

**Mark: A Servant on a Mission**  
*Following Jesus Through the Mess*

Review

- The Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark (cousin to Barnabas) with his primary source being Peter — eyewitness and follower of Christ
- Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark eliminates the birth narrative from his account and begins with John the Baptist preaching in the **wilderness**
- Jesus visits John in the wilderness, is baptized, and is led deeper into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted

Today: After 40 days in the wilderness and following the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus will now begin his Galilean ministry — preaching in synagogues (hangout for Jews) and around Galilee full of many towns and fishing villages

- With the arrival of Jesus and in conjunction with his ministry, a new world (consisting of new values and principles) is beginning to emerge
- The words and ministry of Jesus as he begins his Galilean tour will bring order, peace, and structure to what was a chaotic mess (i.e. wilderness motif)

*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*  
**Mark 1:15, NASB**

Understanding the Mess in Mark's Gospel

**A. The Disturbance of the Demoniac**

**READ:** Mark 1:21-28, NASB

- Takes place in Capernaum in the synagogue on a Sabbath (rest day for Jews)
- The people are “amazed” or “astonished” at the authority of Jesus’ teaching
- His teaching reflected not that of a scribe (instigated debate or reflection) but instead a prophet of the OT (i.e. *Thus says the Lord*)
- A man in the synagogue was possessed by an unclean spirit — this demonic spirit spoke through the man
- The evil spirit recognized that Jesus’ presence was a threat to his existence

*“What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” (Mark 1:24, NASB).*

**NOTE:** The demonic power understands more clearly than those present in the synagogue the significance of Jesus' presence

- f. By a single word, the evil spirit is silenced, comes out of the man, and is completely disarmed of its power
- g. The people are once again “amazed” at the authority of Jesus—He has command over the spiritual realm

**NOTE:** How does Paul instruct those in Ephesus to fight against “the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness?” by taking up the full armor of God, specifically **the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.**

- h. The news of Jesus' authority began to spread into other regions

### B. The Physical Illness of Peter's Mother-In-Law

**READ:** Mark 1:29-34, NASB

- a. This event seems to take place “immediately” following the exorcism in the synagogue

*And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew ... (Mark 1:29, NASB).*

- b. Peter's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever—ancient world viewed as an independent disease
- c. Jesus healed her of her fever
- d. She responded to God's merciful act of healing by immediately beginning to serve those present
- e. The crowds are now growing and they begin to bring all those who are sick and possessed to the door where Jesus was—in chapter 2, the crowd will be so large that a paralytic has to be lowered from the roof to even be near to Jesus

**PROBLEM:** “Jesus had come to preach repentance and the nearness of the kingdom but the people think only of relief from pain and affliction” (William Lane).

(ILL) — prayers for healing, new job, relationship problems but we miss the spiritual life that Jesus can bring

### C. The Cleansing of the Leper

**READ:** Mark 1:40-45, NASB

- a. Those with leprosy were essentially excommunicated and isolated according to Levitical Law

*“As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp” (Leviticus 13:45-46, NASB).*

- b. Leprosy brought physical and mental anguish for the afflicted and those living near the communities—fear of contact
- c. Yet this leper approaches Jesus requesting healing—“If you are willing, you can make me clean”
- d. Jesus “moved with compassion [righteous indignation at the presence of sin, disease, and death]” *touch*ed the leper—unheard of act of compassion

**LESSON:** When it comes to Kingdom activity, we cannot and must not be afraid of people’s mess—we all carry our own baggage

**TRANSITION:** It was into this wilderness-like chaos (demonic activity, uncleanness, and disease) that Jesus first called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow him, and now 2000+ years later Christ is still calling His church (us) to follow Him through the mess in order to accomplish His mission to *seek and save the lost*.

Our mess/wilderness ...

- Life is devalued (abortion, foreigners, elderly)
- Morality is gone (no absolute truth, no moral compass, do what feels right)
- Sin is celebrated

*What does it look like for God’s people to follow Jesus through the mess?*

### **I. Following Jesus Through the Mess Requires Total Surrender**

*<sup>16</sup> As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in 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.”<sup>18</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. <sup>19</sup> Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup> Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him. (Mark 1:16-20, NASB).*

- A. It was a **specific** call—“I will make you fishers of men”
  - i. Since Jesus had come, fishing for men became necessary
  - ii. These fishers of fish will now take on the role of fishing for men—ambassadors for God’s Kingdom
- B. It was an **urgent** call—“Come after me”

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- i. Previously Jesus indicated that the “kingdom of God is at hand” (1:15)
- ii. Jesus knew that he had about three years left on earth to equip
- iii. Harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few

C. They responded to the call in **total surrender**—“left their nets and followed him” (i.e. Abram, Genesis 12)

*So compelling is the claim of Jesus upon them that all prior claims lose their validity. Their father, the hired servants, the boat and the nets are left behind as they commit themselves in an exclusive sense to follow Jesus (William Lane).*

*The call to come after someone implies discipleship because it is the disciple who breaks all other ties to follow his master as a servant (William Lane).*

– Later Jesus will ask them to *take up their cross, deny themselves, and follow him*

*(ILL) — Charles Thomas Studd was a famous English cricketer who went on to be a missionary to China, Africa and India. The youngest of the 'Studd Brothers', who were known for their cricket skills at Eton and Cambridge, Charles played in the first Test match between England vs Australia where the Ashes were named.*

*He was converted to Christianity along with his brothers while at Eton. Of the moment he met God for the first time, he said: "right then and there joy and peace came into my soul. I knew then what it was to be 'born again,' and the Bible which had been so dry to me before, became everything."*

*When he decided to give up sport to pursue a career as a missionary, he said: "I know that cricket would not last, and honour would not last, and nothing in this world would last, but it was worthwhile living for the world to come."*

*In his twenties, he served in the China Inland Mission, where he married missionary Priscilla Livingstone Stewart. They lived in China for 10 years, but moved back to the UK due to ill health, before serving in India at a church in Ootacamund.*

*Later, Priscilla and the couple's four daughters stayed in England, while Charles worked in Central Africa until his death in 1931.*

According to his biography by Norman Grubb, in one of his last letters home, Studd wrote: "As I believe I am now nearing my departure from this world, I have but a few things to rejoice in; they are these:

1. That God called me to China and I went in spite of utmost opposition from all my loved ones.
2. That I joyfully acted as Christ told that rich young man to act.
3. That I deliberately at the call of God, when alone on the Bibby liner in 1910, gave up my life for this work, which was to be henceforth not for the Sudan only, but for the whole unevangelized World.

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My only joys therefore are that when God has given me a work to do, I have not refused it.

- D. The call is the same—have I **surrendered** my all to Him to follow Him through the mess? What am I holding onto?

## II. Following Jesus Through the Mess Clarifies Our Purpose

*Simon and his companions searched for Him; <sup>37</sup> they found Him, and said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” <sup>38</sup> He said to them, “Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.” <sup>39</sup> And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons. (Mark 1:36-39, NASB).*

- A. The called-ones misunderstood Jesus’ mission
- i. Jesus withdrew from the crowds (v. 35)
  - ii. “Everyone is looking for you”
  - iii. “What are you doing here when you should be in the midst of the multitude who are clamoring for you?”
- B. The crowds failed to comprehend the primary purpose of Christ
- i. They were attracted to Christ as a performer of miracles
  - ii. Yet Christ came to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel (1:15)

(IMP) — We must guard against longing for the miracles instead of the miracle-worker—the crowds were attracted to the miracles instead of the One performing the miracles, the One who offered new hope and new life.

- C. Journeying with Christ through the chaos of life will reveal to us our purpose
- i. It’s not to take the position of God and try to fix the problem of others, but instead to introduce them to the comforter and the Savior of the world
  - ii. It’s not to proclaim a message of worldly prosperity, but instead to proclaim the hope of Christ and the availability of eternal life
  - iii. It’s not to accumulate wealth, possessions, and power, but instead to lay down our rights, pursue a relationship with Christ, and glorify Him
  - iv. *The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever*—Shorter Westminster Catechism

### III. Following Jesus Through the Mess Intensifies Our Need of God

*In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. (Mark 1:35, NASB)*

- A. Jesus is only seen praying alone three times in Mark's Gospel (here, following feeding of 5,000, and in the Garden of Gethsemane)
  - i. Critical moments in the ministry of Jesus
  - ii. Moments that recall the wilderness experience
  - iii. Jesus depended upon the strength of His Father
- B. Messiness of our culture (no moral compass, human life is devalued, sexual sin) can lead to burnout, frustration, or surrender, so to advance God's Kingdom in this context we have to depend fully and completely on Christ—Acts 1:8 (Holy Spirit)

#### C. Following Jesus is messy, but messiness is only made clean through the Gospel

- i. Reach 3—ups and downs, no initial results, but God is working
- ii. Muslim Country—minimum of six years before one convert
- iii. Grissom—little fruit but lasting seeds planted
- iv. Dunkirk Plant—brokenness, addiction, and many unchurched, but hope and freedom is needed

**NOTE:** God is calling us to follow Him through the mess, but in order to do so it **requires our complete surrender**, it demands that we **clarify our purpose**, and it will **intensify our need of God**.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Following Jesus through the mess is hard, it's difficult, and it's costly—for the disciples and many believers in the first few centuries it cost them their life.
- Yet when we obediently follow Christ through the mess, the outcome is beautiful—the Kingdom of God is impacted, it grows, and it advances
- God's not called us to a life of luxury and comfort, but instead he's called to a life of **surrender, mission, and dependence on Him**.

- 1.) Are you willing to follow Christ through the mess and go wherever he leads?
- 2.) Do you need God to work on your heart and help you reach a point of total surrender?