

Pastor Dwight Wagner
Garden Heights Baptist Church
Erie, PA
August 15, 2010

“It's All about Jesus!”

Mark 3:7-19

Introduction

There is a story in the Gospels about some Greeks who had heard about Jesus Christ and contacted one of his followers named Philip. Philip took these men to Andrew, another one of Jesus' followers because these men had announced, “Sirs, we would like to see Jesus.” Andrew then arranged a meeting between these men and Jesus.

I don't know what has brought each one of you here today but I hope that some part of your motivation is that you might see Jesus as He is revealed in the inspired Word of God. We are now moving along in our study of the gospel of Mark, one of four records of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, four gospels that reveal the full preeminence of Jesus Christ. The gospels are written that we might see the full display of the glory of God in Jesus.

We have embarked on this journey through this book so that we might learn, as John writes in his gospel, that Jesus is the Christ [the Messiah] and that by believing in Him we might have life through His name! For those who believe in Jesus, we have eternal life and so as we read this gospel our hearts should burst with praise!

That is what Mark is all about! And that is also what Revelation which we read earlier is all about. Our goal in studying God's Word is to learn more about Jesus Christ and to worship Him. Learning is to culminate in adoring! Adoring Jesus as the Lion and the Lamb! The lion—the powerful, majestic, deadly to His enemies Lord. And Lamb—the meek, humble, dying and risen from the dead Lord—the Lion who slays His enemies and the Lamb who was slain by His enemies, yet whose death purchased our salvation from sin.

We are preparing for a day when we will join our voices with those from every tribe, tongue, nation and people who will sing that He is worthy of all honor, praise, glory, and worship! We have come today to worship Him, trust in Him alone, love Him, and hope in Him! He alone is our Redeemer and Savior! How has this happened? Because we have heard, seen, and learned about Jesus Christ through the Word of God and have believed in His perfect and complete work as He lived His life and gave His life for all those who will ever call on Him to save them from their sin and God's wrath against that sin.

For those who are here today but have not yet come to Christ, we are praying that even as you see the evidence laid out in this passage of Scripture today that you will believe in Him and by believing in Christ alone, you will have life through His name.

For my fellow followers of Jesus today I've been praying that as we work our way through Mark that your heart would be stirred again and afresh to love Christ more! Oh, we can never get enough of Jesus, can we? We never tire of gazing on His majesty and beholding His glory, the glory as of the one and only Son of God! What a privilege today to once again gaze into the glory of Jesus!

Now, we are going to cover Mark 3:7-19 this morning, a large swath of Mark 3. And it is unique from what we have seen already in Mark. Pretty much up until now Mark has been a book of constant action. It has been called "the newspaper gospel" because Mark offers a fast-paced account of Jesus' life. And we have seen a pace of almost non-stop action so far in this book. But today, it is like Mark pushes the "pause" button on the DVD or at least slows down the action in verses 7-19 and says, "I want to freeze-frame a few days in Jesus life. We will just take a few still shots rather than keep up this frenetic pace."

So what we have here is one of the few summary statements in the gospel of Mark. And it serves as sort of a reminder that Mark is not giving us an unabridged account of Jesus' life but rather He is giving us a glimpse, a fast-paced look into the Savior's ministry. What this tells us is that Jesus' reputation and ministry exceeded the geographical and biographical limits of this book. John tells us that if all that Jesus said and did were recorded there would be a massive collection of records. So this summary is like looking in one room of a vast art gallery that one is walking through quickly where you just sort of pause for a few lingering moments to get an overview of what you have seen already and what lies ahead. So Mark writes,

"Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. " (Mark 3:7-19)

This text, that is all about Jesus, contains at least four truths that call for attention and application this morning. First, let's observe. . . .

The pressures of Jesus (3:7-9)

Contrary to the picture stories about Jesus' life, our Lord did not live a leisurely, slow paced, quiet, idyllic life. Jesus knew what it was to live a life of pressure and stress. In Mark's account, we see that Jesus is under pressure from unless two parties.

● The collisions with religious leadership

For the last several weeks we have observed Jesus in a series of collisions or conflicts with the religious leadership in Israel at that time—primarily the scribes and the Pharisees (that is the popular teachers and the seminary professors of the apostate religion known as Judaism). This group had been recently joined for a brief encounter from some of John the Baptist' disciples, but more significantly by some political types known as the Herodians. Mark records a series of five collisions, each of which grew more and more intense with the last one ending with his detractors beginning to openly discuss ways to destroy him.

Why did they want to destroy Him? Because He was teaching the Word of God and He was living in such a way that attacked the very foundations of their religion that had become encrusted in layers of man-made traditions. From last week's message we learned that Jesus had attacked the most cherished tradition of this group—the observance of the Sabbath that had been twisted from its original design and purpose. Though Mark doesn't record it, Jesus had already went in and cleaned house in their temple—the most cherished place in their religion—and he would do it one more time before His death. And this was not just cleaning it up so that it could be recovered and restored; in essence this was a judgment on the OT system of worship. Jesus teaches that this temple would be destroyed and He would establish a New Covenant with His people. He says the old is imploding; it is crashing in; the new is coming and people will worship the Christ everywhere.

So what does Jesus do with this pressure? He “withdrew with his disciples to the sea.” Now sometimes Jesus withdraws to pray, for rest or for a private confab with the disciples (1:12; 3:7; 6:31, 4; 7:24, 31; 9:2; 10:1; 14:34). But this time the context suggests he withdraws from the close quarters of the synagogue. where his enemies are plotting to take him out, for the more open and safer zone of the seashore. Matthew 12:15 makes this connection that Jesus leaves Capernaum, his headquarter city for his Galilean ministry—right at the northwest tip of a large lake—“knowing “ about this plot to kill Him. “Jesus aware of this [plot], withdrew from there.” We see Jesus doing this often throughout his ministry because He knows His time had not yet come.

So he along with his disciples [his learners and apprentices whom he will call to be his apostles later on in the passage] withdraw to the lakeshore as a prudent act of protection—out of danger, at least less danger anyway.

● **The crush of the crowd**

But there's this second pressure on Jesus—just as real, just as stressful—the crowd! Mark calls this a great crowd and some commentators think this could mean upwards to tens of thousands of people because Galilee was fairly heavily populated. It's a massive gathering of people—composed of both people who live right near Capernaum in Galilee but then you have some coming up from Jerusalem and the region of Judea which was 100 miles away, from Idumea which was further south, from the East in the area of the Transjordan and finally from the northwest cities of Tyre and Sidon. All of these regions had large Jewish populations but the latter two cities were predominantly Gentile.

So you have quite a bit of diversity in this crowd, ethnically speaking, but they are all there because they have heard about Jesus' ability to heal those suffering with paralysis, withered hands, leprosy, fevers, and they have seen and heard him cast out demons from people. Now remember, this is the day before modern medicine. There was no such thing as urgent care or intensive care units. There was no healing and no exorcism going on. People were living under horrible oppression, a difficult time in Israel's history, and life expectancy was relatively short. This was a broken world Jesus had entered and people needed restoration physically and spiritually.

So what we see is the far reaching impact of Jesus' ministry already. It had reached as far south as Idumea, a region controlled by the Herodian dynasty—this is where the Herod who tried to kill Jesus as a baby was from. He had already spent some time in Jerusalem and Judea. He had gone over on the other side of the Jordan likely to be baptized and he had an impact in the Decapolis and Perea where Herod Antipas ruled at the time along with the region of Galilee. And then Jesus was well-known in what is today modern-day Lebanon or ancient Phoenicia fifty miles to the north.

“When this great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him” (v. 8). Notice his teaching was powerful but that is not why this massive crowd came. They were there looking for miracles. They wanted his “doing”, not his teaching.

So, verse 9, tells us, “He told the disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd lest they crush him.” Verse 10 adds the detail of “all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him.” Here's what's happening. Jesus is walking along the shore and he tells his disciples to have a little rowboat ready that would sort of track along with him—because of the possibility of the crowd crushing him. The word “crush” in the Greek was used to describe the crushing

of grapes. This was pretty much a mob full of people desperate for a miracle. The crowds are jostling him, hassling him, pushing, shoving—not of hostility but out of intense desire and eagerness to get near Jesus!

So Jesus is under pressure from his critics and he is under pressure from the crowds. This little boat is moving back and forth as Jesus moves back and forth on the shore. I can imagine that Peter is trying to act like a Secret Service agent and James and John are the stare down team. This little boat is like a getaway car that politicians and famous people have to have—constantly ready to whisk Jesus away—but the little boat teaches a big lesson—that Jesus was under intense pressure and he wisely took precautions and measures in lieu of possible danger.

The power of Jesus (3:10-11)

● Power over the natural

Secondly, this text displays the power of Jesus. He had power over nature—physical disease—and he had power over the supernatural—demons. We have seen this before and that is why this is a summary statement. Verse 10, “He had healed many” and “all who had diseases pressed upon him.” That word disease is interesting—it is translated in the Latin with our word for “plagues”. The Greek word could be rendered “strokes” not in the medical sense but in the sense that the ancient world viewed disease as the stroke or the plague of God coming from his divine hand. And what is Jesus doing? He is healing masses of people who are falling on Him.

● Power over the supernatural

But not only are there people who are falling on Jesus, there are some who are falling before Jesus—those possessed with demons. Verse 11, “And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him.” The ones with disease fell on him; the demons fall before Him—a verb that always conveys an inferior being prostrating himself in homage before a superior being! They just fell on the ground, not under conviction, but knowing in whose presence they were!

What a demonstration of the power of Jesus! He has power to heal all these people from horrible disease—blindness, deafness, inability to speak, hemorrhaging, even death. And we already know that He has been casting demons out of people and freeing them from horrendous spiritual oppression and pain! It's all a picture, a foretaste of his coming kingdom!

When the first man and woman who ever lived, Adam and Eve, sinned, brokenness entered into the world. This world is not functioning as it was originally designed to work. There is brokenness everywhere and two of the most prominent factors are spiritual brokenness—we live apart from Christ under spiritual slavery to sin—and physical brokenness—disease, pain, suffering, and death.

The proclamation of Jesus (3:11-12)

So we see the pressure of Jesus and the power of Jesus. And thirdly, there is an amazing proclamation of Jesus. And it comes from an unlikely source—although we have seen it before in Mark—from demons. Verse 11: “They cried out [in a raucous, deep-throated voice probably], “You are the Son of God!” The sense in the Greek is, “As for you, you are the Son of God!” The demons are acknowledging the deity of Jesus Christ—that He is very God of very God! They are affirming that Jesus is in a class by Himself.

● He is the Father's Beloved Son

Mark's Gospel is all about declaring that Jesus is God. The demons are the first ones to do this in this gospel. God Father shouts first from heaven, “*And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”*” (Mark 1:11). Jesus is the Son God, beloved of the Father and God takes great delight in His one and only begotten Son!”

● He is the Son of God

But it isn't too much later in Mark's gospel that we read these stunning words that come from demons through the voice of a possessed man in the Jewish synagogue, ““*What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.*”” (Mark 1:24). In chapter 5, we'll meet a demoniac at Gerasenes who is “*crying out with a loud voice. . . “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.*”” (Mark 5:7). Demons are the only ones, except the Father, who declare the deity of Jesus Christ until the Roman centurion does at the end of the book after Jesus dies on the cross (15:39). Despite the fact that he is healing thousands and casting out demons, men don't get who He is—the Son of God. But the testimony of demons show that the critics are wrong when they propose that Jesus was just a good man, a great teacher, a well-intentioned religious prophet. Oh no, don't miss like most of Israel did and even his own disciples seemed to at first—Jesus is the Son of God!

● He is the Messiah

Speaking of Jesus' disciples, it takes them awhile—they are slow learners like me—but eventually with Peter as their spokesman, they make one more startling proclamation of who Jesus is—He is the Christ, the long awaited, promised Messiah! At the turning point of Mark's gospel, Jesus “*asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.”*” (Mark 8:29).

That's the proclamation about Jesus in Mark's gospel! He is the Father's beloved Son, the Son of God, and the Messiah, the Christ! Do you believe that? If you don't you will never be saved! You must believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Sovereign Lord to the glory of God His Father! Who do

you really believe Jesus is? Who do you say that Jesus is? Get that wrong and you will die in your sins.

Of course, it is not simply enough to say those three words, “Jesus is Lord!” or “Jesus is the Son of God!” I mean even the demons believe that and they shudder (James 2:19). They fall down before Jesus! Oh no, you must not just intellectually assent to some proposition like “Jesus is Lord”. You must not just be convinced historically this is true. Rather, you must entrust your life, your eternal soul, to Jesus! You must treasure Him and not just believe something about Him, but believe in Him to be delivered from your sin, rescued from yourself, and saved from the wrath of God!

So let's review. First, we see the pressure upon Jesus. As one commentator aptly summarizes,

“The ill, the feverish, the crippled were pushing and grabbing at Jesus and falling over him; the demonized were malevolently sizing him up and were howling his name in furtive combat; the jaundiced Pharisees were watching his every move, waiting for their chance. It is easy for us in the evangelical tradition to miss the point here because we have been so ready (rightly so!) to emphasize that Jesus was much more than the ideal man, being 100 percent God. The truth is, he was also man, and really did feel immense, inescapable stress and strain.”

And this is so encouraging. Jesus understand the harried, frenetic life we live. Jesus knows all about the pressures of living life on a perpetual treadmill. He experienced a pressured life so he knows what it is like to be sitting at a red light that turns green and one second after it does, people are honking at you if you haven't lurched through the intersection already. He knows what it means to be a busy mom who has to do multi-tasking all day and night long. And he knows what it means when you care about others so much that you open yourself to troubles and vulnerability like He did. And He understands that those who stand with Him will be assaulted by a demonized culture that is increasingly hostile to the Christian faith. Jesus knows what it means to live with pressure!

Secondly, Jesus exercises great power. Nothing is too difficult to God. Did you notice verse 12, “And he strictly ordered them [the demons] not to make him known”. That is a severe, sovereign rebuke that displays complete supremacy over them. Next thing you hear—silence! True, he did this repeatedly whenever new demons began to testify, but when they heard this, they spoke no more. Why did Jesus do this? Because He did not wish to have the endorsement or testimony of demons declaring who He is.

Nevertheless, there is the faithful proclamation of who Jesus is in Mark's gospel. Mark provides us with this summary statement to accomplish His purpose of telling to tell the story of Jesus Christ who is the Son of God, the title of deity that no Jew would ever mistake and He has proven it. The only thing left is for you

to respond to it. If you've received the evidence, embrace the truth concerning Jesus Christ. Do you believe in Him as God's Son and your Redeemer? If you do, you have eternal life.

The personal discipling ministry of Jesus (3:13-19)

Lastly then today, let's explore the personal discipling ministry of Jesus. Jesus has been gathering a small group of men up to this point to be active followers of Him but in the next few verses we watch as he formally calls twelve and formally commissions them to be a distinct group called apostles. We are going to consider this passage very briefly—so much could be said here about Jesus' call and these men's lives. I would commend to you A. B. Bruce's *The Training of the Twelve* (an older, rich work) and John MacArthur's book *Twelve Ordinary Men* based on his sermon series from Matthew 10—both of which offer invaluable insight into Jesus' discipling of these men and the background information available about these twelve men. Well worth your study. But I want you take away at least two principles: Jesus sovereignly calls these men! And these men are very ordinary men, not anything special when Jesus calls them. Plain men following an extraordinary Savior.

- **He calls ordinary people**
 - **He gets away**

First, we see Jesus calling ordinary people. “*And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him.*” (Mark 3:13). Of the same incident, Luke records, “*In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.*” (Luke 6:12). Jesus does three things. He gets away, he prays, and he sovereignly chooses!

First of all he gets away! We don't know where this mountain is, and that's OK because obviously that isn't that important. But what is important is that even in the busyness of ministry and before He makes this huge decision regarding the calling of the Twelve, Jesus gets away.

You likely have heard this saying before, “If we don't come apart, we will come apart!” Now, you don't have to head to the mountains to get away from it all and be with God as Jesus spent time with His Father. No, your “getaway” may be in a parked car in a park, a church building, a walk on a path, or just a few quiet minutes every morning. But the example of Christ teaches us this much: We must be still, get alone with our Father every day for a few minutes and at some points even for an extended period of time. I know this sounds challenging in our day, but if Jesus set the example, I think we would do well to follow.

Remember the rage a few years ago, “What would Jesus do?” Well, here is an instance of “What did Jesus do?” He got away! Spent some quiet time with His Father.

- **He prays**

Now as I said, Luke adds, “He went out to a mountain to pray and all night he continued in prayer to God.” Again, if Jesus had to do this, being the Eternal Son of God, how much more do we, as God's adopted sons and daughters, need to follow His example.

Prayer is one of God's ordained ways to communicate with Him and one way by which we grow in His grace. “Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear—all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

So through this passage, how might God be calling you to spend some “get away” time with Him regularly? How is calling you to a life of more intentional prayer? What will that look like in your life? How could it work?

- **He sovereignly chooses**

Thirdly, in his calling of these ordinary people, we see His sovereign choosing. “He called to him [he summoned to himself] those whom he desired [those whom he willed!” (Verse 13). Mark uses very strong language here. We hear strong reverberations in this calling elsewhere in Scripture:

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.” (John 15:16)

“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

“We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

It is Jesus who determines the call here. He calls and “they came to him!” The disciples don't just decide to follow Jesus and do him some sort of a favor here. No, his call supersedes their wills, woos their will, and is effectual! These twelve men didn't just volunteer for the call! No, they were effectually called by Jesus. And Jesus is doing something totally radically here from his day. You see, rabbis didn't normally choose their students. No it was more like our college selection process today—students choose which university they go to and universities try to do everything to woo the students there. But here the rabbi called Jesus of Nazareth chooses His apprentices—and he doesn't choose them based on their credentials and strengths—rather he chooses them even though He perfectly and completely knew their faults, weaknesses, failures and their slowness in learning.

And that is how He chooses each one of us as well! Christ finds us before we follow Him! It's a calling of pure grace. Nothing in our hands we bring, only to the cross we cling! And the only reason we cling to that cross is because of God's efficacious grace—His grace that calls us and justifies us and sanctifies us!

In a future message we will study more in-depth Jesus' personal discipling ministry as we consider how he commissions ordinary people and then as he uses them.

Until, take great heart in the truth that God uses ordinary people—people just like you and me. And from what have learned thus far, let us constantly be studying Jesus to know more of the love of God, the wrath of God, the comfort of God, the holiness of God and the disciple-making purpose to which God has called each one who knows His grace in salvation.