

Come, Follow Me

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- [0 : 0 0] If you would please turn with me to that portion of scripture that we read in God's word in Mark chapter 1, Mark chapter 1 and we'll take us our verse 17, Mark 1 and at verse 17.
- And Jesus said to them, follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.
- I think it will be fair to say that social media, that is Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, all of these things have changed the world in many ways.
- We can now follow celebrities or sports personalities or politicians or our friends or we can follow anyone on all of these platforms.
- And in many ways society has changed in so much that the scale of a person's value is measured by how many friends they have on Facebook or on Twitter.
- [1 : 1 5] And how many people follow us on the internet. The value of famous people today is not so much measured by awards or what they've accomplished or how much money they're worth but how many likes they get on Facebook or on how many retweets they get on Twitter.
- Everybody wants to be popular. Many people want to be famous and liked and many people say to others, follow me and they do.
- Many people claim to be authorities on many things, authorities on the culture and the sign of the times that we live in.
- They will say to you, you follow me and I will give you value. I will give you self-esteem and I will give you worth and many do.
- But yet there is only one person who has ever lived in this world in which we live, who ever had the complete and total authority to say to another, you follow me.
- [2 : 4 9] And that is the Son of God, our Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ.
- Only He has the authority to say, follow me. And here in our text this afternoon we have Jesus passing by and He is saying, you follow me and I will give you value.
- I will give you worth. I will give you forgiveness of sins and I will give you eternal life.
- I will grant to you holiness. I will grant to you power to live a life in this world where you will have an influence on other people and I will have a job for you to do but you must follow me.
- And each time we read of Jesus passing by in the Scriptures, things happen.
- [4 : 3 2] Each time we read of the Son of God passing by in the Gospels, lives are changed.
- Each time we see and we read and we hear of the Lord Jesus Christ saying, follow me.
- Things happen in heaven itself. So first of all, Jesus is passing by, verse 16, 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. We now have the Lord Jesus Christ equipped for his ministry.

He is now filled to the uttermost with the Holy Spirit and he is heading through Galilee, preaching the Gospel, the good news of God.

[5 : 39] He says the time is fulfilled in verses 14 and 15. He says the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.

In other words, follow me. His full identity has been disclosed by Mark here.

His full identity has been disclosed here as the Son of the living God. He says, follow me.

The Lord in the first chapter of Mark, what has he done? He has identified himself with sinners. He hasn't come into the world and identified himself with a hoi poloi, with the good people, with the rich and the famous.

He has come into Galilee, which was called many disparaging things because of who lived there.

[6 : 47] If you lived in the Holy Land, you didn't want to live in Galilee, you would rather live in Jerusalem. But here he comes, identifying himself with sinners.

In and through what? His baptism. In and through his temptations. His Father has led him out into the wilderness to see what it really like to be tempted for 40 days and 40 nights.

He's identifying himself with you and with me and with those who were there in Galilee at these times.

He is passing by. Now these four fishermen, they are about to meet the Savior of the world, the incarnate Son of the living God.

And when you meet the Savior of the world, things are never the same again. When I met the Savior of the world 12 years ago, my life was transformed.

[8 : 01] And every Christian who has ever lived will say the same thing. When you meet the Savior of the world, everything changes for time and for eternity.

Things will never be the same again in your life and certainly things have never been the same for me in my life. Things are never the same again.

And Jesus here, he preached a very short sermon. He said, follow me and I will make you become fishers of men. Follow me and you will have an amazing influence within your own home.

Follow me and you will have an influence in your community. People will see your good works and they will glorify your Father in heaven.

Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men. And you may say, but hey, hey, Jodo, slow down here. Slow down here. He's talking to the disciples here.

[9 : 10] Yes. He's talking to you and me here this day as well.

You see, there was real power in his word. And the word of the Lord Jesus accomplishes something. Because the fishermen, what did they do?

They obeyed and they followed him. What does Jesus do? He meets them. What does Jesus do? He meets them personally as he is passing by.

He's not aloof. He's not standoffish. He's not arrogant. He comes down to their level and he speaks to them at their level.

This is the incarnate God, remember? And he simply says, hey, follow me. He meets them at their own personal level.

[10 : 15] Now the question today is how do we know if Jesus is passing by today here in Carlyway? Well, I'll tell you that he is passing by here today in Carlyway.

Because the word of God tells me that he is. And he is saying the very same thing.

He is saying, follow me. You see, we meet Jesus in his word, in the Bible, in the Scriptures. And he says, follow me.

You see, the Bible tells us that the word of God is active and alive. The same way as Jesus is active and alive and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

We worship a risen Savior who is alive. So his word is living and active and alive.

[11 : 17] It is his word. And he says, follow me. Listen to Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12.

Rubber stamp this for us. For the word of God is living and active. The writer says it's sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit between joint and marrow.

It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Did you hear that? It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. The Lord God knows what's in your heart and in your mind right now and in my heart and mind right now too.

And he is searching us. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. How often do we come to read the word of God and we read it and we read it and then we come to our realization that it is actually reading us?

That's how powerful it is. You see God's spirit is in partnership with God's word. As Paul tells us in Ephesians, he says, take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

[12 : 44] It's all very mysterious, yes, but we live by faith and not by sight. So is it legitimate for me as a preacher of the gospel to say to you this day that Jesus is passing by, yes and yes and yes, I can say that today because I believe the word of God.

I'm not standing up here just for any other reason. I stand up here and every other preacher that stands up here reaches the word of God and the hope and the prayer that God's spirit is in our midst and changing hearts and moulding us and transforming us and changing us into the image of his own son, convicting and converting people.

That is why I stand up here. You know, one of the most forgotten truths rediscovered during the time of the Reformation was the presence of Christ in the preaching of the gospel.

The presence of Christ in the preaching of the gospel. You see, when you go back to Reformation times, we know all about the debates concerning how Jesus was present in the Lord's Supper and in church history you will see it.

After the time of the Reformation, you had the Lutheran churches and then you had the Reformed churches. That's the line of tradition. We follow the Reformed churches. Now the Lutherans and the Reformed, they parted ways.

[14 : 23] There was a big debate over the Lord's Supper and how Jesus' earthly flesh present at the time of the Lord's Supper and there was a bit of a fallout and it's never really been mended.

But also at that time there was one overlooked issue which was how is the Lord present when the Lord's people gather together to worship Him?

How does that work as His Word is preached? With today's diluting of the importance of the preaching of the Word of God, there are some churches today and I'm not here to disparage other churches, I'm not going to do that, but some churches you go to and they'll only get five-minute sermons or ten-minute sermons and the sermon is an add-on to the worship service.

For us the sermon is probably one of the main parts because that is where the Lord is active and at work as we sing His Word in the Psalms and as we read and preach His Word.

The Lord is present with us. The Reformers and the Puritans, they rediscovered that in their day that the Lord is actually present with us as we gather together.

[15 : 52] If you went into a 16th century church, before the time of the Reformation you would have seen an altar. That would have been the main thing you would have saw going into a church, would have been an altar and at the time of the Reformation the Reformers changed that.

The main thing you would see would be a pulpit. Why? Why is that? It wasn't to elevate the minister or the preacher, it was to elevate the Word of God.

The whole service was to be based around the Word of God. That Christ would be present with us people in the reading and in the preaching and in the singing of the Word of God.

Can I say that Jesus is passing by today? Absolutely, yes I can. I can say that. Martin Luther himself believed in the presence of Christ in proclamation.

As long as the proclamation is in full accord with the Scriptures, one historical commentator says this, listen to what he says. In the sermon he says, in the sermon one actually encounters God.

[17 : 07] In the sermon one actually encounters God. We encounter God in the acts of speaking and listening.

You see the power of God is in the Word of God. That's why Paul could say, I am not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

That's what kept the Apostle Paul going. Later in Romans he says, so faith comes from hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ, Romans 10 and 17.

You see God deals with sinners through the Word and through the preaching of that Word. But the question is, are you listening to what has been read and are you listening to what has been preached?

It is not my word, it is the Word of the living God. We are hearing from heaven each time we open up the Scriptures and each time the sermon is preached, we are hearing from heaven itself.

[18 : 20] The minister or the preacher is only a vessel, a channel through which the Word of God flows, a messenger if you will.

Christ is here with us today. He is passing by and he is saying, are you following me or are you once again rejecting me?

By the power of the Spirit and the preaching of the Word, listen to John Calvin also. Listen to what he says, for God wanted his Word to always be received from the mouth of men, no less than as if he had himself openly appeared from heaven.

You see what he said there? For God wanted his Word to be always received from the mouth of men, no less than as if he himself openly appeared from heaven.

It is a sure and an infallible sign that God is near at hand to us, he says, that he seeks our salvation, that he calls us to himself as though he spoke with open mouth and that we see him personally before us in the act of preaching.

[19 : 47] Jesus calls us to himself, he holds out his hands to receive us in the act of preaching. Do you see what Calvin is saying there?

It's as if the Lord Jesus himself is there with arms outstretched saying, come unto me, all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Now John Calvin and Martin Luther were no mystics. They didn't really go for mystical experiences, but they believed that Christ was present wherever his Word was preached.

Searching your heart and searching my heart. Jesus is passing by in his gospel and he is offering free grace to you and to me here this day.

Thomas Watson says this about reading your Bible. He says, think in every line that God is speaking directly and personally to you.

[20 : 49] Thomas Watson was a Puritan, think in every line that you read that God is speaking directly and personally to you.

Jesus is passing by with arms outstretched, wanting us to come unto him, pleading with us to follow him so that he can change our lives.

Secondly, Jesus in passing by not only sees you, he knows you. We must remember who is passing by here. This is God's Son, the One whose hand was in the creation of this universe in which we live.

Verse 16, he saw Simon and Andrew. He saw James and John. He, the Lord Jesus knew all about these four fishermen long before he set his human eyes on them.

He knew all their fears. He knows all your fears. He knew all their ambitions. He knows all your ambitions.

[22 : 21] He knew all about their sin. He knows all about your sin and my sin. Yet, he came close. He came close. He approached them.

You see, he knew their past and he was about to give them a new future because their future is what was important to Jesus.

It's your future that is what is important to Jesus. Give him your past.

Give him your past. He knows all about it. Because if you're in Christ and you're a Christian here, every wrong thing you have done and every wrong thing I have done, that's been dealt with.

The Bible tells us it's been cast into the sea of God's forgetfulness. It's your future he's interested in.

[23 : 41] You see, they were to become his friends. You see, these fishermen, they thought they were tough. They thought they were fearless. And having been a fisherman for a long time myself, I know that they were probably very impatient and bad tempered.

In fact, he called them men of thunder because they were that bad tempered. You see, as Jesus came to these four fishermen that day, time was money.

And as they were fishing and mending their nets, these four fishermen, they were in their world. It was their zone. This was their place. This was where they showed their expertise.

They were good fishermen. In fact, I believe they were very good fishermen. And here comes Jesus into their world and into their zone.

Now, when you've just ripped your net on the sea bottom and you have to come in to shore to mend your net, time is money. You don't want distractions. You want to get that net fixed as quickly as you possibly can, so you can go back out and start earning a wage.

[25 : 00] But yet here comes Jesus into their world and into their zone. And Jesus knew that as he came into their world and into their zone, their world and their zone would change forever.

Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men. Jesus knew these men.

Jesus knows you. Jesus knows me. Oh Lord, you have searched me and known me, the psalmist says. You know when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from afar.

The Lord knew all about their weaknesses, their concerns, their worries. And it is no different for you or for me. I meet people sometimes who say to me, Jodo, I could never become a Christian.

Some of the things I've done in the past are that awful and terrible and bring so much shame to me.

[26 : 25] God couldn't do anything about it. What would I say to them? What makes you so special? What makes you so different that Jesus can't do anything with you?

And that shocks them sometimes. Oh, I say there's not a sin in your heart that the Lord cannot deal with.

There's not a unbelief within your heart that the Lord Jesus cannot deal with. There's not a fear within your heart that the Lord Jesus cannot deal with.

And I say, stopping so proud about your sinful past, give it to Jesus and he will give you a future.

Because Jesus calls you into his kingdom. The Lord had already said in Mark chapter 1, the kingdom of God is near.

[27 : 36] These four fishermen would see with their own eyes what it meant for the kingdom of God to come to this world. And the kingdom of God is still here. This is it. The church is the beacon of the kingdom of God in this world.

The kingdom of God had arrived in Jesus. Jesus would tell Pilate, my kingdom is not of this world. You don't understand Pilate. You're all interested in his kingdoms in this world, which will rot and fade and crumble.

But my kingdom is not of this world. And these people that I'm calling to myself, who are I, who I am, and bringing to myself, they will see my kingdom. And they will reign with me in that kingdom for all eternity.

Because that is what the Lord Jesus does in your life and my life. We will reign with him in this kingdom, which is not of this world.

Jesus is passing by and he is calling you into his kingdom. What is holding you back? What is holding you back?

[28 : 56] You see, Jesus had come to defeat Satan's kingdom. And throughout Mark's Gospel, we will see Jesus encounter and defeat Satan's kingdom time and time and time again.

You know, lastly, Jesus expects a favourable response. Now I know you have a communion next week, is it? The next week.

How many of you in here will come here next week and sit at the back and believe that your place is not at that table?

When you've heard the Son of God full of grace and full of love saying to you this day, follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.

Are you going to watch the Lord's people again? Or are you going to take your place, your rightful place at that table?

[30 : 17] And let the Lord Jesus deal with your sin and your past and say to the Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, give me the future that you have for me.

I repent of my sin, but I need you to help my unbelief. I need you to help me.

And do you know what? He will help you. Every step of the way He will help you.

And when you come and when you sit at that table and you give your life to the Lord Jesus because He's called you, the Bible tells us that we'll be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents.

Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men. And then life changes. And then the Lord will have a job for you to do.

[31 : 30] Let us pray. Eternal God, we thank you indeed for the simplicity of your word. And that gospel called, O Lord, we pray that you would be at work in the spirit and in the hearts of people here this day, but not only among our number here, but among all churches in our community.

Father, we pray that your kingdom indeed would be extended to the glory of Jesus' name. That you would draw people in, O Lord, by the power of your word and by the power of your spirit, that they indeed would give their past to you and their sin and the burdens that they carry.

And that you, O Lord, indeed would give them that future. Not only in this world, O Lord, but that future in the world to come.

Lord, go before us this day. Bless us one with an elegy, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We shall conclude our worship by singing Psalm 147. Psalm 147. And we'll sing the verses, Mark 1-7.

Praise you, the Lord, for it is good. Praise to our God to sing. For it is pleasant and to praise it is a comely thing. And verses 6 and 7. The Lord lifts up the meek. There's the gospel there. The Lord lifts up the meek and casts the wicked to the ground.

[33 : 12] Sing to the Lord and give him thanks on her. This praise is sound. Psalm 147 to God's praise and glory. Praise you, the Lord, for it is good. Praise to our God to sing. For it is pleasant and to praise it is a comely thing.

God, do not make love to Jerusalem as he is in Jerusalem.

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God, do not make love to Jerusalem as he is in Jerusalem.

He left the hateful wounds a tenderly upon. He comes the number of the stars.

[34 : 58] He wins and everyone grates. Our Lord, our Lord, great power, His wisdom search unknown.

The Lord lifts up the meek and casts the wicked to the ground. Sing to the Lord and give him thanks on her.

Praise the Lord.