

SERMON
MARK 1:14-20
“TENDER CARE: FISHING FOR PEOPLE”

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH – WINSTON-SALEM, NC

JANUARY 21, 2024

AMY R. MCCLURE

Sermon Title: "Tender Care: Fishing for People"

Sermon Reference: Mark 1:14-20

Y'all - I love my wife very much and we often get people asking us how we met, what we love most about each other, what we do for fun, etc. The reality is, more often than not, we are total opposites in most things. I like to stay up late, she likes to go to bed early. I love to be early to scheduled events, she likes to slide in sideways right on time. (Y'all watch every Sunday and you'll see her slide right into that pew right at 11:00). I like to shower first thing in the morning and she likes to shower after her first cup of coffee. I like to drive fast - Karen likes to drive slow. I like to go everywhere - Karen reaches her max for like 2 places a week :-). I like sweets, she likes savory. [and don't even get me started on how differently we approach house projects - shew Lord! But one of the things I love that she can't stand is watching game shows on TV. I LOVE them. I celebrate when I get the right answer on a Jeopardy question or guess the puzzle on wheel of fortune before anyone else. But lately I can't stop watching old episodes of "Deal or No Deal?" The idea is that there are 26 briefcases, each with various sums of money hidden in them ranging from a penny to a million dollars. The contestant gets to pick one, hoping that their one has a million dollars in it. As the game goes on, they slowly open one of the other cases at a time knocking out the various amounts on the board. If they knock out low numbers, that's great - because it means there is a lot of money they could win. The contestant is offered a sum of money to stop playing the game at various points. But it means they may miss out on the million dollars if they take the offer - That stress of when the Howie Mandel looks at the contestant after they have been given an

offer and says “deal or no deal?” And they have to answer right then what their decision is It’s STRESSFUL for the contestant AND the viewer what will they pick?! Daunting Music plays — THAT stress - that’s a little bit how the gospel of Mark feels. Everything is urgent with big consequences.

Last week we talked about the baptism of Jesus. In Mark, it has only 3 verses about that baptism moment and then it say “Jesus was immediately sent to the wilderness. And not to waste time, Mark spends only 2 verses on that and now here we are this week. Wham bam - Jesus gets baptized, goes to the wilderness and then....

Jesus came to Galilee. This is the *start* of his ministry following his baptism. Galilee - the place filled with all kinds of people. This was the name of the place, sure - but it was also a name used as a governmental term. It was a used to name a geographic region. This was a place where both Jews and Gentiles lived - along with anti-Roman zealots. That sounds like I’m starting to give you a history lesson! The point is that this was a place that was different - it was ripe for change and it was distant from the deeply embedded religious authorities in Jerusalem. Jesus chooses to start his ministry here in the gospel of Mark in a place that was really unlikely for someone who was to be a great King and leader. Galilee was like a melting pot of all kinds of people - people who didn’t want to be rooted in the big city of Jerusalem, people who are tired of systems that bring others down, tired of government using authority to oppress others, tired of empty words and promises, and most certainly aware of this guy named Jesus who was already stirring up conversation...and then Jesus steps into their town, proclaiming “The time is fulfilled,

and the Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent and believe the good news!” The time is fulfilled - this wasn’t like a scheduled time that they all checked their calendars, ran around their houses to do last minute things and hollering at their families “hurry up - it’s almost time! Jesus is coming and you know - the kingdom of God is here and stuff - so hurry up!” The greek word here in our text for time is *not* chronos - like checking your calendar or watch - linear. It’s the other greek work for time - Kairos - meaning the appropriate time has arrived. So Jesus said “the time is fulfilled!” This place in Galilee, with all kinds of people and all kinds of backgrounds - this is the place when Jesus proclaims - “yes - this is the appropriate time and the kingdom of God has come near.”

I’m sure heads turned to this man, Jesus, as he proclaims “repent and believe in the good news!” [what’s this guy talking about?!]. The greek word for repent is “metanoia” which means to change your mind. So to repent in this sense is to change our mind about whether our way is better than God’s way. One of my professors, Tony Cartledge, has written a brilliant commentary and of course, our passage today, is one that he has written about. He talks about how the people are hearing this message and no doubt “to believe” sounds much easier than it seems. He talks about how when he was a young preacher, he would say things like “I know...” - then as he gained years of experience and had many sermons in his library, his tone changed from “I know” to “I believe.” And now as an older adult with many years of experience in ministry and in local churches and teaching seminary, his language has changed from I know, to I believe, to “I hope...with a passion. After all, what is belief, but hope with feet on it?”

So believe the good news? They probably hoped it was indeed the good news they had been waiting for.

As Jesus is proclaiming “repent and believe the good news!”, Jesus looks at these fishermen and says drop everything and follow me. He’s asking them to leave the familiar - the thing that is most comfortable for them and the thing they are good at to follow him. As we look at the tradition of scripture, we know that the work of God always looks different than what we imagine it to look. We see the pattern of God elevating the poor, the orphaned, the children, those who are vulnerable. We see Jesus casting his arms open wide to the outcasts of society all throughout his ministry, starting here in Galilee. Jesus could have easily gone straight to those in authority - in power - the rulers, the leaders. And yet, he walks along the shoreline and gathers up regular ol’ folks - like you and like me. And not only does he call them to follow him, he literally calls them by name. Isaiah 43 reminds us “but now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel, do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine.” God, in the form of a human, walks on the shoreline and says “Simon and Andrew...James and John. - follow me” We have to believe that this was not their first time seeing Jesus or talking to him. I mean, after all, our passage today says they “immediately” left their nets and followed him. Fun fact: The greek word for immediately is “euthus” [YOU THOOSE]. This word appears 51 times between Matthew and Acts. Out of those 51 times, 41 of those are used in Mark alone - with 10 being in the first chapter alone! Mark likes to get to the point and uses this to

keep the story going. This is great for people like me who work extra hard to focus!

Mark is moving the story along here - getting right to the point. It's a sense of urgency in the writing. Like "what are you waiting for? - Let's do this"

Come, follow me and I will make you fish for people! Follow me and just as you are so skilled at knowing this trade of fishing, I am asking you to have that same passion, discipline, and love for people. What was Jesus wanting them to follow exactly?! Well, we actually have the privilege of knowing Jesus's life statement - his mission statement. Luke 4 says this:

14 Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to **Galilee**, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding region. **15** He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, **17** and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: (listen carefully - here is his mission statement)

18

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to set free those who are oppressed,

19

to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. **21** Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus said these things - But it's not just about saying the things - it's about doing them.

As Martin Luther King, Jr said in one of his prayers: "We thank you, God, for your church, founded upon your Word, that challenges us to do more than sing and pray, but go out and work as though the very answer to our prayers depending on us and not upon you."

When we claim to be followers of Jesus and prayer "be with the hungry," what would it look like for us to work toward making sure people have food. When we pray "be with those who are lonely," what would it look like for us to take the time to be with them in their loneliness? When we pray help our country that seems so divided, what would it look like to be agents of reconciliation and building bridges with those who seem so opposite of us. When we pray be with those who are oppressed and marginalized, what would it look like to stand in the gap and say enough is enough and do everything in our power to make sure nobody feels less than. When we pray be with those in prison, what would it look like to go be with them ourselves? When we pray for safe spaces for alllll God's children to feel welcomed, affirmed, and celebrated, we say thanks be to God for First on Fifth!

When Jesus says follow me, do we say okay or I'll catch up with you later?! I think Jesus is fine with both answers. Because for some of you Jesus has been calling for you for a long time and you've always thought "is he talking to me? Or you?" The call of Jesus is the best and greatest guarantee - greater than anything else! Deal or no deal? Will you follow or not?

So...is Jesus is calling you - the answer is yes. Rev. Dr. James Forbes once said "I believe that when God calls you, God also intends to stand by you." Jesus doesn't say "y'all go on and I'll catch up with you later!" Jesus says follow me.

Have you ever had to follow someone in the car on a road trip? Most summers, we have to take at least two vehicles - usually three - to passport kids camp. I am usually the lead car with excited kiddos singing and playing in the car and it never fails that Mr. Wally is always driving his truck behind me, filled with excited kiddos. On our way to camp, we always stop to eat, use the restroom, the typical road trip stuff. And always, there are kids in my car who are saying "is Mr. Wally still following us? I don't see him!" And kids in Mr. Wally's car saying "stay close - we don't want to lose them! In fact, let's pass them!" For the full passport experience, it's important that our two cars are at least in eye shot of each other so we can get to where we are going, even with all the stops we have to make. If we don't follow close, we run the risk of losing each other, missing those fun stops together, and missing this lived experience together. When Jesus

says follow me, he is aware of where you are - whether you are close to him or lagging behind. But always, always, he is with you.

As Karen and I talked through this scripture for today, she reminded me of my alarm clock. Every morning for the past 15 years, my alarm has set to music. **[get phone out]**. Let's see if you can figure this one out - my favorite version of this song. [play music on phone] Karen said "Amy, your alarm clock plays I have decided to follow Jesus EVERY MORNING." How did I not remember this as I prepared for this sermon!!! She said "why did you pick that song for your alarm EVERY MORNING? Don't you ever get tired of it?" :-). Another difference with us for sure - I never get tired of the same songs :-).

Following Jesus means deciding what you will do this day - every day. It's a lived out version of deal or no deal. What's our decision today? My alarm music is the nudge I need every day in the same way Jesus approached the fishermen and nudged them to consider a different way. What is your nudge every day? What practice would be helpful for you? What reminds you to drop your nets just like Simon and Andrew when Jesus calls for you? Because you see - life can be hard, y'all. Following in the way of Jesus is a guaranteed offer better than anything I could choose for myself and certainly better than anything else the world has to offer. Following Jesus is the daily guarantee that is worth taking. I can start my day in the right head space and things can quickly get me off course and distract me. You might start your day that way and say "today I will follow Jesus!" And then life happens - on your way to work you get a flat tire, someone pulls out in front of you (road rage anyone?!?) , you run out of gas, your coworkers are

driving you crazy, you forgot to drink your coffee, kids are having meltdowns. Or perhaps your life is in a place that you no longer drive and you feel isolated or lonely. Your internet goes out. Or maybe you have unexpected illnesses that hit you and your family. Just fill in the blanks with what can throw us off track. What will I decide today? Right now. In this very moment?! Following Jesus mean means taking a risk. Sometimes it means holding your tongue for the benefit of the kingdom. Sometimes it means being willing to say the hard thing. Sometimes it means standing up for what is right, even when nobody stands with you. . Following Jesus means committing to the unknown, and trusting in what is to come. Following Jesus means being okay with not always knowing the next step but at least being willing to take it. Following Jesus means loving people that are hard to love, helping to give a voice to the voiceless. Following Jesus means being willing to lose everything. Following Jesus means that sometimes people will laugh at you, think you are crazy, try to put obstacles in your way to stop you from doing what we know God has called us to do as we follow in the way of Jesus. Following Jesus into full relationships with people - seeing them the way God sees them and loving them the way God loves them - fully. But no matter how many minutes, hours, days, or years go by, the calming voice of Jesus always pierces through it all and says “follow me.” As we “fish for people,” let us remember the prayer of Martin Luther King, Jr. and step into the challenge to follow Jesus, to do more than sing and pray and to go out and work as though the very answer to our prayers actually depended on us. Let’s follow Jesus - And how about we do that right now? Deal? Amen.