm the message he's preaching and so it should come as no surprise to us that Jesus starts his public ministry with His word.

Think of the pattern we have already in Scripture. How did God bring everything into existence? By his Word. How did God call and create his people in the OT? By his Word. His people in the OT didn't live on the miraculous bread that fell from heaven but by the Word that came from the mouth of God. It always has been and always will be that God's Words create, shapes, instructs, and sustains His people.

Maybe you're here and you're not a believer. You might think Christians are self-righteous because we're always preaching to you. If there's anyone who is a Christ follower who has been rude or ungracious then I apologize that. We are a broken people, we are a prideful people. We above all people should not be self-righteous but we are from time to time but I hope you don't conclude that every Christian who wants to talk to you about Jesus is self-righteous. In wanting to talk to you about following Jesus, we're trying to be faithful and follow his example.

I'm willing to bet if you're thinking about life and how we come to know what we know. You know from experience that coming to believe that something is true, requires you listening to the case before believing what you believe.

Anything you believe, you had to be told of it so you would believe...none of us were just born with a belief system...I don't know, maybe you were a special case who came into the world with a full set of beliefs...Benjamin Button situation...But odds are in order to be taught it, you had to be told it and you had to listen to it so I wonder if you're willing to listen to a case for why Jesus Christ is worth following.

And if you're not willing to listen to a case for why Jesus Christ is worth following, then I would ask why? Why not hear it out? I would encourage you to keep studying Mark because in this book, Jesus is going to give evidence for why he is worth following and why he is the son of God and he'll do this through the surprising medium of Preaching and Teaching. Not only does Jesus use a surprising medium but he also uses a **surprising message** which leads us into our second point.

Look again at **v.14,15** **“¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”**

The word Gospel literally means good news, so this is a message of good news that he brings. and the message of good news that Jesus is bringing is, **“The time is fulfilled”** this is full of meaning! The word Mark uses for Time, it doesn't refer to chronological time (like second-by-second passing) but what he's referring to is a history altering event is occurring. Jesus, himself, is the hinge upon which the door of history swings.

Not only is the time fulfilled but, in his arrival,, the kingdom of God is coming. This concept of the kingdom of God having come would've been embedded in the Jewish culture Jesus grew up in. However, what he knew the kingdom of God to be and what they were expecting were two different things. The Jewish people would've been expecting a physical king who would set up a Jewish geopolitical dominance over the world...an earthly kingdom, but that's not what's happening

He's declaring that in his arrival, a new kingdom has come and it won't be limited to one location, or one people but instead, citizenship to this kingdom will be to those who respond to Jesus' surprising message and what he's calling them to...and what is he calling them to? Look back at the verse 15 since **“The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand“**, Jesus is calling people to **“repent and believe in the gospel.”**

What does it mean to repent? Repentance is when you have a sorrow over your sin, you reject it and walk in obedience to Christ. That's man's problem, we choose to walk in our own way of thought, deeds, and words, we mentioned last week that like the first Adam, we choose to live as independent from God and put our self on the glory seat. And Jesus is saying, Turn around, turn back to God, the way you're going will lead to judgement!

Notice that Jesus doesn't only tell them to repent but also that they need to **believe** in the gospel. The gospel is the good news that even though we have chosen to reject God and rule ourselves, God has been gracious and merciful, sending Jesus into this world to live the life we could not live and to die the death we deserved and after all that, got up from the grave.

It's not just that we have a knowledge of this but that you trust in and rest in that reality that he paid for my sins and I'm going to follow him. What is surprising is that when we do this, God is gracious to forgive us, and give us his spirit to us to help us follow him and in doing that God builds his kingdom. A kingdom that he builds with a surprising medium, a surprising message, and third a **surprising people**.

Now, in this time, Galilee was a cosmopolitan population. You would've found Syrians, Jews, Romans, Parthians... a lot of movement taking place here. Furthermore, there would've been an abundance of important people roaming around because Galilee sat in between the Mediterranean Sea and the Eastern kingdoms. It was in a prime geographical location where there would've been a lot of trading routes moving through Galilee.

I say this to say, if Jesus is starting his ministry out and wants to find people to be part of this, then it would make sense that he would find some of these influential people.

But look where Jesus goes in v. **16-20**... **16** Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. **17** And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." **18** And immediately they left their nets and followed him. **19** And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. **20** And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

This is an amazing section because this is where God begins to entrust his mission to people. If you were the messiah and you're picking your first 4 followers...is it these guys???

God calls people in need of redemption to be tools of redemption. They are not called because of who they are, they're called because of who Christ is

Look at the task Jesus says he has for them in his kingdom, it's in v.17 (**fishers of men**)

As NT upholds, they (and we) are called to do what Jesus did which we mentioned earlier...we are to use our words to tell others about the Kingdom of God and calling men to repent. We understand that people are saved by seeing or hearing this message of truth. This is direct application for us.

You know the old sport saying, "You miss 100% of the shots you never take." That holds true in our evangelism. You will never be a fisher of men if you don't fish for them. Jesus is calling us all to be fishers of men, not just the "elite Christian GI Joe task force repelling in from the ceiling" but all of us.

Here's what I want you to be encouraged by...Jesus isn't burdening you with a job you just have to do...This is about all of us recognizing that when Jesus speaks and wants a person to listen, he will open their ears and eyes to hear truth. Look at the passage, Jesus says, "follow me" and they go. This is a supernatural situation. Think about being at your office when a man you've never met comes in and says "Follow me...it's ok, I have plans for your life..." We all know you're going to decline and try and defuse the situation as politely as you possibly can but we also know your left hand is in your lap drawer with your finger on the pepper spray & you're ready to rumble if you have to.

I joke but this really is a sovereign situation. It's about his word having the power to open ears and eyes to hear the gospel and that's what's happening here. So what I want you to be encouraged with this morning when we're talking about being fishers of men is that it doesn't depend on how persuasive or charismatic you are. It's about when God wants to open someone's heart in response to the Gospel, nothing in the world can stop it so be bold to share this good news with everyone you interact with? God is the one who works salvation, it's not up to us...how freeing is that?

Let that freedom fuel your evangelism!

Not only that but there's one other thing I want you to be encouraged by as we look at this passage. Just as it is certain that these guys had to learn to be fishermen, they would also have to learn to be fishers of men...it didn't happen overnight. **Look at v.17** "Follow me, and I will make you **BECOME** fishers of men". Jesus is going to take these disciples on a journey that will make them fishers of men.

This is refreshing...The thing you need to know about these disciples is that they had no clue where Jesus was going to take them. It would be easy to think that because God has chosen this Jesus to set up his rule & that by following Jesus, my life is going to go from fair, to good, to the greatest!

What happens to these guys in a few years? They would be opposed, face trials, suffer, fight with one another, fail, betray Jesus (denied him 3 times). This was the unexpected journey that Jesus was taking them on that they might become fishers of men.

It's the same for us, when we follow Jesus, we are taking a journey that can't be predicted. When you start to follow Jesus, you have no clue where it's going...He'll take you into some of the hardest spiritual land you've ever been through. He will take you into a spiritual wilderness. He'll lead you up to mountains sometimes and let you see his glory but often times in the Christian life you're in the valley with clouds over you and you can't see where you're going.

Through this journey, he will break you of your pride, your self-centeredness, he will humble you, you will face trials and he's going to do all this so that you will become fishers of men. You might think that Jesus can do this work in other people lives but not yours but if you think that, just look at this text. Do you realize the world we live in today is largely what it is in part 4 fishermen? Do you really think that God can't empower you to change lives by becoming a fisher of men? If he can take them, don't you doubt for one second that he can't use you. Jesus

can use anyone. It is an encouragement when we realize that in building his kingdom, he is using a surprising people.

Finally, we see that Jesus is surprisingly building his kingdom through a **surprising response**.

Jesus calls Simon and Andrew to follow him in v.17 then **in v.18** “and immediately they left their nets and followed him”

Then again we see Jesus call James and John **in v.20** “They left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.”

Not only is the fact that they follow him surprising but look at what they leave behind.

They leave their nets (livelihoods) and James/John leave behind their father (family). This is no small sacrifice. The surprising response is what the call to discipleship and the call to following Jesus looks like. This immediate willingness to follow Jesus and to forsake all is the transforming power of the gospel.

If you're here today and you are considering what it means to follow Jesus but you know that it will upset your family (Maybe you come from a family with a different religious background where following Jesus will make you an outcast). We have people in this room right now who have had family and loved ones walk away from them because they are living faithfully to what Christ has called them to. There is loss there, but they count Christ as more valuable than anything else.

Maybe following Jesus will have implications for your work
Maybe you know that following Jesus will mean you have to give up other behaviors or actions and that's preventing you from being faithful to him.

Jesus is calling you to count following him more valuable than all else.

Let me ask you, what is it that keeps you from following Jesus today? A follow up to that question would be, are the things you're clinging to and unwilling to give up, are they providing for you the joy and fulfillment that you thought it would? Or are you finding you're still looking for something more? If your heart is restless, your heart will continue to be restless until it finds its rest in God. Only he, can provide the hope, and joy and fulfillment that our hearts so desperately long for and he provides that through Jesus Christ.

Here's the encouraging thing for you if you are feeling the sting of what it looks like to give up something...He's not calling you to something he's not already endured as we saw last week's example of his temptation. In coming to rescue you as the chief fisher of men, he gave up the riches of heaven and fellowship with the Father to come and rescue us.

Think back on what Paul tells us in 2 Cor 8:9 “**For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.**”

What will move you to be a person who will give up all to follow Jesus?

Consider that Jesus gave up the riches of heaven to secure your salvation. In light of this, what is our money, that we can't give up for the gospel? What is our schedule, that we can't change it in order to pursue others? The Christian life is all about following Jesus in faithful obedience and believing, that when God brings you to a place in life that he calls you to sacrifice something important to you...take heart because he provided and sustained the disciples and will do it for you until he calls you home.

This is a surprising approach, Jesus is a pioneer, a trailblazer but he is unlike all those who have come before and after him, only Jesus has created a kingdom that will never end.

Considering this great kingdom, Brother and Sister, we can step into 2021 with great confidence that will never fade because even in the midst of trials and suffering we know that God is working...He will uphold his end of the promise and transforming us into fishers of men and as we share the truth of the gospel that we hold so dear to our hearts, we can rest in His sovereign hands proclaiming it is well with our souls.

PRAY: