



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

An Example to Follow

Mark 1.16-34

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An Urgency Enacted

I want to again call attention to how Mark's more condensed telling of his story lets us see Jesus' priority, focus, and manner of service. As we noticed in our study of Mark 1.9-15, in just seven verses at the beginning of this gospel, we see (1) that Jesus was primarily devoted to obeying God, (2) that his commitment to obey led to his loyalty when tempted, and (3) that it also caused him to keep God's purpose and mission at the forefront of his activities.

Beginning in 1.16, we see how that singular focus played out in his ministry. As Hurtado wrote:

The urgent conviction reflected in Jesus' words [in 1.14-15] sets the tone for the rest of the story of his ministry and, together with his acclamation as God's Son, marks his work with momentous significance.... God has begun to establish his rule in a world viewed by many religious Jews as under the tyranny of Satan and evil. The kingdom of God thus represents the triumph of God's plan of salvation over human sin and demonic oppression...¹

At the heart of what Jesus was doing—and this is an important theme in Mark—is the demonstration of the nature of discipleship, or following. In our text, we see representative scenes that show important aspects of following.

What Following Jesus Is

To fully appreciate what occurs in Mark 1.16-20, we must begin in John 1.35-42.

1. Andrew had been a follower of John and had been introduced to Jesus by John.
2. Favorably impressed with Jesus, he went to Peter and brought him to the Lord.
3. So, the encounter described in Mark 1.16-20 is not depicting their first meeting with or opportunity to evaluate Jesus; it reports their decisive commitment to follow him.

From their call, we learn what Jesus intended for his followers (see Hurtado, 22-23).

1. He intended to have followers accompany him as people involved in his mission, not just observers or recipients of blessings.
2. They were to engage in a ministry modeled after Jesus' own (Mark 3.13-19).
3. Fundamentally, to follow Jesus is to be "with him" (Mark 3.14; cf. 1.36; 5.18, 37, 40; 14.33); it's a relationship wherein we increasingly come to identify ourselves with him and allow him to mentor us into greater imitation of his image (cf. 2 Cor 3.17-18).

What Following Jesus Assumes

First, Jesus was devoted to *teaching* (1.21-22; cf. 2.13; 4.1-2; 6.2, 6, 30, 34; 7.7; 8.31; 9.31; 10.1; 11.7; 12.14, 35; 14.49).

1. Hurtado (26) calls attention to an important feature of Mark's account: teaching (διδάσκω, *didaskō*; Mark used the verb 17 times) is characteristically used to describe what Jesus did, not proclaiming (κηρύσσω, *kēryssō*).²
2. The emphasis on teaching in the gospels and later in Acts and the epistles should serve as a corrective to our culture's emphasis on the instant, seen in an attitude which often looks as if we think we can make disciples through a (relatively) brief proclamation.
3. Also, while there is certainly merit to the idea, we should be wary of an overemphasis on the idea that the faith is "better caught than taught."³

Second, Jesus possessed unique *authority* (ἐξουσία, *exousia* - 1.22, 27; cf. 2.10; 3.15; 6.7; 11.28-29, 33; 13.34).

1. This says something important about his being, status, and power over demonic forces.
2. It also says something about his credibility: Jesus' teaching gave direction for life, providing unique insights into reality and how to live.

Third, Jesus' *care* for people and ability to deliver them was comprehensive.

1. The demons could neither rebut nor control him (1.23-25); so people received relief from nearly unimaginable distress and loss of control.
2. Diseases, understood as being connected to sin, or at least one of the effects of being in a fallen world, were cured in an instant.
3. Whether with regard to the crowds or individuals, Jesus showed that people are most important and treated them holistically.

What Following Jesus Involves

Jesus did not focus on discipleship as a plank in his teaching platform, he modeled it in everything he said and did. We see this in Mark's reports of what he commissioned his followers to do.

1. They were to preach and were given the authority to cast out demons (3.14-15).
2. As they proclaimed Jesus, cast out demons, and called for repentance, they "anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them" (6.7, 12-13)

Again, we are "called to enter into his mission and not to be observers" (Hurtado, 22).

First, we should seek to convey and aptly apply his authority (assuming the place and activity of teaching; see above).

1. No, we do not have the status or power that gave him unique authority.
2. But, if we submit to his teaching—as much of it as possible, studied as completely as possible—we should grow in our ability to insightfully diagnose our world's condition and how Jesus' teaching best applies to its various needs.

Second, we can exhibit the *quality* of care for all people that Jesus modeled.

In this regard, Hurtado's comments about Jesus' exorcisms and how some have diminished them are germane.

The accounts resemble descriptions of certain kinds of behavior labeled in modern medical language as particularly severe mental disorders. Though it is certainly true that the Gospel writers employ the descriptive language of their day for such conditions and that moderns may be uncomfortable with ideas of "demon possession," we must not allow the medical question to overshadow the fact that the Gospel accounts show Jesus as bringing deliverance and health to such afflicted people as part of God's manifestation of his rule. That Jesus is shown taking pity on such people and releasing them, rather than condemning them or superstitiously avoiding them, is significant as a role model of care for such troubled persons today (Hurtado, 33).

In other words, although we cannot replicate the power or extent of his service to hurting people, we can practice the quality of godly compassion that he modeled.

In a Nutshell ...

How would we describe the work of Jesus and what it implies for us as his followers "in twenty-five words or less"? Consider Peter's summary when he spoke of

what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him (Acts 10.37-38).

May we continue to grow in our imitation of his example of service.

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Notes

¹ Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1983, 1989), 22.

² In contrast to the 17 times he used the verb διδάσκω (*didaskō*; see above), Mark used κηρύσσω (*kērussō*) 14 times. Only 3 refer explicitly to Jesus' proclaiming (1.14, 38-39), although another 6 refer to the proclaiming of the apostles or those who would follow in their stead (3.14; 6.12; 13.10; 14.9; 16.15, 20). Three times, the word describes actions by people Jesus healed (1.45; 5.20; 7.36).

³ We should especially take note of what it might mean for our ministries that Jesus taught his closest disciples intensely for at least three years.