

Main Idea: In Mark 1:14-20 we see The Servant begin His work by engaging in two labors of love. To put it simply, He goes fishing, and then He recruits and trains others to fish.

- I. Labor of love #1: Jesus proclaims the gospel (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. Labor of love #2: Jesus recruits others who will do what He does (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 personally.

Make It Personal: Three questions for all of us...

1. Have you left your nets?
2. Are you following the King?
3. Are you living for His kingdom?

Father’s Day recognition of dads – at beginning of service

Fishing. Now, there’s a good topic to talk about on Father’s Day. Some dads like to fish, and many more dads see it as their manly duty to at least expose their kids (and grandkids) to this recreational activity of putting a worm on a hook and enticing a creature in the water to bit it (I fall into this latter category).

It’s providential that on Father’s Day we come to a passage in Mark that deals with fishing. In fact, I almost chose to outline today’s text as, point one, Jesus goes fishing. And point two, Jesus recruits and trains others to fish. But I thought that might be stretching the point of the text a little. But not all that much, as we’ll see. Let’s read our text and then marvel at The Servant as He begins His work.

*Scripture Reading: Mark 1:14-20*

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? There’s a very simple answer. *He did.*

I have seen young men walk into my study overwhelmed with the pain of regret, broken over foolish decisions made, and then 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. Sure, they still have problems but they’re in the race for the long haul once again, and they’re experiencing real joy in their lives day by day. 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,

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2004.

He brings transforming power and we are never the same again. With Him is life that is abundant and eternal.

I can't think of a more appropriate person to consider for a Father's Day message than Jesus, for two primary reasons. One, He's the ultimate standard of what a real man is. And two, He's the One who can help dads who have fallen short, which we all have, and moms and kids and singles and everyone else, too. Men, by looking at Him we see what we should be, and by trusting in Him we become what we should be.

So let's look at Jesus today. Closely. And what will we see? We'll see the perfect man, the God-man. And what's He doing? In Mark 1, He's beginning to do something that men were created to do, and in their lives spend a lot of time doing. *Work*. Jesus is beginning to work, to do *His* work, the work His Father sent Him into the world to accomplish.

And what is that work? In Mark 1:14-20, we see The Servant engaging in two labors of love. The first? Jesus proclaims the gospel in verses 14-15. And the second? Jesus recruits others who will do what He does in verses 16-20. To put it another way, He goes fishing, and then He recruits and trains others to fish.<sup>2</sup> That's His work. That's His mission. That's what the Perfect Man does with His life.

Let's unpack those two realities, which are filled with significance for us.

#### I. Labor of love #1: Jesus proclaims the gospel (14-15).

Notice verses 14-15, "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,<sup>15</sup> and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'" The NIV records Jesus as saying, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

In a moment, we'll look carefully at the radical nature of Jesus' message, but first, notice the setting for His preaching. Mark says, "Now after John was arrested." This is the John he mentioned back in verse 4, the John who came to prepare the world for the Messiah's arrival. He too had a work, and what was it? He came "baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

Was His work successful? It depends what we mean by "successful." Mark says he ended up in prison for it.

To the multitudes in Israel John's imprisonment was a great tragedy. At the peak of his popularity, when his ministry was really starting to make a difference and God was using him to turn hundreds, even thousands of people from their lives of sin, King Herod arrested John and put him in prison. And then, as the cruel consequence of a 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 not a wasted life. John fulfilled his God-given purpose. Though his years were brief, he accomplished His God-given work and prepared the world for the One people need far more than him.

And so, according to Mark, after John completed his assignment, after John was arrested, *Jesus* entered center stage.

There's a vital truth illustrated here, men. 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

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

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.”<sup>3</sup>

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, “Now after John was arrested.” 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 had a work to do, a God-given work, and he did it. Just like we do, men, and women, and boys and girls.

Now, with that as the background, with John out of the limelight, the real story begins. After John was arrested, *Jesus came*. John is a key figure in one paragraph of the book, but now we meet the main character of the whole book.

And what did Jesus do? Mark says He “came into Galilee”. He’d been down south in Judea prior to this, where John was when arrested, but now He moved north. Why Galilee? For safety reasons? Perhaps. But there’s another reason. We might say, because that’s where the fish are biting.

It’s important to note that although this is where Mark begins the record of Jesus’ public ministry, this isn’t where Jesus actually 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 both in 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.

And now He heads to Galilee. This is fishing country. This is where He grew up, about fifteen miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee in Nazareth. And what does He do once He arrives?

Mark says He begins to engage in a verbal ministry of proclamation. In other words, He preaches. Is preaching work? I mean, building furniture, that’s work. Manual labor is work. But preaching? That’s just talking, right? Anybody with the gift of gab can do that, right?

Actually, preaching, when done in a way that pleases God, is work. It’s hard work. It’s God-glorifying work. It’s the work of the soul, and it produces eternal dividends.

When Jesus preached, He talked about three primary subjects.

**A. He talked about hope.** Mark says that Jesus came “proclaiming the gospel of God”. Interesting word, *gospel*. We just saw it in the first verse of the book, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” The word (*euangelion*) literally means “good news”.<sup>4</sup> In this case, it’s God’s good news, that is, the good news about God, and about what God has done, is doing, and is going to do.

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<sup>3</sup> J. D. Jones, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> According to Easton’s Bible Dictionary, gospel is “a word of Anglo-Saxon origin, and meaning “God’s spell”, i.e., word of God, or rather, according to others, “good spell”, i.e., good news. It is the rendering of the Greek *euangelion*, i.e., “good message.”

Far too often preachers are known for what they are *against*. Their pulpit ministries are negative. Though Jesus certainly stepped on toes at times, He begins with a message of hope. He announces *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 says. “The time is fulfilled,” as the ESV and AV put it. What “time” does Jesus have in mind? The time the prophets foretold for centuries, the time when God would break into human history and fix the problem that’s plagued mankind since the beginning, the problem of sin. That’s the time.

My friend, 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.

And now Jesus announces, “The time is fulfilled.” Many verses in the Bible refer to “the time,” the time when God would break into history and deal with sin once for all.

Listen to Paul in **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.”

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

Listen to **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.”

Listen again to Paul in **Romans 5:6**, “You see, *at just the right time*, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”<sup>5</sup>

Even the demons in Jesus’ day knew the time was coming. We hear them in **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 proclaimed a message of hope. To people enslaved in sin He announced, “The time has come.” My friend, are you looking for hope today, hope for the problem of sin? Then look to the One who came to earth in fulfillment of the divine plan to save sinners. Look to Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> **1 Timothy 2:5-6** “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given *in its proper time*.”

<sup>6</sup> **Revelation 11:18** speaks of the coming accomplishments, “The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. *The time has come* for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great— and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

**B. He talked about God's kingdom.** “The kingdom of God is near [NIV; ‘at hand’ in the ESV & AV],” said Jesus. In a sense, this statement answers the question regarding what *the time* is. “The time has come,” says Jesus, “the time for the kingdom of God.”

I’m not sure we can appreciate just how radical these words are while we live in a country with first amendment rights. To speak of kingdom at a time when the Romans ruled could get a preacher killed, as well as those listening. But that didn’t stop Jesus. In fact, He talked a lot about the kingdom of God.

“Just what is the kingdom of God?” you ask. That’s a good question, and there would have been confusion even in the minds of Jesus’ first audience. To understand what Jesus means by “the kingdom of God”, we need to understand three basic realities.

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

2. *There is a rival.* The rival, a renegade angel by the name of Lucifer, tried to usurp the throne of God (Isa 14:12-14). He, of course, failed and was cast out of God’s presence. Next, he tried to persuade others to join him in his rebellion, including the first caretakers of this world, God’s own image-bearers. “Did God really say?” the deceiver asked the woman in Genesis 3. And you know the result. She and her passive husband committed treason against the King, and brought the just sentence of death upon themselves and this world.

3. *The King is reclaiming what belongs to Him.* This is the story of the Bible. This is why we see Him putting on the robe of humanity and coming incognito to Bethlehem. The King has come to rescue His estranged world.

The skeptic says, “It doesn’t look like He succeeded. This world’s still a mess.”

That, of course, is because the King isn’t done yet. He came the first time to rescue sinners, by taking their place, their punishment, on the cross. Then He conquered death, again, in their place, for their justification. Right now, He’s reconciling individuals, one by one, back to Himself. And He’s done this for many of us in this room, and will do so for others who will repent and believe in Him.

But there’s more to the story. He’s coming again. And when He comes the second time, He will reconcile all creation to Himself, a creation that right now is groaning, but will once again sing His praises when it is, as Paul says in Romans 8:21, “set free from its bondage to corruption and obtains the freedom of the glory of the children of God”.

So 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 people who have repented and given their allegiance to Him. But the day is coming when the King will return and establish His reign over all creation.

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 King Jesus is reigning. 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 exhorts us to pray for that day.

My friend, I'll say it as plainly as I can. If you're considering becoming a Christian, know this. You're about to take a radical, indeed, revolutionary step. You're about to change kingdoms. You're about to leave the kingdom of this present dark world, which is in rebellion to the King. And you're about to enter the kingdom of light, the kingdom of God Himself where His Son, the King, is cherished above all.

This brings us to the third vital subject in Jesus' message. Hope. Kingdom.

**C. He talked about change.** "Repent and believe in the gospel," said Jesus. The gospel is good news, but it's certainly not a message that makes you feel good about yourself, not initially. It's a message that convicts, that confronts, that calls for change.

Jesus talked a lot about personal *change*. Not, change first, then come to Me. But come to Me, expecting to be changed. Even here, as Jesus launches His public ministry, He makes it clear that the gospel of God requires two responses (not two as in separate, but two as in opposite sides of the same coin), which God's grace makes possible.

1. *The gospel requires repentance.* If there is a King who is reclaiming His world, and there is, then what must sinners do when they come to Him? "Repent," says Jesus. To repent means that you feel sorrow for your sin, but it doesn't stop there. To repent means you want 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 Zacchaeus, 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.<sup>7</sup>

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," said Jesus. This indicates that faith is lacking apart from accompanying repentance. It also indicates that repentance is incomplete without faith. "Believe the good news!" said Jesus. The good news is that God has done for us precisely what we cannot do for ourselves, and the proper response is to *believe in this gospel, to believe in Him!*

Since many today seem confused about this message, it's vital that we take it to heart. Jesus said that His gospel produces these two tangible results. One, a willingness to turn from sin, and two, to turn to Him in faith. If a person isn't willing to turn *from* his sin, it indicates he isn't really turning *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 does it. He cancels the penalty of sin immediately and then begins to break the power of sin that previously enslaved the repentant believer.

So here's how Jesus begins His work. His first labor of love? He proclaims the gospel of God. His second? He recruits others to do the same. Again, first, He fishes. Then He recruits others to fish.

## II. Labor of love #2: Jesus recruits others who will do what He does (16-20).

In verses 16-20 Mark shows us how Jesus did it. First...

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<sup>7</sup> J. D. Jones, p. 22.

**A. He chose Simon and Andrew (16-18).** Verse 16 says, “Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee.” The KJV and NIV both indicate that Jesus *walked*. There were no cars or planes for the Son of man. He walked literally hundreds and hundreds of miles in His three year ministry as an itinerant preacher.

And as He walked, “He saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.<sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’”

Here we see Jesus’ methodology. He selects individuals to follow Him, and tells them right up front that they will do what He’s been doing. Fishing.

Don’t miss that He chose these men. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit (John 15:16).” No, they didn’t choose Him, not initially. He chose them.

To do this, He went to where they were. He didn’t stay in the ivory tower. In this case He went to the job-site of two brothers, Simon [later to be renamed Peter] and Andrew. Mark emphasizes that Jesus *saw* these two men. Don’t miss His sovereign gaze here, for He is still seeing and seeking His people.

And then He spoke to them. The words He spoke indicate how He plans to advance His saving mission through them. It’s a call to discipleship, and it involves three significant steps.

1. *To be a disciple you must be willing to leave your past.* “Come,” He told them. Remember, these were fishermen. They didn’t fish for recreation but as an occupation. Come. With that one word, Jesus exhorts them to sign on the dotted line. They must leave where they are, and join Him. Are you with me or not? Are you willing to let go of everything you’ve considered important in your life until now, and consider Me to be even more important?

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. To be His disciple, you must be willing to leave your past.

2. *To be a disciple you must be willing to follow Jesus.* “Come, *follow Me.*” Sometimes we over-complicate this. We turn discipleship into a college-level course. Jesus made it simple, though not easy, and highly personal. *Follow Me.*

To follow someone, you must stop trying to lead, and instead, yield, submit, and obey. Have you ever been in a car caravan, in heavy traffic, when you were *not* in the lead? How’d that go? “What’s he doing? Why is he going *that* way? Where is he taking us?!” It’s not easy to follow someone else, especially if the way the leader chooses doesn’t make sense to us.

To be Jesus’ disciple, we must be willing to follow Him. Wherever He leads.

So Jesus just walked up to their boat, said *Follow Me*, and they did? Actually, there’s more to the story. This isn’t the first time Simon and Andrew met Jesus.

We see that encounter in John 1, and it happened months earlier. That’s when John the Baptist pointed Andrew to Jesus, and said, “Look! the Lamb of God!” Andrew then found Simon and brought him to Jesus. In the months that followed these two brothers learned about Jesus. They heard His teaching, and saw His miracles.

And then one day, the day described in our text, when these brothers were out in their boat fishing, Jesus saw them. Mark says He saw them “casting a net into the sea, for they

were fishermen.” That’s what these brothers had been doing with their lives, *fishing for fish*. But that was about to change.

3. *To be a disciple you must be willing to fish for men.* “Follow Me...and I will make you become fishers of men.” This is not coincidental. These men were fishermen. If there’s anything they know, it’s fishing. But what does Jesus do? He takes their abilities, interests, and past experiences, and says He’s going to transform them, and use them for His kingdom purposes.

What has the Lord given you, my friend? Hands that can fix things? He intends to use those hands for His kingdom. Do you have a voice that you’ve used for your own glory? He intends to use it for His. Were you a fighter? He’ll turn you into a soldier of the cross.

The call to follow Jesus means that you lay at His feet all that you are and have and say, “I am yours, Wonderful Savior. Use me however You want, so that others may come to know You too.”

You say, “I can’t fish for men.” True, you can’t, but don’t miss the verb “make.” Jesus says, “Follow Me, and *I will make you become* 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 Him.

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? Notice verse 18, “And immediately they left their nets and followed him.” That’s interesting. Why didn’t they take their nets with them? Because they took Jesus at His word. He said He was going to turn them into *fishers of men*. And they believed Him. They wouldn’t be needing these nets any longer, because they catch fish, not men.

The problem for many is that they try to keep their nets, as it were, to keep their old life, but add Jesus to it. 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 recruiting others.

**B. He chose James and John (19-20).** “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. <sup>20</sup> And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.”

In some ways, this situation is even more stunning. 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 this sink in. These sons of Zebedee put Jesus above their dad, above the family business, above the security of staying in the comfort zone of the familiar, above *everything*. Indeed, if we want to be a disciple of Jesus, we must love Him *supremely*.

I know you know the story, but feel the weight of what’s happening here. An itinerant preacher approaches four men, says “Follow Me,” and all four men leave behind all they have, and follow Him. Why? To take such drastic steps (and these are drastic steps), they must have solid motivation. And they do.

Perhaps this is where you’re struggling. You’re interested in Jesus, perhaps even encouraged by Him. That’s why you keep coming to church, and reading the Bible from time to time. But then you see an account like this, and you realize that’s something missing.

Why would a person give up everything to follow Jesus? Granted, only the Spirit of God can enable a person to respond to this call. But when He does, this is what happens, and perhaps, it's what has been lacking in your life, my friend.

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!" Furthermore...

2. *To follow Jesus, you must know Him personally.* He who is the King of the universe must be *your King*. He who is the Savior of the world must become *your Savior*. You must receive Him personally. You must know Him.

Quite frankly, if you don't believe He is worthy, then 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 that 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 us today, saying, "Repent and believe the gospel of God. Come, follow Me."

To leave all and follow Him is no sacrifice. It makes perfect sense to trade in the temporal pleasures of sin and gain an 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."

Whenever we hear God's Word, it's always good to take inventory. So let's do that.

#### Make It Personal: Three questions for all of us...

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, and it's keeping you from the joyful work Jesus intends for you. I invite you to leave your nets today.

2. *Are you following the King?* "My sheep hear my voice and they follow Me (John 10:27)," said Jesus. This is the evidence that we are a true sheep. We love to hear the Shepherd's voice, and follow Him. Are you following Him?

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

This is our Father's Day challenge from Jesus. He went fishing. Let's join Him.

**Closing Song: #369 "O Jesus, I Have Promised"** (all three verses)