

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 5/23/04 Brad Brandt

Mark 1:14-20 "The Jesus Many Don't Know" **

Main Idea: The Jesus of the Bible is a Jesus that many people today don't know. In Mark 1:14-20 we discover two radical things associated with the real Jesus.

I. Jesus preached a radical message (14-15).

A. He talked about hope.

B. He talked about God's kingdom.

1. There is a King.

2. There is a rival.

3. The King is reclaiming what belongs to Him.

C. He talked about change.

1. The gospel requires repentance.

2. The gospel requires faith.

II. Jesus called for a radical response (16-20).

A. He chose Simon and Andrew (16-18).

1. To be a disciple you must be willing to leave your past.

2. To be a disciple you must be willing to follow Jesus.

3. To be a disciple you must be willing to fish for men.

B. He chose James and John (19-20).

1. To follow Jesus you must believe His message.

2. To follow Jesus you must know Him as a person.

Check-up Time: Three questions to determine if you know the real Jesus...

1. Have you left your nets?

2. Are you following the King?

3. Are you living for His kingdom?

He changed my life. I was a young boy struggling with doubts and fears about eternity one day, and filled with hope and assurance the next. What made the difference? *He did.*

I have seen young men walk into my study overwhelmed with the pain of regret, broken over foolish decisions made, then to leave my study with joy in their hearts and a purpose in their steps again. What made the difference? *He did.*

I have seen couples in despair, their marriages crumbling. But that all changed. Oh, they still have problems but they're in the race for the long haul once again and they're experiencing real joy for the first time ever. What made the difference? *He did.*

Who is *He*? It's Jesus Christ. When Jesus enters a person's life, things change. Not a little either. He revolutionizes lives. No matter how bad things are, when He comes He brings transforming power and we are never the same again. With Him is life that is abundant and eternal.

You say, "Why then do so many Christians struggle in their lives?" There are many reasons, of which I would like to address one, perhaps the most fundamental of all. Jesus changes lives—that's a 100% guarantee. The problem, however, is that many folks don't know the real Jesus. They've prayed a prayer to receive a "Jesus," they've been baptized in the name of a "Jesus," but the Jesus they received and to whom they declared allegiance in baptism is not the Jesus of the Bible.

It's true. The Jesus of the Bible is a Jesus that many people today don't know. You say, "Like what? What

don't they know about Him?" The best way to answer that is to take a close look at one of the inspired accounts of Jesus' life, which is what we're doing on Sunday mornings in this series, "*Straight Talk about Jesus*," a look at The Servant through the eyes of Mark.

Mark wrote this biography about a generation after Jesus returned to heaven, around the year A.D. 60. He had a Roman audience in mind. His readers were hearing reports about Jesus, some of them not true. To have eternal life you must believe in the true Jesus. But who is He really? Then, as now, many don't know, including those who *think* they know.

This morning I want to give you two very specific examples of things many don't know about Jesus. They're found in Mark 1:14-20. It's here that we discover two radical realities associated with the real Jesus.

I. Reality #1: Jesus preached a radical message (14-15).

Notice verses 14-15—"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 is near. Repent and believe the good news!'"

Before examining the radical nature of Jesus' message, notice the setting for His preaching. Mark says, "After John was put in prison." He's talking about the John he mentioned back in verse 4, the John who came to prepare the world for the Messiah's arrival. How did he do it? By "baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Was John the Baptist's preaching successful? It depends what you mean by "successful." Mark says he ended up in prison for it.

To the multitudes in Israel John's imprisonment must have seemed a real tragedy. At the peak of his popularity, when his ministry was really starting to make a difference and God was using him to turn countless numbers from their lives of sin, King Herod arrested John and stuck him in prison. In fact, as the result of a cruel scheme instigated by Herod's unlawful wife, Herodias, John was beheaded. The whole thing was a great misfortune, a waste of potential. Or was it?

It was a loss, for sure, but no waste. John fulfilled his God-given purpose. Though his years were brief he fulfilled His God-given assignment and introduced the world to the Messiah. And so, according to Mark, after John completed this assignment, after John was put in prison, *Jesus* entered center stage.

There's a vital truth illustrated here. In the words of J. D. Jones, "God's work will never be allowed to come to a stand for a lack of workers! The Sanhedrin stoned Stephen, but after Stephen came Paul. John Hus was burned in Constance, and Savonarola was gibbeted in Florence, but after Hus and Savonarola came Martin Luther. Mary kindled fires for Protestant confessors: she burned Latimer, Ridley, Hooper, Cranmer, in the hope of burning out Protestantism with them; but God raised one after another to continue their witness... It is ever so; God buries His workmen, but carries on His work. After John comes Jesus."

This truth would have encouraged Mark's readers in the first century. Many Christians were going to prison for the message they preached. Mark offers this helpful reminder, "You are not the first and you won't be the last."

The brevity of the statement strikes me, "After John was put in prison." That's it? Why didn't Mark tell us more about John? After all, there was certainly more to tell. But it wasn't necessary, for in the end John the Baptist was just a *servant*, just like we are.

With that background, with John out of the limelight, the real story begins. After John was put in prison, *Jesus* took center stage. What did He do? Mark says He moved north into Galilee. Why? For starters, for safety reasons. He'd been down south in Judea prior to this, where John was when arrested.

By the way, though this is where Mark begins the record of Jesus' public ministry, this isn't where Jesus

began His public ministry. Between verses 13 and 14 there's a gap of nearly one year, sometimes referred to as "the year of obscurity" in Jesus' life. Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke tell us much about this year, but the fourth gospel writer does. Plug in John 1-4 at this point. Following Jesus' baptism, He spent a year ministering in both Galilee and Judea, during which time he turned water into wine at Cana, turned tables over in the temple in Jerusalem, and taught Nicodemus. On one trip from Judea to Galilee, perhaps the very trip Mark has in mind here, Jesus went through Samaria and gave living water to the woman at the well.

What did Jesus do once in Galilee? Mark says He preached. The Lord engaged in a verbal ministry of proclamation. And what He said was radical, I mean *radical*. He talked about three primary subjects.

A. He talked about hope. Mark says that Jesus proclaimed the gospel, the good news of God. Far too often preachers are known for what they are *against*. Their pulpit ministries are negative. Though He stepped on toes Jesus preached a positive message. He announced *the good news of God*. The preposition "of" indicates that God is both the source and object of this good news. The message Jesus preached was both *from* God and *about* God. The gospel is indeed the best news the world has ever heard for it originated with God and is about what God has done so that sinners might experience forgiveness and new life.

Notice the first subject Jesus addressed in His hope-giving proclamation of God's good news. "The time has come!" He said. "The time is fulfilled," as the AV puts it. What "time" did He have in mind? The time the prophets foretold for centuries, the time when God would break into human history and fix the problem that began at the beginning of time, the problem of sin, that's the time.

You see, on the very day in the garden when the first couple committed treason in God's world, God announced the time was coming (Gen 3:15). And as century after century passed, God in His mercy postponed final judgment, sustaining rebellious mankind in His world, all the while preparing the world for His chosen One, the Deliverer who would come to rescue sinners and judge the wicked. "The time has come," Jesus said. Man had had his hour, now God was about to have *His* hour.

Many verses in the Bible refer to "the time," the time when God would break into history and deal with sin once for all.

Galatians 4:4-5 "But *when the time had fully come*, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Peter, who influenced Mark in this gospel, said the prophets pondered the coming *time*...

1 Peter 1:10-12 "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, *trying to find out the time* and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things."

Hebrews 1:1-2 "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but *in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son*, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

Romans 5:6 "You see, *at just the right time*, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."

Even the demons in Jesus' day knew the time was coming...

Matthew 8:29 "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the *appointed time*?"

Yes, Jesus' message was radical. To hearers' enslaved in sin He announced, "The time has come." Are you looking for hope today, my friend? Look to the Sovereign One, the One who designed and has fulfilled the plan to save sinners. Look to Jesus.

B. He talked about God's kingdom. "The kingdom of God is near ['at hand,' AV]," He said. In a sense, this statement answers the question of what *the time* is. "The time has come," Jesus said, "the time for the kingdom of God to come."

These again are radical words. To speak of kingdom at a time when the Romans ruled and acknowledged only one kingdom, theirs, that's radical and that could get you killed. But Jesus talked a lot about the kingdom of God.

You say, "Just what is the kingdom of God?" To understand Jesus' words we need to understand three basic truths.

1. *There is a King.* If there is a kingdom there must be a king. There is a King in God's kingdom. It is His Son. God has committed all authority to His Son (Matt 28:18). The Son created the universe, indeed created it for the purpose of bringing glory to Himself (Col 1:15-16). So there is one true king. However...

2. *There is a rival.* The rival tried to usurp the throne of God (Isa 14:12-14), but failed and was cast out of God's presence. Next he tried to get others to join him in his rebellion, "Did God really say?" he asked the woman in Genesis 3. And you know the result. The King pronounced a curse on His world.

3. *The King is reclaiming what belongs to Him.* That's why He robed Himself in human flesh and came inognito to Bethlehem. The King came to reclaim His world.

A skeptic will say, "It doesn't look like He succeeded. The world's still a mess." But He's not done. He came the first time to rescue sinners—that's why He died on the cross. He's coming a second time to eliminate rebellion forever.

You say, "Is God's kingdom a present reality or a future hope?" It's both. The King is ruling right now. Where? In the lives of His people. But the day is coming when the King will return and establish His reign over the world. Sometimes Jesus spoke of the kingdom as a present reality, such as here ("The kingdom of God is near") and in Matthew 12:28 ("But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you"). At other times Jesus spoke of the kingdom as a future hope (Matthew 8:11 "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven").

To put it another way, the question isn't whether the King reigns. The question is *where*. Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven." The King is ruling right now. Where? In heaven. Where else? In the lives of His people. And at a soon coming day He will extend His reign over the whole earth, indeed, He exhorted us to pray for that day.

My friend, I'll say it as plainly as I can. If you become a Christian you are taking a radical, even revolutionary step. You are changing kingdoms, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. You're changing allegiances, from sin to righteousness. That brings us to the third primary subject in Jesus' radical message. Hope. Kingdom.

C. He talked about change. "Repent and believe the good news," He said. The gospel is good news, yes, but it's not status quo news. Jesus didn't preach a feel-good-about-yourself message, but a life-

transforming message. He talked a lot about personal *change*. He made it clear that the gospel requires two things.

1. *The gospel requires repentance.* If there is a King who is reclaiming His world, what must sinners do who desire to be right with Him? "Repent," Jesus said. To repent means more than to feel sorry for your sin. To repent is to renounce your sin, to repudiate it, to get rid of it.

"Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor,"—for a man who once loved money, as did Zachaeus, that's repentance. "The things I once counted gain I now count but loss for Christ,"—that too is repenting. "Burn them," said a convert in the Welsh Revival, handing to his minister three gambling-clubs' membership tickets—that is repenting.

Please realize that a person cannot enter God's kingdom without repenting. That doesn't mean a person must change his life in order to be saved. It does mean he must be willing to be changed for that's exactly what Jesus will do when He enters.

But even repenting isn't enough. It's not sufficient to turn from sin. A person must turn *to* something, to the right something.

2. *The gospel requires faith.* "Repent *and* believe," Jesus said. That indicates that faith is lacking apart from accompanying repentance. It also indicates that repentance is incomplete without faith. "Believe the good news!" Jesus said. The good news is that God has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves, at the cross. Believe it!

This is a radical message, isn't it? Quite frankly, it's one not preached in many churches. Listen to Jesus. He said that salvation involves turning from sin and turning to Him in faith. If a person doesn't turn *from* his sin, it indicates he hasn't really turned *to* Christ. When a person truly turns to Christ, there will be a change, a lasting, obvious change in the person. The person didn't do it. Christ did it. When a person turns from his sin to Christ, the Savior changes that person. He cancels the penalty of sin immediately and then begins to break the power of sin that previously enslaved him.

There's something many don't know about Jesus. He preached a radical message. That's reality #1. There's more...

II. Reality #2: Jesus called for a radical response (16-20).

In verses 16-20 Mark records two examples of the impact Jesus' radical message had. In both scenarios Jesus called for a drastic response.

A. He chose Simon and Andrew (16-18). Verses 16-17—"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 make you fishers of men.'"

Please note that Jesus walked. There were no cars or planes for Him. He walked literally hundreds and hundreds of miles in His three year ministry as an itinerant preacher.

And here we see His methodology. He selected and then worked through disciples. Don't miss that He chose His men. They didn't choose Him, not initially. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit (John 15:16)."

He also went to where His people were. He didn't stay in the ivory tower. There's no impact without contact. In this case He went to the job-site of two brothers, Simon [later to be renamed Peter] and Andrew. He saw these two men—don't miss His sovereign gaze there, for He is still seeing and seeking His disciples. And

then He spoke to them powerful words, words that teach us just how radical the response is to be His disciple. If you want to identify with His kingdom you must take three steps.

1. *To be a disciple you must be willing to leave your past.* "Come," He told them. Remember, these men were fishermen. They didn't fish for recreation but as an occupation. Come. With that word Jesus asked them to sign on the dotted line. Are you with me or not? Are you willing to let go of everything you've considered important in your life until now?

You say, "Do I have to get rid of everything to be Jesus' disciple?" No. Only if He says so. But you must be willing. He called these two men to leave their jobs. He may ask you to do the same, or He may ask you to stay where you are and represent Him there. But things will be different. You will be different.

2. *To be a disciple you must be willing to follow Jesus.* "Come, *follow Me*," He said. Sometimes we complicate things too much. We view discipleship as a ten week course. Jesus made it simple, though not easy, and highly personal. *Follow Me*. To follow you must yield, submit, and obey.

Have you ever been in a car caravan, one in heavy traffic where you are *not* in the lead? "Why is he going *that way!* Where is he taking us now!" It's not easy to follow someone else, especially if the way he chooses doesn't make sense to us. If you want to be Jesus' disciple, you must be willing to follow Him. Wherever He leads.

I need to put the decision of Simon and Andrew into perspective. This wasn't the first time they met Jesus. You'll find that episode in John 1. Months before this day John the Baptist pointed Andrew to Jesus, saying, "Look! the Lamb of God!" Andrew then found Simon and brought him to Jesus. In the months that followed they heard Jesus' teaching and saw His miracles. Now it was decision time. It's one thing to be fascinated with Jesus, even to agree with Him and applaud Him. It's another to *follow Him*.

3. *To be a disciple you must be willing to fish for men.* "Follow Me...and I will make you fishers of men." Remember, these men were fishermen. But what did Jesus do? He took their abilities, transformed them, and used them for kingdom purposes.

What has the Lord given you? The ability to sing? Then sing for Him. Hands that can fix things? Then fix things for His kingdom. Were you a fighter? Now be a soldier for Him! To follow Him means that you lay at His feet all that you are and have and say, "I am yours. Use me."

You say, "I can't fish for men." True, you can't, but don't miss the verb "make." "Come, follow Me, and *I will make you* fishers of men." What Jesus calls us to do He enables us to do. It's a process, and it begins the day we surrender our all to the Lord and start fishing for men.

To fish for fish is to do what you've always done. To fish for men is to get on board with the Master's plan to reach lost people. To fish for fish is to do what meets temporal needs. To fish for men is to engage in a task that will matter for eternity.

How did Simon and Andrew respond? Verse 18—"At once they left their nets and followed him." The problem for many is that they try to keep their nets, to add Jesus to their already cluttered lives. That's a sure way to live a frustrated life, to live with two masters. Not these two brothers. They left it all and followed Jesus.

Mark includes a second example of how Jesus called for a radical response...

B. He chose James and John (19-20). "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."

This situation is even more shocking in some ways. The first set of brothers left their nets. The latter pair left their dad sitting in the boat!

I'm sure they loved their father. The point is, they loved Jesus more.

Let that sink in. These sons of Zebedee put Jesus above their father, above the family business, above the security of staying in the comfort zone of the familiar, above *everything*. Indeed, if you want to be a disciple you must love Jesus *supremely*.

Some say that James and John left more than Simon Peter and Andrew for the latter, we're told in verse 18, left *their nets*, while the former set of brothers left their father's business including boat and hired servants. Whether James and John left more or not, we can't be sure. This we know. All four men *left all they had*, and that is the minimum requirement for being a Christian.

Why would a person give up everything to follow Jesus? To take drastic steps—and these are drastic steps—you must have solid motivation. Why would anyone take to heart Jesus' radical call? Granted, only the Spirit of God can enable a person to respond to this call, but from a human perspective, two things are necessary.

1. *To follow Jesus you must believe His message.* Is what Jesus said true or is it not? Is He the King, the Son of the Living God, or is He not? Is He the way, the truth, and the life, or is He not? Is He going to establish His kingdom, reward His people and judge the unbelieving, or is He not? In order to follow Him, you must *believe His message*. You must confess, "Yes! I believe what You say!" What's more...

2. *To follow Jesus you must know Him as a person.* He who is the King of the universe must be *your King*. You must receive Him personally. You must know Him.

Quite frankly, if you don't believe He is worthy, don't follow Him. It's not that your assessment is right, for He is worthy. But until you believe He is you cannot follow Him. You *will* not follow Him. Oh, you may pay Him lip-service, but that will last only until tribulation comes or the cares of this world recapture your heart.

What is it the redeemed multitudes in heaven are crying? Hear them: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" Why have they followed him to loss of family and reputation, to ridicule and hardship, even to burning stakes? "He is *worthy!*" they cry.

For James, following Jesus took him to prison and death by sword (Acts 12:2). For John it was exile on Patmos. For Peter it was crucifixion in Rome. But there was no regret. They followed Him because they counted the cost and considered Him *worthy*.

Who else can offer peace and joy that never fades? Who else guarantees life beyond the grave? There is but One who does, the One who is worthy, *Jesus the Messiah*. And He calls you today, "Repent and believe the good news. Come, follow Me."

To leave all and follow Jesus is no sacrifice. It's not. It makes perfect sense to trade in the pleasures of sin that last for a short season to gain eternal treasure. Jim Elliot, himself a martyr, was right, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

It's sad yet true. Many do not know Him, not the real Jesus. And that's why they don't follow Him. How else can we explain why the American church is full of people who think that sitting in church an hour a week is enough, who aren't involved in fishing for men, who have known sin in their lives yet tolerate it, and who still claim to be followers of Jesus? There's only one conclusion. They're following a different Jesus.

The Jesus of the Bible preached a radical message and called for a radical response. And when people said they believed in Him but resisted His radical response, such as the rich young ruler, Jesus didn't coddle them. He let them go.

Beloved, the Jesus of the Bible is worthy of our all. Do you know Him?

Check-up Time: Three questions to determine if you know the real Jesus...

1. *Have you left your nets?* Is there anything in your life that's competing with Jesus right now? It could be a good thing, but it's become an idol for you. I invite you to leave you nets today. If you are unwilling, it's an indication you don't know the real Jesus, for the real Jesus is worth more than a million nets.

2. *Are you following the King?* Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice and they follow Me (John 10:27)." Are you exhibiting a hunger to learn and then live by His word? This is a mark of a true sheep. He loves to hear and follow the Shepherd. Are you following the King?

3. *Are you living for His kingdom?* He said, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness," and that if we did "all these things will be given to you as well (Matt 6:33)." Are you doing that? Are you using your money, time, home, *everything* for kingdom purposes, or for earthly pleasures?

He is worthy, my friend. The real Jesus is worthy. Come, follow Him.