
The Conquering Call of Christ (Mark 1:14-20)
1/21/2018 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



Last week, we heard about the power in God's call to faith. We saw that when God Speaks, Things Happen. Today, we continue to focus on God's powerful Word but the focus shifts from the words to the persons, the one who speaks and those who hear. God reveals his glory in the Conquering Call of Christ.

Last week, we read from the Gospel of John and saw the power of God's Word. Today, we return to the Gospel of Mark and see that he too speaks of this power. Our lesson begins with a reference to John the Baptist's arrest. Many of you remember from the other Gospels that John the Baptist had been preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. At one point, he even stood up to Herod the Tetrarch who ruled in Galilee.

Today, it's no big deal to openly disrespect authority. But John did not have the freedom of speech that we enjoy in the United States. In a world where might made right, John stood up to one of the most powerful people in his country and said that he was sinning against God. John insisted that even Herod was bound by an even greater power, God himself and he was in the wrong.

Herod insisted on doing what he pleased and silencing the dissenting voice, so he had John thrown in prison and eventually had John beheaded. John was arrested and killed for preaching that there is such a thing as right and wrong and that none of us, not even the most powerful of people are right. We all need to repent.

So what does Jesus do? He goes to Galilee, Herod's domain, and preaches the exact same message of repentance! It might have seemed like God had so little power that he couldn't even save John's life, but the Conquering Call of Christ shines through here nonetheless. Jesus was not afraid to continue preaching God's message even in the face of powerful and violent enemies. As we will see soon, those Jesus called to follow him, were not afraid of what Herod could do to them. Jesus' message was far more powerful than anything that Herod could do or imagine.

Jesus message recorded here in Mark, connects a lot with Isaiah 52, as Jesus proclaims good news and the reign of God. In Isaiah, God speaks about redemption for his people, and about the servant of God who, though he would be disfigured

beyond that of any human being, would sprinkle many nations.

Jesus was proclaiming to people the same message that we preach here. He said that the time to repent is now because God has now come to save the world. Jesus is the one who was crucified, put to death in such a torturous and hideous way that he hardly even looked human, but his blood shed on that cross will forever sprinkle over us covering all our sins for all of eternity. This is the good news that Jesus proclaimed. This is the reason and power for us to repent and believe that good news.

Next, Mark tells us about Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, and the Conquering Call of Christ forever changes the lives of four men. Jesus is almost like a commander charging through a battlefield calling his soldiers to rally to him. What incredible charisma Jesus must have had for all these people to hear his call and just leave behind entire careers to follow him! Again, that is what God's Word can accomplish!

But notice *who* Jesus calls. He does not call that powerful king Herod. He calls simple fisherman. He calls Simon and Andrew, two brothers, probably just standing in the lake dropping their nets into the water and dragging them along to catch any and every fish they can. He calls James and John, out on the Sea of Galilee in boats. It seems that Zebedee, their father, may have had a much bigger business than did Simon and Andrew since they were out in boats and he had hired men as well as his sons working for him. But they too left their father, boats, and business and instead followed Jesus.

That is the Conquering Call of Christ! He chooses these humble people that the rest of the world would just ignore, and he calls them to be his followers. He entrusts them with his omnipotent words. And that's where we see all the more just how powerful God's Word is. God's Word doesn't spread and accomplish God's purposes because we, his people, are just so charismatic or influential. Instead, God spreads his Word through humble people like those four fisherman so that we might see clearly that the *Word* is what accomplishes these great things; not us!

God still works that way today. We don't need to waste our time worrying that if we just had the right people with us then all kinds of amazing things would happen! No, God is even now accomplishing his missions through his Word and through us

as we hear that Word; through us as his Holy Spirit works on our hearts through that Word.

We don't need to help God along. We need to simply hear that gospel message that Jesus proclaimed, and God through that Conquering Call of Christ will work repentance and faith in us to believe the good news. God will work in us that willingness to give up anything and everything to follow God because we know he is worth far more than any sacrifice he may call us to make.

Notice too the picture Jesus gives of how that Word works. Jesus told Simon and Andrew that he would send them to fish for people. He didn't tell them to pick out the perfect lures and bait and then find the right spot to cast out their line, and wait for a bite. No, remember they were fishing with nets! They were just casting out that net, dragging it along and picking up anything they could!

And that's how the Word works today too. It does not require our wisdom on just the right words to bait people in, get them hooked, and reel them in. We simply cast God's Word out. We see to it that we ourselves are grounded in God's Word. Then we live our lives according to that Word. We tell our friends and family about God's Word. We cast that Word out into every part of our lives and as that net drags along the sea around us, God catches the people he has chosen.

Hear the Conquering Call of Christ. It dominates world powers. It changes lives. And God chooses to give it to the weak, humble, and lowly, so that we might see all the more the power of God's Word. Amen.

