

## How Do I Follow King Jesus?

**October 14, 2018**

Who is in charge of your life? If you are in school, your parents are the authority. They have a right to tell you what to do, when you can drive and what time is your curfew. When you are a little older and get married, you still have an authority. Now the authority is your spouse. He or she has a right to tell you about his or her emotional needs and relational needs. As his or her spouse, you need to respond to him or her. While our parents and our spouses are some of the conscious authorities in our lives, there are unconscious authorities that tell us how to think.

One unconscious authority is the Internet. The things we see people doing on Facebook can leave us green with envy as we feel pressure to keep up with everyone else. If they can take so many vacations in tropical paradises during the Iowa winter, we need to take vacations like that too.

There are many authorities trying to control of our lives. This morning, we are going to look at someone who doesn't just want to be an accessory in our lives but who demands to be an authority in our lives. He deserves to be there. His name is Jesus.

We are in the beginning weeks of a study in the Gospel of Mark. So far we learned the purpose of the first half of the book of Mark is to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" The purpose of the second half of the book of Mark is to answer the question, "What has Jesus done for us?" This is why Pastor Jordan and I called this series, "The king and the cross." The question of Mark 1 to 8 is, "Who is Jesus?" The answer is, "He is our king — the Son of God." The question of

Mark 9 to 16 is, “What has Jesus done for us?” The answer to that question is that he died on the cross for our sin.

Since the first half of Mark is about establishing the fact that Jesus deserves to be king of our lives and this world, the front half of Mark is about proving Jesus’ kingship. In the ancient world, all legitimate kings had a forerunner that prepared people for their coming before they arrived. The first things we saw in Mark is that Jesus, as a legitimate king, also had a forerunner. His name was John the Baptist. He prepared people for Jesus’ coming by calling them to repent of their sin and to look forward to Jesus’ imminent arrival.

Every legitimate king also had a coronation ceremony where he was crowned as king. Last week, we studied Jesus’ coronation ceremony that took place at his baptism. At Jesus’ baptism God the Father verbally authenticated Jesus as king when he spoke from heaven to Jesus saying, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Holy Spirit visually authenticated Jesus as the king who is the Son of God when the Bible tells us he descended on Jesus at his baptism like a dove.

Last week, we also looked at the vindication of King Jesus. When a new king was crowned in the ancient world, he then took on some enemies of the kingdom to demonstrate his power. In a similar way, immediately after Jesus’ temptation, the Holy Spirit drove him into the wilderness where he was tempted for 40 days by Satan. During that time, Jesus was without food. When Satan was at his best, Jesus was at his worst. Jesus never gave in to temptation, and he proved he is the one capable of taking on and defeating the devil. After those 40

days of intense temptation, the Bible tells us Satan left Jesus until an opportune time. That opportune time would be in the Garden of Gethsemane and at the cross.

This morning, as we continue through the Gospel of Mark, we begin a series of Jesus stories that all demonstrate Jesus' kingly authority. This morning we will see Jesus' authority to save our lives. We will see Jesus' authority over our lives and his right to change people's lives and call them to himself. In future weeks, we will see Jesus' authority over Satan by casting out demons. We will also see Jesus' authority over the fallen world by his healing of the sick.

Let's read the text and study it together.

Mark 1:14-20.

**Jesus' message is simple. It is repent and believe.**

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:14–15 (ESV)

Mark begins by telling us what he is about to share happened **after John the Baptist was arrested**. In Mark's Gospel, his stories about Jesus are short. Just a few verses before we read about John the Baptist preaching, and then immediately after that Jesus faced temptation by Satan for 40 days in the wilderness. Now Jesus is preaching in Galilee. It sounds like all this took place in a matter of days because Mark compresses things together. Actually, that is not the way things unfolded.

When we turn to the Gospel of John, we find that John gives us more of a chronological account. Jesus actually began his preaching and teaching while John the Baptist was still baptizing in the dessert. There was probably a five- or

six-month overlap when John and Jesus were both preaching. We read about this in John 3:22-4:2. This is the time when John uttered his famous words about Jesus.

**He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:30 (ESV)**

During these six months, John the Baptist's ministry was winding down while Jesus' preaching was picking up pace. Apparently Jesus began his ministry near Jerusalem. This is why the Gospel of John tells us that Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers on his first visit to the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus apparently went to Jerusalem to begin his ministry. Jesus eventually went north toward Galilee and through Samaria. This is where we read in the Gospel of John of Jesus speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well. During Jesus' trip north, John the Baptist was arrested. Jesus ended in Galilee to the north with John the Baptist completely off the scene and Jesus being the focus of God's work from that point forward. This is why Mark said that it was after John the Baptist was arrested that Jesus showed



up in Galilee. Mark didn't tell us that Jesus' ministry and John's ministry overlapped overlapped by six months. Mark just ignored that period and picked things up when Jesus arrived in Galilee.

Why did Mark skip the details shared in the Gospel of John? Remember the point of Mark's Gospel. Mark is a short Gospel. He was not telling us an exhaustive story of Jesus' life that tells us everything he did. He told us a selective story of Jesus' life. The parts of Jesus' life that Mark chose all add

together to prove Jesus is the king. I say this because I don't want you to be confused when you see things in one Gospel that are not in another Gospel. That isn't an error. What a Gospel writer included about Jesus' life was selective to illustrate the point he was making about Jesus. In Mark's case, he was showing us a few selective parts of Jesus' life to prove Jesus' kingship. He was skipping over parts what might distract us away from that point.

When Jesus showed up in Galilee, Mark tells us **he was proclaiming the gospel of God**. The word proclaiming is the word preaching. Jesus was a preacher, and he was a good one. In the Old Testament and in the New Testament, preaching is God's chosen method to draw people to himself so people are born again. People are not born again through knitting. They are not born again through playing poker. They are born again through the preaching of the Word of God. That is why Jesus was a preacher. That is why Billy Graham was a preacher. That is why we preach the Word of God at CrossWinds. We trust what the Bible says about itself in Hebrews 4:12 that the Word of God is living and active. It is sharper than a double-edged sword. It changes lives when we preach it.

**The time is fulfilled.** Jesus preached that the time was fulfilled. That sounds like a throw-away phrase. Actually, it is a very significant statement. In Greek, there are two words for time. There is the Greek word *chronos* which refers to the moment-by-moment passing of time chronologically. This is where we get our word chronograph. The other word for time in the Greek is the word *kairos*. Kairos refers to a particular moment in time that is much more significant

than those which come before or after. For example, D-Day in World War II was a kairotic moment. It was an extremely significant time because it was the beginning of the end for Hitler. September 11 is the day when we remember the collapse of the World Trade Center. September 11 was a kairotic moment. Everybody remembers where they were and what they were doing when they heard about the attack on the World Trade Center. In a similar way, the birth of Christ was a kairotic moment. It was so significant that the Western world decided to divide history in half based on Christ's birth. That is why we have BC (Before Christ) and AD (anno Domini — in the year of the Lord).

When Jesus said the time was fulfilled, he was using the word *kairos* as the word for time. Jesus said a super important event in world history was happening right in front of them. A history-changing event was unfolding in front of their eyes.

Jesus also said the, "time is fulfilled." The word fulfilled is the word *pleroma* in Greek. That means super filled, not just regular filled. The best way to illustrate this is when we fill our coffee cups at the coffee bar. We never fill our cups to the absolute top or they would spill. We leave a little room at the top for walking. The word *pleroma* means super filled. It means filled to the top and running over the sides so there is no room left.

When Jesus' time was fulfilled he was saying a super important event that all of world history was leading up to was unfolding right in front of their eyes. The long-awaited manifestation of the kingdom of God was happening in front of them.

Jesus' words were a huge claim that would have caught people's attention because he was claiming something so big was happening in front of them.

Jesus also said "the kingdom of God is at hand." What does that mean? At hand means close to you. It means in front of you. It means you can reach out and touch it. This is literally what was taking place. Jesus is the one who is the rightful ruler of the earth. He is the one through whom God's kingdom will come. People could literally reach out and touch him. He was that close to them.

The million dollar question is how can someone be part of this kingdom? Jesus said it is super simple to be part of the king's kingdom.

All you need to do to be part of God's kingdom that all of history was leading up to is **to repent and believe in the gospel**.

What could be easier than simply repenting and believing?

Let's look at this first word. The word, "repent." Repent means feeling profoundly sorry for things we have done wrong and then making choices to head away from the sin we have done in the past so we do what we can to turn away from sinful choices in the future. I once heard a pastor say the Greek word repent means retreat. Just as an army runs in one direction to enter into battle, when it changes its mind, the soldiers don't sit on the front lines, they retreat. They run away from the battle. Jesus said to be part of his kingdom we need to repent of our sin and believe in him. We stop running to our sin and instead have a change of heart and make a conscious decision to run from our sin.

It is worth pausing for a moment to talk about this. The gospel message that Jesus preached and by which we are saved is not to simply believe in Jesus

Christ and you will be saved. That is the essential core of the message but it is not all of the message. It is to repent of your sin and believe in Jesus, then you will be saved. Today, that is not a popular message because it involves talking about sin. It involves admitting we are sinners fully deserving God's wrath. We don't like talking about sin. Instead of talking about sin, we like to say we made poor choices. Instead of talking about sin, we want to say we made an unwise decision. The Bible doesn't use that language. To be saved we must call our sin with the proper name. Call it sin. We need to admit it. We need to be broken for it. We need to repent of it and head away from it, then believe in Jesus to save us from our sin.

Remember that John the Baptist came calling people to repent of their sin so they would be ready to turn to Jesus. Jesus is doing the same thing. He says repent of your sin and turn to me.

Think of it like this. Salvation is like turning a coin. At the same time we turn to Jesus, we must turn from sin. Simply turning to Jesus without a decision to repent and turn away from sin is not saving faith.



Does this mean we will never sin again? Of course not! It means that each time we sin we repent again and turn to Jesus. We confess our sin and we make whatever conscious choices we can keep ourselves away from continuing in sin. For example, if we make sinful choices when we stay up late watching YouTube, we repent and stop watching YouTube late at night so we don't fall back into sin. If we make sinful choices when we are around a particular



friend, we repent and stop hanging around that friend. Jesus came to forgive us and free us from sin. He didn't come so we might continue in sin.

This is a great point of application for us this week. Too many times when we tell people about Jesus, we only give half the gospel message. We say turn to Jesus because he loves you and Christ died for you. We don't give the other half which calls us to admit our sin, confess our sin and repent of our sin. Too many times we only give half the gospel and we unwittingly do a disservice to Christ.

**Jesus' call was hard because it is to place him first.**

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. Mark 1:16–20 (ESV)

As Jesus was proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God, he was **walking along the Sea of Galilee**. The Sea of Galilee is actually an inland lake about 13 miles long and 7 miles wide. It looks like a harp. It is 682 feet below sea level. It was, and still is, a very popular fishing lake. The Sea of Galilee at the time of Jesus had 16 harbors. It is fed by the Jordan River to the north and emptied by the Jordan River in the south. The land around the Sea of Galilee is highly fertile. Josephus, an ancient historian writing around the time of Jesus, described the Sea of Galilee and the land around it as a place of exceedingly great beauty.



The Sea of Galilee is also one of the most productive bodies of water when it comes to fish. It was filled with fish. Currently there are 23 varieties in this small body of water. Fishermen on the Sea of Galilee caught fish and exported them to other parts of the ancient world.

Mark also introduced us to Andrew and his brother Simon. We also met John and James. Mark tells us Simon and Andrew were casting their nets into the sea. Let me help you picture this. The nets fisherman used were approximately 12-20 feet across with weights on the edges. Fisherman threw the nets like a big Wham-O Frisbee, so as the net spun the weights spread it open. When it fell on top of the water, the weights pulled the edges of the net to the bottom. There was a rope that ran around the outer edge of the net that the fisherman pulled. That pinched the edges closed and they brought into the boat the fish they caught. That is what it means to cast a net.

We also learned the reason Simon and Andrew were doing this is because they were fisherman. What often comes to mind is poverty-stricken fishermen trying to eke out a living. That is the wrong picture. Fisherman on the Sea of Galilee made a good living. Notice when James and John left to follow Jesus, they left their father with his servants. Their family fishing business made enough money to have employees. Many of the fish caught in the Sea of Galilee were exported around the ancient world for a nice profit. The fishing business was a good business.

Another clue that these men were making good money is found in John 18:15 when we find that the apostle John was well known to the high priest in

Jerusalem. We don't know how John and Jerusalem's high priest were connected. Some scholars suppose that it was because the high priest was familiar with John and his family's fishing business. John may have known the high priest through selling fish in Jerusalem. We don't know for sure. That is only a scholar's guess. We do know fisherman made a good living from catching and selling fish, and they sold them around the ancient world.

What we find next is very usual. Jesus said to Simon and Andrew, and later he said to James and John, "Follow me." In the ancient world, rabbis never recruited their students. Students applied to study under rabbis, just like students apply to attend colleges today. Just like you take the ACT to get into a college today, students of ancient rabbis such as Hillel and Gamaliel made their potential students take a test to see if they were good enough to study under them.

Jesus was different. Students didn't choose him. He chose them. Jesus chose these four men to follow him and be his disciples. They didn't apply. That would strike people as highly unusual. As we study the rest of the Bible, that is always the way it works with God. He chose us before we ever chose him. Paul described us a spiritually dead. God goes out of his way to soften our hearts to the gospel and enables us to respond to the gospel. God calls us. We don't call him. That way God gets all the credit. Nothing has changed.

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you... 1 Thessalonians 1:4 (ESV)

Now we come to the part I find interesting, and some of this background helps us better understand Mark's point. Simon and Andrew plus James and John immediately dropped everything when Jesus called them to follow him.

They left lucrative careers in the fishing industry to follow Jesus and fish for people.

Every time I read this, the whole event sounds strange. These four men sound impulsive. How could they leave their families and their lucrative business in a moment's notice to follow someone that haven't met? This is awkward. It doesn't make sense.

The Gospel of John helps us a bit. In John 1:35-42 we see that at least Andrew was originally a disciple of John the Baptist. Possibly all four of these men were connected or at least familiar with John the Baptist. Andrew had seen John the Baptist point to Jesus and say he is the lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Through John the Baptist, these men would have been familiar with the supernatural manifestations of God the Father's voice and the Holy Spirit's descent on Jesus at his baptism. At least some, if not all, of these men were familiar with Jesus' identity through John the Baptist. That is why they so quickly responded to Jesus' call to follow him.

Now that we know these men were not impetuous and there was logic to their dropping everything to follow Jesus, the question remains, what didn't Mark tell us about this? Why does Mark intentionally shock us by how immediately Jesus' first disciples followed him? This tension we feel as we read about the disciple's dropping everything is intentionally created by Mark to teach us.

The point Mark was making is that following Jesus means being willing to give him first place in your life. Even if it means you need to drop everything,

even if it means you need to leave behind a lucrative business to obey Jesus, a disciple of Jesus needs to be ready to do that.

While becoming part of the kingdom is as easy as repenting and believing the good news of Jesus, following Jesus as his disciple is the hardest and most costly thing we can do. It means placing King Jesus as king in your heart and putting him before everything in your life.

This is our problem. We believe in a Christian life of moderation. We don't want to get too carried away when it comes to following Jesus. If obeying Jesus means doing something costly, radical or inconvenient, we are not interested.

Jesus said, "Following me in moderation is not what it means to be my disciple." Following Jesus means we must be willing to drop everything if that is what it takes to obey God's Word, no matter what the cost.

This is the big idea of our message. Following Jesus is the easiest thing to do because it is only repentance and belief in the gospel. Following Jesus is also the hardest thing to do because it means giving Jesus first place in our lives.

Let me show you how the Bible says following Jesus means giving him first place in our lives.

### **Following Jesus means putting him before our money.**

And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! Mark 10:21–24 (ESV)

Jesus doesn't call everybody to give away all their wealth when they follow him, but he does call everyone to place their love of him before their love of their money. For this man, since he loved his money more than Jesus, his money came in first place before Jesus so it was too hard for him to follow Jesus.

### **Following Jesus means putting him before our families.**

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26 (ESV)

What did Jesus mean when he told us to hate our families? Jesus was not telling us to hate our families absolutely. He was telling us to hate our families comparatively. Jesus said the place he must hold in our lives must be higher than our love for our spouses, our children and our parents. Since Jesus is the King, he deserves the place of absolute authority in our lives above anyone else. That is not being unreasonable. That is simply recognizing Jesus for who he actually is.

### **Following Jesus means putting him before ourselves.**

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Mark 8:34 (ESV)

If you want to follow Jesus, you must place your love for him higher than even your love for yourself. We must be willing to take up our crosses for Jesus. That means we need to be willing to suffer for Jesus. If Jesus calls us to suffer for him, we gladly do so because our allegiance to Jesus is higher than our allegiance to ourselves and our comfort. Following Jesus is the hardest thing we will ever do in our lives because he comes before our wealth, our families and

even ourselves. Jesus said, “You cannot be my disciples if you want me to just be part of your life. I am the king, I only fit as ruler over all of your life.”

## Conclusion

Herein lies the problem with our Christian faith. We want to believe in the good news of Jesus that he has died for us and will save us, but we don’t want to own our sin. We don’t want to confess and repent of our sin. That is too hard.

In addition, we want to follow Christ with half-hearted devotion that doesn’t have Jesus as king over our money, our family and even lives. After all, we don’t want to be too radical for Jesus. We don’t want to live like the disciples and be willing to drop everything when he asks us to follow him.

Jesus tells us that he is the king of this world and he rightfully holds the place of greatest authority in our lives.

I ask you this morning, how would you describe your faith? Is your faith only repenting of sin and believing in Jesus? As king, Jesus asks for more than that. He asks to be seated in the highest place of authority in your life because that is the place he deserves, even above your love for your wealth, your family and yourself.

Following Jesus — it is the easiest, but it is also the hardest, thing to do in our lives.



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