

## ***READ Mark 1:14-20***

**What** – Mark’s gospel is the shortest of the gospels, and he immediately began by describing the ministry of Jesus. Before Jesus got very far into his ministry, He recruited for himself several young men to “follow” Him. Jesus had a specific purpose. He was proclaiming that the “Kingdom of God was near”. He told the soon to be disciples that their mission would be helping Him introduce that news to the world. He was going to teach them to “fish for men”. The historical context for this scripture adds so much to our understanding. Most of us see that following a teacher would be preferable to fishing for a living, but few of us realize just what Jesus was offering these young men. In Jesus time, all Jewish boys were asked to memorize the Old Testament, it was part of what every young Jewish boy did. The boys who showed a skill in this area moved on to deeper study, and the other boys were sent to learn other trades, like fishing. Jesus statement, “Come, follow me” was much more than an invitation to a different life, it was an invitation to become what every Jewish boy dreamed of. They were going to apprentice with a Rabbi.

**Why** – This scripture is important in helping us remember that the mission of the church today is still to “fish for men”. Jesus confirmed that when He commissioned His disciples to take over the church after His resurrection (see Matt 28:19-20). Also striking is the revelation that Jesus’ invitation to follow in the footsteps of the master extend to us. When we look closer at the lives of the disciples, we see that Jesus chose them with the purpose of including us in His mission. These were ordinary men. They were NOT priests or teachers, but fishermen. In addition to that, they were from the “wrong side of the tracks”. In John chapter seven the Jewish leaders argue with Jesus’ followers saying that a prophet cannot come from Galilee. They were speaking of Jesus, but the disciples were also from that area. The message for us is simple. No matter where you are from, no matter what the “powers that be” say about your past or your heritage, God can use you in a powerful way. Jesus’ first recruits were ordinary people, and He is still using men and woman from every walk of life to accomplish His goals on earth.

**WOW** – As we witness the start of Jesus’ ministry, and we realize that He wants to use everyone as His witness, I am most overwhelmed by the response of the disciples. It says that they followed Him, “at once” and “without delay”. WOW. How I wish we were so bold in following our teacher and our savior. While it was a lifelong dream to apprentice with a rabbi, I am sure the disciples had a comfortable routine in life. They were ordinary, not destitute men. Their families had boats, so they had some means of income in a time when not all people could say this. It was a risk to drop that and follow Jesus. They gave up the known, the routine, the easy (at least in terms of risk) way to follow the kingdom of God. The faith of these young men cannot be denied. Finally, I believe that their faith was placed so solidly because of one last important piece of this scripture that so often goes unnoticed. The simplicity of Jesus message is absolutely astounding. Incredibly, Jesus did not discourse here on the Trinity, His own deity, or the proper time for baptism or communion. He did not speak about denominational polity or spiritual growth. He didn’t talk about financial success or failure. He simply says, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” He gave them, and us, a vision, and a goal.

They were going to change the lives of people with Him and through Him. Your life and the lives of the people around you will be affected if you follow Him. Incredibly simple, incredibly direct, and incredibly forgotten in our complex church world today.

Is your faith as simple as Jesus proclaimed to the disciples originally? The goal of the church has not changed, so the message is the same for us as it was for them. Jesus is calling you. Are you responding to His invitation to focus on Him and fish for men? When you do, He will work out the rest.