

## **Mark 1:14—20**

*January 21, 2018*

In May 2011, a book by Howard Marks was released called—The Most Important Thing. The most important thing about what, you might ask.

The subtitle tells us more. “Uncommon Sense for the Thoughtful Investor.”

We understand that the book is about making smart, careful monetary investments. Understanding investment is a good thing but is it the Most Important Thing?

It could/should be entitled The Most Important Thing about Investing. But that title does not have a ‘pop’ factor. Do you wish someone would write a book on The REAL Most Important thing?

Good for us. Mark did just that.

If we were tasked with entitling this book, it might just be—The Most Important thing in Life. Or The Most Important thing about you.

What is that?

The most important Thing is--How you respond to Jesus.

You might think—why do I need to think about Jesus? I don’t need to respond to him. Let me tell you, Jesus is not like the gold standard, something you can have an opinion about but doesn’t really impact your life.

Jesus is not like the exploits of Space X, something you can choose to pay attention to or not, but those exploits don't really impact your life.

Everyone responds to Jesus in some way. He is the one person that cannot be ignored. Jesus is such that you are responding to Jesus right now.

You are either ignoring or accepting him but make no mistake you are responding to him. Everyone will respond to Jesus with either acceptance or rejection and how you respond to Jesus is the Most Important Thing about you.

Mark is saying—Since how you respond to Jesus is the most important thing about you—Let's

- Watch Jesus.
- Listen to Jesus.
- See Jesus.
- Follow Jesus around a while.
- Get to know Jesus.

As Mark draws our attention again to Jesus we hear him speak for the very first time. And if we listen we will understand how to respond to him.

“Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Follow

me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”<sup>18</sup> And immediately they left their nets and followed him.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.” Mark 1:14–20

## PRAY

As we follow Jesus around Mark we overhear two things in what we just read together—

An Announcement  
A Gathering

In other words, we are going to overhear the King announces and the King gathering.

### ***1. The King announces (Mark 1:14-15)***

Jesus refuses to give into human expectations for pomp and pageantry. Instead of staying where John was in the Judean wilderness—not too far from the major population center—Jerusalem, he strikes out north.

He goes from the south to north. He goes from Judea to Galilee. This region was less populous and seen as full of backwater hicks. But these are Jesus’ people, where he is from.

This is not a good way to kick off an international movement. If you were going to start an international

movement you figure the way you can get the most attention and impact the most people.

He does not do this. He goes to the hinterlands of Israel to start his international ministry in relative obscurity. This is not what you and I would do or expect. If any one of us was tasked with beginning an international movement we would go directly to great population centers—

NY  
LA

And speak to the seat of power in these places. We would talk to the political officials, the community leaders, the financial paragons.

You would never think of starting an international movement in a truck stop diner just past mile marker 134 in Nebraska.

Never. But Jesus essentially does this.

You should know this up front—with Jesus expect the unexpected. Get used to it in Mark and in your life.

This is exactly what the Lord says through the great prophet Isaiah,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.” Is. 55:8

With Jesus, expect the unexpected.

He starts his international ministry with a message. Not with fireworks or a magic show; not with signs and wonders but by preaching.

Vs. 15,

**“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”**

It is not like he just went around saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

This is a summary of all that he preached. We are going to see the Kingdom of God advance as the first part of Mark unfolds. For example, next week we are going to see his authority exercised over the forces of the devil.

As he preaches the ‘kingdom of God is at hand,’ He is not so much preaching news about God as much as good news from God. He is not merely telling us what God is like in his preaching—he is telling us what God will do in Christ.

The gospel (good news) is centered on Jesus Christ. This Jesus has left the bright glory of heaven and has invaded the dark realms of the shadowlands of sin. He has come to save bring mankind to God not merely educate them about God.

The good news of God is all about who Jesus is and what he does. That is why Mark so consistently draws our attention to him. So we must—

- Watch Jesus.

- Listen to Jesus.
- See Jesus.
- Follow Jesus around a while.
- Get to know him.

Because the most important thing about us is how we respond to Jesus.

When Jesus preaches that the kingdom of God is at hand he is not thinking of a geographical kingdom. He is not talking about a kingdom with borders, government and taxes.

The Kingdom is the realm of God's authority.

Let's put this together—Jesus is announcing that it is time for the world to God's authority through him. Jesus is the gospel—the good news of God—Jesus is the one who will usher in the kingdom of God by what he does.

- Watch Jesus.
- Listen to Jesus.
- See Jesus.
- Follow Jesus around a while.
- Get to know him.

His announcement demands a response from his hearers. He is not merely looking to inform and educate. He is not just trying to inspire and lift up. He is calling clearly and forcefully for all to 'Repent and Believe in the gospel.'

In other words, he is saying Repent and believe in me. I am the good news sent from God. I have the authority of

God. I define and expand the kingdom of God. I am the one you must respond to.

How?

Repent and believe.

Repent means to turn from and belief means to turn to. In this context, Repent means to turn FROM your own way AND turn TO and believe in Jesus Christ.

Repentance and belief always travel together. They cannot be separated.

Just as breathing requires both inhaling and exhaling—responding to Jesus requires both repentance and belief.

Turning from your old way of life and turning to a new way of living.

Repentance means you turn from your own purposes, your own priorities. You turn from putting yourself at the center in the most important spot. You turn from loving yourself and you turn to him.

And you believe that his purposes, his priorities, him at the center and the most important spot by loving him more than yourself is best.

Before we move onto the next thought, notice the nature of the message. The message that Jesus preaches is not advice but news.

Do you know the difference?

Advice says: here is what you should do.

News says: here is what has already been done for you.

Advice says: here is how you need to improve yourself.

News says: here is what has been done already for you.

Advice says: here are the things you need to do.

News says: here is what has already been done.

The gospel of God does not demand we do anything but just to believe.

And this is what makes following Jesus different. He does not tell us what we have to do without giving us the ability to do it.

It is the difference between offering someone who is famished advice—you should eat and news—I have food coming for you.

Following Jesus is about believing in Jesus and not doing a bunch of good things.

If you think that Christianity is fundamentally about adhering to a list of rules and regulations or trying to be morally good. Some think Christianity is essentially following a message of, ‘Don’t smoke, drink or chew or hang with those who do.’

Nope.

It is believing the message of Jesus—He can and will save all those who come to him and turn from trusting yourself.

That is why we need to—



- Watch Jesus.
- Listen to Jesus.
- See Jesus.
- Follow Jesus around a while.
- Get to know him.

Because how you respond to Jesus is the most important thing about you.

Mark, being a good writer, shows us people who repent and believe in Jesus. We see here the king gathering his first subjects—

## ***2. The King gathers (Mark 1:16-20)***

Vs. 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. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

John the Baptist precedes Jesus but their ministries diverge right from the beginning. John planted himself on the shores of the Jordan River and people streamed out to him.

Not Jesus.

Jesus goes looking for people. Jesus walks the shores of the Sea of Galilee looking for people. He does not wait around he goes looking and announcing.

He is the God who comes looking.

And he finds his first 4 followers fishing. They were fishermen. Again, he is not going to the educated, influential and wealthy—he goes to common laborers.

Hard-working fishermen.

If you were going to start an international movement not one of you would say—Let me recruit my first followers—those who are going to set the tone and make a real difference.

Let's go to the docks and get the fishermen.

Nope.

No one goes to fishermen to be taught, they go and to them to get fish. But again, Jesus does the unexpected thing.

He called—two sets of brothers.

Three things we see about what it means to be a follower of Jesus

- *A call from Jesus is a call to follow Jesus*

Simon & Andrew and James & John. These four men who shake the foundations of the world not because of their natural abilities but because of their connection to Jesus.

When Jesus calls you to himself you never really know where you might end up. Until this moment, Peter, Andrew, James and John probably just thought they

would continue to be fishermen toiling under the bright Galilean sun for the rest of their lives.

But Jesus has a way of changing the trajectory of someone's life.

That is what happened here.

All four left their nets and followed Jesus. Little did they know that their efforts have helped to pluck all of us in this room out of the waters of judgment.

Notice what they all did—

Vs. 18—

**18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him.**

**19 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. 20 And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.**

Following Jesus does not mean that we need to quit our jobs or change our vocation—sometimes—but not generally.

When Jesus calls to, “Follow me.” He is calling them to give up all those things that have previously identified you and identify yourself solely with me.

You might say—following Jesus demands a complete reorientation of your life. Jesus is not just someone you add a little bit of to your life.

He cannot merely be a part of your life—he must be your life. In that moment, the most important thing about these men changed.

They were not defined by their vocation. Instead, their savior defined them. Their identity changed from fisherman to Follower of Jesus.

How do you think about yourself?

You are not first a dad or mom; you are not first a business owner or a college graduate; you are not first a husband or a wife—if you follow Jesus you are first and foremost a follower of Jesus.

A call from Jesus is a call to follow Jesus.

*A call to follow Jesus is a call of service*

Following Jesus means—in part that we are called to serve other people. He would make them become—indicating process, journey—fishers of men. They would be called to follow Jesus by laying their lives down for others.

And they did just that—

They devoted their life to Jesus by devoting their lives to others.

We know Simon as Peter. He became the first major Christian leader in the first church. Peter proclaimed the good news about Jesus in Acts 2 and 3000 were added to the kingdom that day.

John would be one of the few that was not killed for his connection with Jesus. He lived to an old age and wrote about 20% of the New Testament.

James would be the first of the 12 to die for his testimony about Jesus. Andrew melted into the pages of history following Jesus the whole way.

But on the day, they heard Jesus all they knew was that they wanted to follow that man. They didn't know where he would lead them just that they could trust him. They had no idea as they labored under the bright Palestinian sun, fishing, they had no dead where they would end up only that they were going to follow him.

The same is true for us. Following Jesus is submitting to Jesus and giving up all rights to dictate where we will end up. The important thing is not where you end up but who you are following.

Jesus tells these four that he would become fishers of men. And what fishermen they proved to be. Anyone who has come to Jesus in the years since these first men can in some measure thank them.

They might have started out trolling for fish, but they ended up fishing for men and women.

Jesus can change the world through whom he chooses. Following Jesus means living a life of service for others. All of us are called to this, not just the original followers of Jesus.

*A call to follow Jesus is a call to fellowship*

Following Jesus only makes sense in fellowship with other people. Jesus calls four men and would eventually call 8 more. His group of 12 was the seeds of the Christian church.

Following Jesus always means fellowshiping with others. Always.

No one can faithfully follow Jesus alone. The call to follow Jesus is a call to involve others in your life and to be involved in their lives. As you follow Jesus you opening yourself up to some others.

If that sounds risky and uncomfortable, it is.

The most important thing about you is how you respond to Jesus.

We've:

Watched Jesus

Listened to Jesus

Seen Jesus

Followed Jesus

Getting to know Jesus

How have you responded?

How you respond to Jesus is the most important thing about you. How have you responded?

You are responding to him now. You are either resisting him or you are submitting to him.

Which is it?

Do you know why he is easy to respond to and follow?

- Because he offers himself

He does not ask us to do more than he has already done. Following Jesus means we give up all, but Jesus gave up more.

He gave up his old way of life—living in glory and bliss to come and look for sinners. He came to earth to give himself. Not a piece of himself, but everything.

He is easy to follow because he offers himself to you. He offers himself freely. When says repent and believe in the gospel—he is saying we ought to believe in him.

We are called not just to believe what he says—but accept who he is. He lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death and rose again defeating the power of death.

He offers himself—

- Despite our failures
- Despite our flaws
- Despite our weaknesses
- Despite our bad choices

We know this because we are going to continue to—

Watch Jesus:

Call in the outcasts and welcome sinners. He does not wait for people to come to him, but he goes to where we are. Watch Jesus come close.

Listen to Jesus:

Hear him proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God—opening the door to any who would repent and believe.

See Jesus:

See him move decisively through his life to his appointed crucifixion. See him the beloved of God hang and die like an outcast from God.

Follow Jesus around:

You can now follow him too. As you lay aside your desire to center your life on yourself you never know where you might end up. Jesus does not require we be impressive, just willing to follow. As you follow you will have more and more reason to keep following.

Have you repented and believed?

How you respond to Jesus is the most important thing about you.

Get to know him:

You can find no better friend than Jesus.  
You will find no one who sticks closer than Jesus.



You will find Jesus who forgives your every sin.  
You will find Jesus loves you always.  
You will find no one better to follow.

He offers himself to you—have you offered yourself to him?

- If you are not a follower—you can be today.

Follow him. Turn and believe and you will enjoy newness of life and blessing beyond what I can describe. There is nothing like following Jesus.

- Watch Jesus—you will love Jesus.
- Listen to Jesus—you will want to hear more.
- See Jesus—you will be amazed.
- Follow Jesus around a while—you won't want to stop.
- Get to know him because the most important thing about you is how you respond to him.

Christians—

The most important thing about you is your connection to Jesus.

We are disciples, followers of Jesus first and foremost.

You may be—

A wife and mother but you are a follower of Jesus first.  
A husband and father but you are a follower of Jesus first.  
A grandparent but you are a follower of Jesus first.  
A college graduate but you are a follower of Jesus first.  
A single but you are a follower of Jesus first.

Retired but you are a follower of Jesus first.  
Financially successful but you are a follower of Jesus first.

Christian, the most important thing about you is how you have responded and continue to respond to Jesus.

PRAY

[14] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14