

Read also Habakkuk 3. Check out the service, which is recorded on www.fpcd.org.

What would it take for you to change something big about your life? What would motivate you to change careers or perhaps your location or your focus in life? Do you have a dream in the back of your mind that you would like to follow? Today and for the next few weeks we return to the beginning of Mark to explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God has arrived." For years the people of God looked for that day. Habakkuk had prayed for a revival. And, Habakkuk said after praying, "I see God moving." He saw the answer as God bringing salvation and rescue. But God's movement also made Habakkuk tremble because he knew God's people were far from perfect, and he feared they would be punished. So he also prayed, "Remember Your mercy." We all have a certain fear of God, that we might not be good enough, so sometimes we hold back from God.

Jesus has just begun His ministry. But it is not "religion as usual." Before, religious life was played out in keeping the Torah, following God's statutes, trying really hard. But Jesus speaks of entering the kingdom in a different way. He says being God's person is actually like entering a new state of being.

It would be like a big change in your life – a new career or location or focus in life. Let's read it.
READ MARK 1:16-20

Jesus wasn't looking for perfect people.

Jesus simply said "follow me" and "immediately Simon and Andrew left their nets and followed him." Then, "immediately Jesus called James and John" and "they left their father and followed Him."

Mark writes in the immediate. The immediacy of Jesus calls for an active response, which those men gave.

What would cause you to make such a dramatic change?

Perhaps you would say, "Winning the lottery."

Or, perhaps you have a particular talent – singing or acting – and you might dream of being discovered. Or, you might be really smart or a high achiever and you strive to get into a particular school.

Do you think of relating to Jesus as a performance?

In Bible times, students sought out the rabbi, and the rabbinical school. Acceptance into their schools was very much like now, performance based and test driven. Once in, students didn't really follow the rabbi, they followed the law; they learned to be a student of God's statutes.

But with Jesus it is different. Jesus is the unqualified subject of the call. "Come, follow me."

They had no required background, no test to see if they knew the Torah, or were even spiritual; they need only to do what they learn from following Jesus.

Basically, they were breathing and working. So the call began at their work – right where they were.

But they did have to do something. They had to take a risk of faith. They had to respond to His commanding word and follow him. Faith must be an act before it comprehends belief.

In other words, do you ever tell yourself *I don't know enough about the faith*. To Jesus, that absolutely does not matter. **You know Jesus only as you follow Him.**

This is hugely freeing.

Jesus is not looking for some kind of religious performance. It's not human effort He is looking for. **He looks for those who are willing to follow Him because He has a happier, brighter, purpose-filled future for them.**

You might not consider God's call happier, brighter, and more purpose-filled, but I would like to posit that it is.

- First, it requires time, not expertise.
- Second, it involves what you do well, fulfilling Jesus' dreams for you.
- Third, He takes what you do and makes it meaningful.

Moses, for example, dealt with the Egyptian rulers. He had been a foster child, given up by his mother, raised by the royal family. He was later banished into the desert where he became a shepherd and learned the wilderness well.

He probably felt pretty bad about his past. But then God used all he was to make him a leader. His life as a shepherd enabled him to lead others through the desert, and growing up in Pharaoh's household prepared him to talk to him, and his education enabled him to write the first five books of the Bible.

Thus God's call gave meaning to his life. God took him exactly where he was and gave him a purpose.

Do you want more purpose in your work? In your life?

You have to be willing to give your experiences to God. Then, go wherever He guides you, even if it seems like it's going nowhere. Habakkuk said to God, "Things look pretty barren, the trees don't have any fruit, and the fields have no food, but yet I will rejoice because I know that you, God, will bring triumph!"

Jesus walks with us and teaches us as we follow.

Consider Mary, Jesus' mother. She probably never imagined what she was called to be. But she dared to believe the impossible. God's call always involves elements of the impossible. But God knows what He is doing and will personally show the way.

Jesus called the disciples to fish for people. I doubt that they knew what this meant. Regardless, they risked leaving the family business that they knew, and they moved to being creatively shaped by Jesus into what He dreamed for them.

Jesus simply promises a future. He gets to define it, it won't rely on your strength, and you hear it in prayer.

We know this because Jesus models it. Listen to the story. READ Mark 1:35-39

Jesus had drawn a huge crowd. The whole city of Capernaum, about two miles away, had turned out to hear Him preach. When the disciples saw it, they thought –we need to build a church. Come on Jesus, let's get to work!

But instead Jesus was “wasting” hours in prayer. And when He was done, He redirected them somewhere else!

When you follow Jesus, it's mostly about listening and being guided. It's about a journey where He takes you according to His plan. Sometimes what he calls you to do doesn't make sense, but it's God-driven, and that is enough.

Elijah was a man of prayer. James tells us “he prayed fervently it would not rain and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain” (James 5:17-18).

Do you want to have vision in life or accept only a fraction of what you can do? Put your hand in Jesus' hand as He opens the world more broadly to you and says, “Follow me and I will use you.”

Jesus has the power and authority to do what He calls you to do.

These disciples did fish again, and they did not walk away from their parents. They established a new priority. Over and above everything, Jesus led them. Don't be afraid to establish a new priority.

The disciples had no idea where they were going with Jesus. It's a call that requires full trust. And we get to know the One who is leading and experience His filling our lives with meaning.

Can you imagine where it will lead? I believe if you lined up Moses and Elijah and Habakkuk and Mary and the disciples they would all say, “No way! But following Him is happier, brighter, and gives incredible purpose to life.

The apostle Paul says, "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us" (2 Cor. 4:7). For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," and it shines through us. (v. 6)

Follow Him, and pray without ceasing. And you, too, will experience the power of God as you are used to do something glorious.

AMEN