



ENCOUNTER

The Gospel of Mark

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Discussion Notes

The Crossing Church

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OPENING

This Sunday, we are starting a brand new series called *Encounter*. Over the next few months, we are going to walk through the life of Jesus using the Gospel of Mark as the backdrop. Instead of just doing something new in 2017, let us become something new – let us become more like Jesus. The closer we get to Him, the more our lives will change. So, we're going on a journey that has the potential to change our lives. We are going to get up close and personal with the life of Christ.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 1:1-13 "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in Isaiah, the prophet: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way – a voice of one calling in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.' (Isaiah 40:3) And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. John wore clothing of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: 'After me there will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.' At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him."

Mark 1:14-17 "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!' 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."

Mark 1:18-22 "'Come, follow me,' he said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James, son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.' They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."

Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple."

Genesis 1:1-2 "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

OBSERVATION

Mark was not one of the twelve disciples, but he may have been an eye-witness to Jesus' ministry. Mark got most of his information about Jesus from Peter and we will see that this gospel is written from Peter's perspective. Nothing happens in it where Peter is not present. Mark had a very specific agenda when writing his gospel: the first half of the book is to establish Jesus' identity as King over all things and the

second half is His purpose in dying on the cross. Mark deliberately points us back in history as he tells the Genesis story of creation where the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are present. He then brings us to Jesus' baptism when the Father speaks, the Spirit descends like a dove, and so the Trinity is present when our redemption plan begins. The Bible's history was paramount to Mark as he educated us about Jesus. Therefore, we need to honor this history as we study God's Word.

Question: How much do you know and understand of the Bible's teachings and its history? What do you plan to do to increase your understanding?

APPLICATION

Christianity is different from other religions in several ways: other religions give advice while Christianity brings good news; other religions tell us what we have to do to connect with God while Christianity tells us what has been done in history; other religions tell us how we have to live in order to earn our way to God while Christianity tells us how Jesus lived and died to earn the way to God for us. His core message is to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus chose the men who would become the twelve disciples by saying, "Follow me!" The disciples took a step of faith. They didn't know where it would eventually lead; they didn't know that they would change the world; they just took a step toward Jesus.

Question: If you had been alive in Jesus' day and He had said to you, "Follow Me!" what do you think you would have done? He's saying it to you now so what is your answer?

Question: When Jesus called you what did you leave in order to follow him?

There are three stages of following. The first is the "invitation" stage. There was something about Jesus that was captivating. Following Jesus begins with learning from Him and taking a step toward Him. Maybe we need to read the Bible on a regular basis or join a study group. Maybe we need to ask a lot of questions through the ALPHA course or commit to coming to church every Sunday.

Question: If you understood that Jesus is calling you to love Him with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength, what changes would you make in your lifestyle today?

The second is the "leaving your net" stage. This stage is about losing our own identity and completely surrendering to Jesus. Many people make a caricature or distortion of Jesus because they really don't know Him. They, and we, have tried to make Him in their own image and have a misconception of what Jesus is supposed to do for them. It has become a barrier that keeps them from "dropping their nets." They and we need to take a next step and accept His invitation to get close to Him and find out who He really is. Jesus doesn't want to be a PART of our lives, He wants to BE our lives. His voice within us is urging us to leave the emphasis on our relationships, finances, and careers behind and make Him the center of our lives.

Question: What will you do to diminish the cares and pressures of your daily life and put Jesus first in everything?

The third is the "fish for people" stage. Jesus is inviting us to follow Him, and be on His mission and He will send us out to reach people for His kingdom. He is saying that God is about to do something new and, if we aren't paying attention, we are going to miss it.

Question: Who is the first person who comes to mind when you think of being used by Jesus to accomplish His greatest mission? What will you do to begin this journey with your friend?

Always remember, the closer you get to Jesus, the more your life will change!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we have no idea, just as the first disciples didn't know, what hangs in the balance of our decisions to follow You. Their futures were magnificent, even through struggles and death, because they were following a glorious God. By Your Holy Spirit, Father, continue to urge us forward to the finest hours You have planned for us as we leave our nets behind and work for Your kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen