

The Call to Participate

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Morning, everybody, how y'all sound so wonderful, have enjoyed having our hem moment and our worship service. So let us begin with a word of prayer. Father in heaven, thank you, Lord for another day of life. Lord, we are here. That's a miracle in itself. As we continue our journey through the book of Mark, open our eyes, which you have us to see. In Jesus name, amen.

How's everybody doing? Have you started doing your reading already for this book? Any of you already ahead? If not, that's okay, we got time. Let's go to the book of Mark. And today we're going to focus on discipleship. But before we get there, let's just kind of do a quick overview. So last week, we talked primarily about the prologue, the opening to the book of Mark we have to remember to Mark was probably the first gospel written is the shortest of all of the Gospels, only 16 chapters. So we began with the prologue. And now part two talks about the public ministry of Jesus. And in this first part, he's gonna primarily be reaching out to those who are of the Jewish faith. But immediately in chapter one, in verse 21, he drives out in impure spirits, it talks also about how he heals many people. In fact, even Simon's mother in law, she had a fever, he healed her. He then draws to a solitary place in verse 35. Because I don't know about you, but I like Jesus, sometimes I love people. Sometimes I have to withdraw to decompress and get my energy back. And he spends time and prayer. He also spends time, healing a man with leprosy in chapter two, He forgives and heals a paralyzed man. He's going to call Levi, he's going to, he's going to be questioned about fasting, he's also going to acknowledge that he's even the Lord of the Sabbath. He also heals on the Sabbath. And the crowds also begin to follow Jesus. So that's just kind of an overview of the beginning of Jesus public ministry.

But today, I want to focus on one theme that is present in the Gospel of Mark. And we'll only tackle a couple of verses today. But it's a theme that goes throughout the gospel, and actually all of the Gospels because it is so central to our faith, and we're going to talk about one word, it's called discipleship. Now, anybody want to try to attempt to what is discipleship mean? In our context? Anybody want to take a guess? Anybody nervous? Essentially, how we follow God, we are disciples. We are followers of Jesus. Okay. And so we're going to find let's go to Mark 1. Mark 1. And today's sermon is called the call to participate in the good news. What is the good news? Well, you know, Luke 4:18, actually explains it pretty well. It says, The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim the Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight of the blind, to set the press free to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, ultimately, the good news of God's salvation, amen. So we have this great, great story and this great opportunity to share. And what does Jesus do after he proclaims the fact that he's here to proclaim the good news? He enlists people.

So let's go to Mark 1. Verse 16. And it says, as Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the lake for they were fishermen. Come follow me, Jesus said, and I will send you out to fish for people at once they left their nets and followed Him. And when he'd gone a little further, he saw the sons of Zebedee, his James, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John in a boat, preparing their Nuts and without delay, he called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired hitmen and followed him. Now, can you imagine being James and John Simon,

also known as Peter and Andrew, this guy comes up and he says, Come follow me. I will send you out to fish for people. Is this a big step in their life? Absolutely, because they're turning away from everything that they had known. Now, if they were probably good Jewish boys. They had gone through the schooling and everything, but they didn't quite make the cut to becoming a rabbi. So they had to go back to probably the family trade. Mr. Zebedee, he was a fisherman. And fishermen during this time, were fishermen were they..... Did they have a great high, high place in the scale of people? No, they were down at the bottom. Okay, blue collar, if not even lower than that. Okay. So they had to work hard, they had to earn their keep. And yeah, Jesus comes along, and he says, Come follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people. And this fishing that they're going to do is the greatest call because we as fish are called to serve and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So this is the calling of Simon, Andrew, James and John,

Let's flip over to chapter 2, verse 14. And it's here in verse 14. That as he walked along, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax collectors booth, follow me, Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. And for those of you who don't know, Levi, that's his original name, but he's eventually what does Jesus eventually start to call him? Matthew. Okay. Now, Levi, a tax collector. Again, we're tax collectors well perceived in Jesus, I know, especially if you were a Jew, because more than likely, Levi, is that a Jewish name? So he's, he's a Jew, probably falls off the path. I don't know if he maybe thought well, let me work for the Romans because there'll be a better lifestyle, or was he felt this is the only way I can make it. Levi was a Jew, working with the Romans, and basically collecting taxes. So what if one of your own goes out works for the government, and doesn't just charge you he charges you extra? Are you going to like that guy? Quite a lot that Jesus is already collecting fishermen, and tax collectors. Now let's go to chapter 3, verses three through 19. Let's just briefly read through this three through 19. Jesus went up on the mountainside and called him those he wanted and they came to him, he appointed the 12, that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the 12 he appointed so he spells out all of the disciples here, Simon to whom he gave the name Peter, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. To them, he gave the name, Boanerges, which also means Sons of Thunder. Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Now, what's interesting about these guys, is, these are common people, maybe not all of them, but majority of them are common people. And what's beautiful about this is that Jesus has the ability to be able to take anybody to transform their life, and be able to spread the gospel, to use them to share the good news with others. Amen. And just like the disciples were all called, to help Jesus enlist the help of others, by asking us to follow him to follow Jesus.

Now in Mark 8:34, through 37, let's go to Mark 8:34 through 37. Jesus kind of puts it in perspective, what does it mean to follow Jesus? What does it mean to follow Jesus? And here we're going to talk about the way of the cross and then he called verse 34. Then he called to him along with his disciple called the crowds him along with the disciples said, whoever wants to be my disciple. must deny who themselves and take up their cross and follow Me, for whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will what? Who, what good? Is it that someone who gains the whole world get forfeit their soul? Or who can anyone.... I can't read.... Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

So he calls out to the crowd. He says, Come follow me, the crowds are following along and he shares with them what the meaning of following Jesus means. He points out that, you know, essentially, hey,

look, we could have a gazillion dollars, but in the end, is it worth it? In Jesus is everything. But it's going to cost something that's going to cost your life to give our lives to surrender to God. Now, when he says, deny, it's not like, Oh, you need to deny yourselves and live this horrible life? No. Essentially, what he's saying is, your allegiance is now not to yourself, but to the Lord. Amen. Okay. And Jesus says, to take up the cross, but in Jesus time was the cross. We look at the cross as something is significant. It's monumental in our lives. But how did the people in Jesus time look at the cross? Yeah, it was like an electric chair. It was not something to aspire to. When you died on the cross, it was a painful experience, not only were you nailed to be you were left up there. And you essentially died of asphyxiation because the water would well up and you couldn't breathe, and being left out there, especially if it's hot, or even if it's humid, it's a miserable experience. Generally, you were exposed. And you wouldn't just be let down, you would be left up there for a long time. And Jesus is going counter cultural to what they believe and said, you're gonna you're supposed to take up a cross, what does that mean? Jesus is pointing forward to his future as well. Now, he's not saying that, okay, you know, well, when you deny yourselves, meaning, essentially giving your allegiance to God. That doesn't mean that your life has to be a horrible experience, okay? But you also have to recognize that when Jesus comes into your life, your life is going to change, you're no longer living for yourself, you're no longer having to live to try to make as much money in the world because you could have a billion dollars. But in the end, when you die, how much is that billion dollars worth to you? Nothing. How much is that Bugatti worth to you? When you die? Nothing. The Bugatti will rust, and eventually the engine will fail. The gift of salvation is eternal. Amen. So, and by the way, there were many faithful people who did well to do in the Bible. So I'm not saying money is bad. But how you prioritize it in your life is important. You can lose your physical life. But you could gain so much more in Christ, amen. So to follow Jesus essentially means to, to follow what Jesus has shared in the gospels, lessons of how we should love one another. Forgive one another, not to put so much trust in our earthly possessions, that your faith is not dependent on a people group. But in your own personal belief of God. Everyone has to make a decision to follow Jesus, to how to pray, how to live life, Jesus shares all of these lessons and as his disciples, we need to be able to make sure that we're in the word that we can learn these lessons for ourselves, and replicate them in our lives.

Now, Jesus calls for us to deny ourselves to take up the cross, to die to self beings, essentially, to renounce oneself and take up the object and the object of one's life, to move to believe in Jesus. There was a young man who, in his faithfulness and zeal to follow the Lord even better to grow in his Christian spiritual life. He got a piece of paper and he made a list of things that all the things that he wanted to do for God, and he wrote them down of things. He would give up the places that perhaps he would go and hopefully minister in areas of ministry that he wanted to go into. He was super excited. And then he took that church and listened, he put it on the platform. And he thought he would feel this amazing feeling of joy. Instead, he felt emptiness. And so he went home he started to add to his list, he wrote down even more things he wanted to do and accomplish. He took that longer list, he put it there, he put it on the altar here. And again, he felt nothing. And then there was a wise old individual in the church observing him, they started to talk and he shared what he was doing. And he said, take a blank sheet of paper, sign your name at the bottom, and put that here. And the young man did. And then peace came to his heart. When it comes to denying ourselves and taking up the cross means we're giving our lives to Christ.

And that journey, we may not know where that journey takes us. But God has called us to faithfulness to being faithful in all things, it's not so much what we want to do doesn't mean that doesn't God doesn't

give us dreams and opportunities to go for things. But where's our perspective is it things that we want to do, because notice, he wrote everything he wanted to do, the places he wanted to go, and the places that he wanted to accomplish and the things that he wanted to do. And God simply wants us to have an open heart, to follow him to wherever God is calling us to. It could be here in Downey, it could be, it could be in Tanzania, it could be in Chile, it could be in China, it could be in Arkansas, wherever God calls you, and especially though he calls us to minister to wherever, wherever we are, wherever we are posted, because God can use us anywhere. So God calls us deny ourselves and take up the cross. And this call to discipleship is it's not a commitment to last a week or a day. It's a lifelong commitment to faithfulness to believe, to believe in the One who loves you, and died for you.

Let's jump to let's jump to Mark 10, verses 35 through 45, Mark 10. I know we're we're going through a lot but these are just a handful of books, I'm sorry, verses as you read the book of Mark, there are other things that are gonna pop out. And I hope that as you write them and note these things down, but Mark 10, verse 35. And these are some of the requirements of what does it mean to be a disciple? We've kind of studied this passage, but in the gospel, but it's good. It's a good reminder. So 10 Verse 35, it says, Then James, and John, the sons of Zebedee came to him and said, Teacher, they said, We want you to do for us, whatever we ask. You know what you read that? When you when you think about the disciples asking that, is that a bold statement? Kinda right? Jesus, we want you to do what we're gonna ask what we're gonna ask, alright. I would not do that. And so he responds with what do you want me to do for you? He asked. And he replied, Let it let one of us sit at your right, and the other, you're left in your glory. And Jesus responds, you don't know what you're asking. And Jesus said, Can you drink the cup? I'm gonna drink and be baptized with the baptism, I'm baptized with the answered We can. Jesus said to them, you will drink the cup I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or my left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared. All right. So it's here that Jesus is pointing now, what's going to happen to them in the future because the disciples say for John, he, we believe I believe he dies more of old age. He's the only disciple that is granted a long wife. Most of the disciples die for the Lord. Okay. And he's kind of referencing the fact of, Hey, guys, you're gonna die, you're gonna suffer. Remember, we talked in the Gospel of Mark, there's this theme of suffering. To follow Jesus is not an easy path. There is some amount of pain and suffering that goes along with following the cross. And now it may not literally be a suffering of persecution. But we all are going to experience challenges at one point in our life, especially as a disciple, Jesus faced many obstacles every day, we're gonna face obstacles everyday. That's just like, amen. And so, not everybody's gonna accept our beliefs and fact if they really don't like us, they made it to try to make our lives be even more difficult. Our family may not accept our new beliefs we may have experience physical hardship. How many of our friends and family here have experienced cancer in various ailments, and we've had to pray for them? Okay? Just because we're followers of Jesus does not mean that the road will be smooth and easy. But what does God expect of us talked about earlier is that of faithfulness. So James and John, you know, they'd hoped that they would get some extra special recognition and be with Jesus to get at the top seat. But now as we as we turn to the next verse, how do the disciples respond to their request?

Well, they get indignant. Let's go to verse 41. When the 10 heard about this, they became indignant with James and John, and Jesus called them together. And he said, you know, that those who were regarded as rulers of the Gentiles, lord it over them, and their high officials exercise over authority over them, not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your what? servant. And

whoever wants to be first among let's be the slave of all, For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for how many, many, so even the Son of God, Jesus is indicating that, hey, you have to be a servant first to serve others. And notice how we talked about this theme of Son of man, right here in verse 45. Jesus is referring to himself as the Son of Man.

You know, when you talk about humility, serving others, sometimes we don't always get it right. When was the last time you heard somebody, maybe on TV or the radio? Say, I'm sorry, I messed up. You got to think about it right. Now just let I'm gonna let you use your imagination to how far you want to go with that. In our day and age, we don't hear people say I'm sorry, because it's never our fault anymore. What's our first reaction? It's their fault. We were talking about Joseph today, part of his wife blamed her husband Potter for bringing Joseph and even though she was totally lying. And when Adam and Eve get caught eating the fruit, what does Adam do? He throws Eve under the bus. So it's in our nature to throw people under the bus. Kick. That's not what God is calling us to do. God is calling us to serve. And to be honest, and have the humility to serve one another. may ask you this when somebody messes up, but they're humble about it. And they admit it and they come say, Hey, I messed up. And I'm willing to learn and grow or here's some ways I'm going to fix this. Would you prefer to deal with that person or somebody who does a good job, but makes mistakes on the way even though they do a great job, but they blame others for the mistakes? Who would you rather deal with? The person who's able to admit their faults, right? I trust that person more than I will somebody who thinks they're great and awesome, but then starts to point their fingers everywhere. Folks, we have to take ownership of our lives even when it comes to our fate. We have to acknowledge that we are not perfect, I am not a perfect person. But I know that with God, all things are possible. And God is I'm a continual work just like everyone here is. Nobody ever gets it right. That God is continually working on us through the Holy Spirit.

So the last thing I want to say Thomas Merton says Humility is the surest sign of strength. When we have humility and bow to and follow Jesus. God can do amazing things in our life. And when we're humble when we work with us, doesn't mean though, that we again, we do not have to be a punching bag or a mat that people can just step on either because was Jesus a pushover? No, but he treated everybody with respect. Likewise, we also have to be able to treat everybody with respect and humility. May we have the attitude of humility and strength as we go forward? As we become faithful disciples for the Lord, to deny ourselves to take up the cross, to go what is counter to what everyone else is saying, to be a faithful disciple. So as you reflect this week, does the idea of service and humility come natural to you, or do you resist these personality characteristics? Okay, the service and humility are is that something natural? Where it's like, oh, I have a hard time letting go things. And this week, choose at least two people. Okay, before we did four, I want you to choose at least two people this week to pray for. And out of service in humility, do one act of service for them this week. Amen.

All right, let's pray. Father in Heaven we thank you For the gift of love for all that you've done for us and Lord, we've talked about discipleship. Lord, help us to be faithful to you in all things. May we be humble, may we serve one another. And as we pray and as we serve, Lord, help those we minister to you to see you through us. It's not about us, but about you working through us in Jesus name. Amen. Grace and peace, everybody.