

Jesus Calls

Mark 1-2

I have three questions for you today that go with our outline.

1. Do you want something more for your life?
2. Do you hear Jesus calling your name?
3. Do you feel your desperate need for grace?

Those are the questions. This message is mainly for the person who knows about Jesus but has not yet committed to Jesus. You have been flirting with him, maybe you've been on a few dates but you have not walked down the aisle and gotten married. You have not entered a covenant relationship with Him.

I know that's a strange analogy for men, so how about this? We're all on a sinking ship called life. We all know that the end of the story is that the ship sinks when we die. You've heard there is a lifeboat and his name is Jesus. People call him the Savior. You have heard about him, you might even believe that he died and rose again. But you haven't yet gotten onto the boat. You haven't yet crossed over and committed yourself to Jesus.

That's what the baptisms were about earlier in the service. Baptism represents your old life, your old self that died and a new person that came to life. Committing to Jesus means you abandon your old life - you turn away from it and let it die so that Jesus can give you a whole new life.

So - three questions:

1. **Do you want something more for your life?** Do you feel the emptiness of chasing success and money and pleasure and know, deep down, there has to be more?
2. **Do you hear Jesus calling your name?** It won't be an audible voice but it will be unmistakable. The Holy Spirit makes Himself known. And one of the first ways you know the Lord is talking to you is that you start to feel guilty about your sin. So:
3. **Do you feel your desperate need for grace?** That's called conviction. Lots of people simply live their lives, doing whatever they want, however they want, and don't feel an ounce of guilt or shame about it. Well, truthfully they DO feel guilt and shame but they find ways to silence it and cover it up until those places that feel the guilt and shame are calloused and hardened over. But a sign that Jesus is calling you is that those hard places start to crumble and sins you used to enjoy are now spoiled with guilt.

If you answer even one of these with a yes, I have tremendously good news for you today. And for those of us who answered these questions long ago, let's come along as well and be reminded of the grace of Jesus who calls ordinary people to extraordinary lives, who knows His people and calls them to Himself and how invites sinners to repent and find in Him the forgiveness and grace they desperately long for.

My point today is simple: **when Jesus calls, come to him!** Don't delay. Don't make excuses. Don't procrastinate. Come. We'll see three descriptions of the people Jesus calls and three ways we should respond to Him when He does call.

First, **Jesus calls ordinary people to extraordinary lives.**

When Jesus calls, come to Him!

1. Jesus calls ordinary people to extraordinary lives

*"And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you become **fishers of men.**'" Mark 1:17*

The first four people Jesus called were teenage fishermen. Teenage. Fishermen. Still working with their Dads. Simon, Andrew, James and John. Peter, James and John would become THE BIG THREE - the ones Jesus focused most of his time and attention on. That is crazy.

Jesus gambled everything on three young **fishermen**. They weren't Bible scholars. They weren't genius philosophers. They weren't high power tradesmen in the marketplace. They probably had a 5th grade education. What they were good at was sailing a little boat and casting nets into the water to catch fish.

The ones Jesus called were **ORDINARY**. If anything they were below average. These were ordinary guys but Jesus called them to leave their ordinary lives for something extraordinary. Incredibly, it says, "immediately they left their nets and followed him."

When Jesus calls, come to Him!

1. Jesus calls ordinary people to extraordinary lives

*"And **immediately** they left their nets and followed him... And **immediately** he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat... and followed him." Mark 1:18,20*

Think about what this meant for these young men. **When Jesus called, they came.** They left everything in their old lives - their Dad, their job, their livelihood, their homes. Immediately, Mark says. They walked away from their lives as fishermen to follow a Rabbi who said, "I will make you into fishers of men." Whatever that means...

What it means is that **Jesus had something special in mind for these four men.** He said, "You've been catching fish, but I'm going to teach you how to catch people." You've been feeding people's stomachs, I'm going to teach you how to feed their souls. You've been living for a few coins per fish in the marketplace, I'm going to teach you about treasure in heaven that lasts forever.

Come, Jesus says, follow me - and I will take your ordinary life and turn it into something extraordinary. ***Do you have that feeling in the pit of your stomach that your life was meant***

for more? You got the girl, you got the job, you got the house and the car and the kids and the vacations - but you just know there's got to be more to this life. You long for something eternal, something supernatural, something of lasting significance. We all do.

Now, some of you hear those things and say, "I didn't get any of those." That's not the point today. Whether you have a life that is "successful" or miserable, Jesus has the same offer for you. Trade it in. ***Trade your ordinary life for a new mission in the service of Jesus.***

When Jesus calls, come to Him!

1. Jesus calls ordinary people to extraordinary lives

"And immediately they left their nets and followed him." Mark 1:18

- **Trade in your old life for Jesus**

But that's the rub. ***You have to trade.*** You can't just add a little Jesus to your life like a seasoning on chicken. It doesn't work that way. You can't keep your life and just add Jesus to it. If you want Jesus you have to give him your life - give it all to him - and accept the new life and new plans that He has for you, whatever they might be.

For these four young men it meant walking away from a safe and familiar fishing business with their family members to follow a homeless, penniless traveling preacher. That's quite a trade! But look what they got in return: these four men became the leaders of the spiritual and social revolution that changed the entire world. They could have said "no" to Jesus and lived normal lives catching fish and raising a family by the Sea of Galilee.

But look what they would have missed! All of the miracles; all of the healings; all of the teachings of Jesus; the dead that were raised; the calming of the storm; the walking on the water; the feeding of the 5,000; the crucifixion and resurrection; the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; the rapid expansion of the early church; the persecutions and the missionary ventures. They could not have stayed in their boats and told Jesus, "We'll sign up for the correspondence course!" or "Keep us on your email prayer list!"

No. It was all or nothing. And it's the same for every one of us. Don't kid yourself into thinking you can add a little Jesus to YOUR life. Jesus is calling you to TRADE YOUR LIFE - all of it - for something new that He has in store for you. He takes ordinary people and gives them extraordinary lives.

That is our mission statement, based on this very passage. Our mission as a church is

Our Mission:

to transform ordinary people into fully devoted followers of Christ.

God is in the business of changing lives and our job is to partner with Him in that work - to enter the lives of people and invite them to go "all in" with Jesus; to trade their ordinary lives for the supernatural opportunity to follow Jesus.

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1. Jesus calls ordinary people to extraordinary lives

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- **Trade in your old life for Jesus**

This will feel to you like a radical step - and it is. But you know in your heart of hearts that it's the only option. The alternative is to *"gain the whole world and forfeit your soul"* (Mk. 8:36). If you try to save your life, Jesus says, you will lose it. It is only when you lose your life by giving it to Jesus that you can save it. When Jesus calls you - come to him. Even though you don't know what it all means any more than Simon, Andrew, James and John did.

All they knew was that Jesus was calling them - and they came. Do you hear Jesus calling your name? The first sign of a Christ-follower is that they want more out of life than the ordinary - they know there has to be more. The second sign is that they hear Jesus' voice - you hear Him calling your name.

We know the four fishermen heard Jesus, because they *immediately* left their boats and nets and families and followed him. Now let's look at what was going on in their hearts. First we saw that Jesus calls ordinary people to extraordinary lives. Second, ***Jesus calls His sheep and they come to Him***. John 10 calls Jesus **the Good Shepherd** and says:

When Jesus calls, come to Him!

2. Jesus calls His sheep and they come to Him

*"The sheep **hear his voice** and he calls his own sheep by name... the sheep follow him, for **they know his voice**."* John 10:3-4

Sheep are not very smart animals. Scripture often compares God's people to sheep and this is not a particularly flattering analogy. But the one good thing about sheep is that they know their shepherd's voice and they come when he calls.

Tending sheep is very different from driving cattle. Cowboys ride horses around cattle and use sheep dogs to nip their legs and electric prods to zap the cattle and get them moving in the right direction. Cattle are driven from behind. Sheep are led from the front. The Shepherd goes ahead of the flock and calls back to the sheep and they follow him. They walk along, following his familiar voice.

A different voice will startle the sheep and scare them. They will look up in fear and confusion if another person tries to call them forward. If they get really scared, sheep will scatter in every direction. But a good shepherd knows all of his sheep by name - and just as you can call your dog and the dog knows his master's voice and comes - so **sheep know the voice of their shepherd and the come when he calls them**. John 10:14 shows us why the sheep know their master's voice:

When Jesus calls, come to Him!

2. Jesus calls His sheep and they come to Him

*"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and **my own know me.**" John 10:14*

- Come to Jesus, your Shepherd

Sheep know their shepherd's voice because **they belong to Him** - they are HIS sheep. Do you know the voice of Jesus? Do you hear Him calling your name?

If you do, **don't delay another moment** - come to Him! He is the GOOD SHEPHERD - he will heal your wounds and lead you into safe pasture, by streams of water, where you can be well fed and cared for forever! If you hear Jesus' voice in your heart, in your conscience, all it takes is a "yes, Lord," as your first step toward Him. Stop saying, "No." Stop saying, "Later." That is the devil's great lie - you can get religion later. You can try this Jesus thing later. **Later will never come. Today is all there is.** Come to Jesus today!

Now, if you DON'T hear Jesus calling - you don't even know what I'm talking about here - don't be discouraged. Probably you just don't know what to listen for. How can you listen to a voice you've never heard before? **You have to get to know the voice of Jesus!** That's what this sermon series is for. That's what the gospel accounts are for. Read the Gospel of Mark. Sign up for one of our Gospel of Mark Bible Studies. Get to know Jesus and you'll start to get to know his voice.

Jesus Himself PROMISES:

If you don't hear Jesus' voice yet, get to know Him!

*"Ask and it will be given to you; **seek and you will find**; knock and it will be opened to you."*

Matthew 7:7

As you get to know Jesus, you will become familiar with His voice. And it won't be long before you'll hear him calling you to trade your ordinary life for the extraordinary joy of following Him. It won't be long before you'll hear the voice of your Shepherd calling your name. And when you do - come. Come to Jesus!

Jesus calls ordinary people. He calls his sheep. And third, Jesus calls sinners.

When Jesus calls, come to Him!

3. Jesus calls sinners who know they need a Savior

*"I came not to call the righteous, **but sinners.**" Mark 2:17*

It was surprising enough that Jesus started with four fishermen. But then in Mark 2, Jesus chooses someone even LESS likely: **a tax collector!** Follow with me in Mark 2:13.

"He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. 14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

*15 And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat ^[b] with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.**"*

Jesus did not come for the healthy. He did not come to call the righteous. He came to save sinners. He came for those who know they need a Savior. He didn't come for the worthy, but the unworthy; not for the deserving but the undeserving; not for the popular and famous and wealthy but the outcasts, the insignificant, the poor. He didn't come for the strong, but for the weak; not for the impressive but those who know they aren't impressive; not the confident and assertive but the humble and meek.

This was very threatening to the religious leaders of his day. They initially thought of Jesus as one of them - a fellow rabbi and teacher of God's Law. But he would not be owned by them and would not even really associate with them. Instead, he spent time with fishermen and tax collectors, political zealots and - as noted in this passage - recognized **sinners**.

There were two categories in those days - the righteous and the sinners. The Pharisees, scribes and teachers of the Law were considered "**the righteous ones**" who prayed long, public prayers, gave large, visible financial gifts, recited long passages of Scripture from memory, fasted 2-3 days every week, plus many other visible disciplines.

On the other side of the spectrum were the sinners. These were the tax collectors and prostitutes, the criminals and low-lives. Shockingly, this powerful rabbi did not hang out with the righteous, religious crowd but spent a lot of his time with the sinful low-lives! And he explains his reasoning - these "sinners" know they need me. You "righteous" people think you don't.

Of course, Jesus knows what Paul would later write in Romans 3:10 - "None is righteous; no, not one." There is no such category as "righteous ones." Romans 3:23 explains:

There are no "righteous ones."

"For there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:22-23

We love to categorize people by comparing ourselves with others. Compared to hardened criminals in prison, I'm a pretty decent person. Compared to selfish and greedy oil tycoons, I am generous. Compared to ridiculous Hollywood divas, I'm remarkably humble. We can always find someone to compare ourselves to so that we look favorable next to them. "I may not be the best, but I'm better than that guy."

But then you stand next to God and see the reality. He is the standard. God alone is the benchmark of righteousness. And **next to His infinite perfection we all fall infinitely short.**

I think people often think of heaven as relatively accessible, like climbing a ladder up into a loft. Is there some work involved? Sure. It takes some effort. But if "good people go to heaven," the thought is that the standard of goodness is probably pretty attainable - the curve is pretty reasonable.

But the reality is that if there was **a ladder to climb to get into heaven**, it would reach up beyond the clouds, beyond sight, stretching all the way to the moon. Now that is one big ladder. If you want to climb your way to God by your own efforts, you better get climbing. It took the Apollo astronauts 3 days to cover the 240,000 miles to the moon, traveling at speeds around 24,000 mph. If you're climbing a ladder, hand over hand, it's going to take a good bit longer to go 240,000 miles.

The point is that heaven is WAY beyond our reach. You might be a stronger climber than I am, but nobody can climb their way to heaven. You may be a stronger swimmer than I am, but nobody can swim across the Atlantic. The only way to get to the Moon is in a spaceship. The only way to get across the ocean is in a boat or plane. And the only way to get to heaven is with Jesus.

He is the spaceship that can carry you to heaven. He is the lifeboat that can get you across the ocean of this life and into the safe haven of eternity. We simply cannot make it on our own. So the exhortation of the Gospel is to trust in Jesus completely.

When Jesus calls, come to Him!

3. Jesus calls sinners who know they need a Savior

*"I came not to call the righteous, **but sinners.**" Mark 2:17*

- **Entrust yourself completely to Jesus**

When you get on an airplane, do you add anything to its ability to fly? When you get onto a boat, do you add anything to its seaworthiness? No. You depend on the vehicle completely.

Think about the last time you flew on an airplane. Were you sitting there saying to yourself, "I believe. I believe. I believe"? Did you think, even for a second, that your FAITH in the plane would

determine whether it would take off? Are planes like Tinkerbell fairies? Do they need our faith so they can fly? Wouldn't that be funny if they did? The pilot comes onto the intercom and says, "Ok, everyone, we're in position and it's time to get going - I need to hear your voices and you better sincerely believe what you're saying or this metal tube isn't going up." And the flight attendants start leading all the passengers in a chant, "I do believe in physics. I do. I do."

That's a silly illustration. But the point is that you exercise faith in the airplane by getting on board. The same is true with Jesus. You don't add anything to His ability as Savior - you simply entrust yourself to Him. Your commitment to Him as Savior and Lord is your moment of stepping on board.

So that raises the question - have you taken that step? Think of Jesus as a lifeboat. There is no middle ground category - you are either on the boat or not on the boat. Jesus is either the Lord of your life or He is not. You can only get onto this boat by naming Jesus as your Captain. Have you done that? Have you taken that life-changing step?

Entrust yourself completely to Jesus

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." Romans 10:9-10

Lots of people know about Jesus. Lots of people believe he is the Son of God who died on the cross. But just knowing about Jesus doesn't save you any more than knowing about a lifeboat could save you. You have to get on the boat. You have to get on board with Jesus.

So let me come back to the three questions we started with today.

- 1. Do you want something more for your life?**
- 2. Do you hear Jesus calling your name?**
- 3. Do you feel your desperate need for grace?**

Jesus is calling you. He is telling you there IS more to this life and He can give you meaning and purpose. He is calling your name because He made you, He knows you and He has good plans for your life. He knows that you are a sinner - there's no point trying to hide that truth from God. But Jesus is calling you anyway - because He is the Savior for sinners. The only qualification for coming to Jesus is ADMITTING that you need Him.

Do you feel your desperate need for grace? Do you know how much you need to be forgiven? Then Jesus came for YOU! Come to Him today! It's a very simple thing to do to commit your life to Christ. It's simple in taking that first step, but it is utterly and totally life changing. As I said earlier, it is a trade. You are giving Jesus your old life - all of it. You are letting that old you die

with Jesus on the cross. And you are trusting Him to give you a whole new life - to spiritually bring you to new birth.

Jesus will take your ordinary life and make it extraordinary. If you hear His voice calling your name, come to Him. Admit your sin - call on Him to forgive you for your sin. Confess Him as your Savior. Commit to Him as your Lord. Jesus came to call sinners to repent. Will you get on board with Jesus today?

Pray with me now.