



Mark 1:9-20 - “Ready, Set, Follow” - January 17, 2021

OPEN

What kind of leader do you appreciate? Why would you follow such a leader? Can you think of someone that you would follow right now even if the path was dangerous? Consider Mark, the Gospel writer. During the first missionary journey, Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas.

In fact Acts 15:36-41 documents the division that occurred between Paul and Barnabas over taking Mark on a second journey! So here we are, centuries later, learning about following Jesus, from an author who knows what it means *not* to follow faithfully.

In the dozen weeks leading up to Easter we are examining the life and ministry of Jesus – especially the call to follow Jesus as Mark presented it. Though Mark is not completely chronological, it does begin with a time sequence – the launching of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Bear in mind that Mark’s purpose was to proclaim the mission and message of Jesus, not merely to be His biographer.

In Mark we do not have the nativity or other material included in Matthew and Luke. Rather, we are plunged immediately into Jesus’ baptism, temptation, and ministry launch. Of course, essential to this, is the role John the Baptizer, as we considered last week. In our passage for today we are faced with a sequence which reminds me of the “ready, set, go” start of a running race. This “race” is the public ministry and mission of Jesus Christ.

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[1] Ready – vv. 9-13

When runners are at the starting line, they are first told “get ready”. There are two critical events in the life of Jesus which preceded His earthly, public ministry. What was involved in Jesus becoming ready? There are two very important components.

- The baptism of Jesus - vv. 9-11

Did Jesus need to repent? Clearly not! That is why John initially refused to baptize Jesus (see Matthew 3:14). Why did John change his mind? Jesus explained His baptism was necessary “to fulfill all righteousness” (see Matthew 3:15). The baptism of Jesus was a declaration of His willingness to **identify** with and **rectify** the lost condition of humanity. Mark’s purpose was to highlight God (as Father and Spirit) audibly affirming Jesus in His role as **Servant** and **Savior** (God’s statement echoes Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1).

- The temptation of Jesus - vv. 12-13

The desert was a place of trial and testing for Israel for forty years. Jesus experienced forty **days** in the desert. His was a time of **confirmation** in His role as Messiah. As we read in Hebrews 4:15, “*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin.*” Jesus proved His Person. He was confirmed fully as the sinless Son of God, fully qualified to be our Redeemer.



What an amazing affirmation of Jesus! Can you picture the starting blocks in which a runner **positions** his feet in preparation to run? As Jesus is getting ready to “run the race” of His earthly mission there are two “blocks”. One is the divine declaration of approval of the Son, by the Father and the Holy Spirit. The second block is the confirmation of Christ’s character as the sinless One.

[2] Set – vv. 14-15

During the pandemic certain words have been popularized – or overused! One such example is the word “pivot”. These two verses describe a **pivot point** in Jesus life – from relative obscurity to public ministry.

Mark’s Gospel began with the work of John the Baptizer. But as Mark’s focus shifted to Jesus the reference point was John’s fade into the background and prison. Luke records Jesus reading in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:14-21). Then Jesus left Nazareth to launch His ministry in Galilee.

This is the point at which Mark highlighted the “launch code” for Jesus’ public ministry: “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*” (Mark 1:15, see also Matthew 4:17)

Think again of the runner’s starting blocks. At the “get set” stage, runners are not just positioning their feet in the blocks. They are **pressing** into them with purpose. One block is the in-breaking of God’s Kingdom. The other block is a call to repentance. And it is as if Jesus has every spiritual muscle strained and ready to “run the race” of His public ministry.

[3] Follow – vv. 16-20

Do you remember stepping up to the starting line for a race? What did you feel as you heard “get ready, get set...go”? It is fascinating what Jesus did when He first “leapt from the starting blocks” into His earthly ministry. His “go” was to invite others to follow!

Is it possible that Mark’s own track record in following prompted him to zero in on this part of the story? Did Mark have a passion to communicate Jesus’ call of “follow Me”?



As we read Mark 1:16-20 we see that Jesus’ activity had shifted from Nazareth to Capernaum which was near the Sea of Galilee. Notice especially how Jesus included followers in His mission right from the start! What did He call these fishermen to do? His call was to Himself, that He might teach them to fish for men.

In *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker* (Flemming H. Revell, 1984) Bill Hull makes a case for a four-phased call. Jesus called His disciples over time:

“Come and see”	John 1:38-39	4 months	Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathaniel
“Come and follow”	Mark 1:16-20; Matthew 4:19	10 months	Simon, Andrew, James, John
“Come and be with Me”	Mark 3:13-19	20 months	Twelve
“Remain in Me”	John 15:7-8	Final days	Twelve plus

Are you a follower of Jesus? It might also help to consider this question in light of the call that Jesus gave in Mark 1:16-20. Here are some characteristics:

- **Complete** – the immediate response of these men reveals that the invitation was not just a change of jobs but a revolution in their lifestyle, values, and priorities.
- **Communal** – it is important to see that Jesus did not select a one superstar to groom but rather a community which would become a family.
- **Continual** – whether you are in an initial stage of investigation or growing to be a discipler of others, we must continue to grow into the call of Jesus to follow Him.

Os Guinness writes about the many choices we are given in modern society. You can follow many “calls” in this life – you can give yourself to many passions and projects. Guinness writes, “*One minute we feel the vertigo of unlimited possibility and the next the frustration of superficiality. The result is not only overload but also a profound loss of unity, solidity, and coherence in life.*” What does Jesus’ invitation “follow Me” offer? This “calling is a ‘yes’ to God that carries a ‘no’ to the chaos of modern demands.” (*The Call*, Thomas Nelson, 1998, 166,170)

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A. W. Tozer noted, “*The solemn delight which those early disciples knew sprang straight from the conviction that there was One in the midst of them. They knew that the majesty in the heavens was confronting them on earth.*” (*God’s Pursuit of Man*, Wing Spread, 1950, 7)

Such an encounter with Jesus results in the call to “*follow in His steps*” (see I Peter 2:21). A passive response is not possible! We must either say “yes” to Jesus or “no”.

Here is a YouVersion [reading plan for Mark](#). Perhaps this could be your devotional reading for the next weeks.