

## The Gospel of Mark

Sermon series can be found at [asburybham.org/sermons](http://asburybham.org/sermons)



### Scripture Reading

Mark 1:14-20

*"Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'*

*As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him."*

# Summary

Mark's Gospel is likely the earliest of the four Gospels and unlike the Gospels of Matthew and Luke which cover the birth narratives of Jesus — Mark jumps right to the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is baptized by John and immediately goes into the wilderness to fast and pray.

Mark quickly turns to the beginning of Jesus' ministry by the fourteenth verse in the first chapter where the message of Jesus is summarized.

What stands out to me in the calling of the disciples from the first chapter of Mark is that ordinary everyday fishermen in the area of the Sea of Galilee seem to immediately leave their homes and their work when Jesus simply says, "Follow me."

James and John even leave their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men.

Jesus simply calls them and they go.

Pastor Robert Mercer preached in our Traditional Worship service this past Sunday and he pointed out that some of us would likely stay in the boat. We may be so afraid of failure that we won't even try. We may be so tied to the busyness of our lives that we may not even give Jesus a second thought.

The Gospel of Mark does not tell us if the disciples were ready for a change or if Jesus was just so persuasive that they had to leave their nets in the boats for someone else to take over the catching of fish.

What Mark seems to say is that whether we are ready or not, Jesus comes to each and every one of us and calls us to follow him and to bend the totality of our lives to him and his way.

As we begin our study of the Gospel of Mark, consider the message of Jesus: The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe. What do these phrases mean to you and how do they summarize the ministry of Jesus?

Think about your own experiences. How have you left something or someone behind in order to explore what God is calling you to do or to be?

How has the Good News changed your mind or changed your life?

## Discussion Questions

- The Gospel of Mark immediately introduces Jesus to his readers as the Messiah and the Son of God. He provides a summary of Jesus' teaching in saying that "the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near." How does the long waiting for Israel's Messiah and the Kingdom of God relate to the arrival of Jesus? Discuss what the promised Messiah was supposed to do.
- Building upon the first question, Mark then adds to the summary of Jesus' teaching in his early ministry by saying "repent, and believe in the Good News." Pastor Robert mentioned in his sermon that the word for "repent" in the New Testament means "to turn around" as well as "to change one's mind." How are our minds turned around and changed when we believe in Jesus and the Good News about him?
- Take some time to discuss the immediate response from the first disciples to leave behind their work and family and to follow Jesus. How can we become more ready to follow Jesus? And how can we increase in courage so that when Jesus calls and we are not ready we can, as Pastor Robert said, "go anyway"?
- If you have read through the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark with Asbury this Lent, discuss what you have learned or observed in a fresh reading. What have you seen with fresh eyes?

## Prayer (ancient prayer by Augustine of Hippo, 4th century)

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.*

*Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.*

*Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy.*

*Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy.*

*Guard me, O Holy Spirit, that I myself may always be holy. Amen.*

## Practice

Pastor Robert mentioned that prayer is an important Lenten discipline, but that it is more than simply checking off a spiritual task. He said that prayer should lead to change and action. What is your expectation of prayer? Have you experienced changes as a result of your prayer life? Spend time talking with God about what you are discovering.

Ideas of practices to incorporate into your spiritual journey:

- Listen to the daily Lent meditation podcasts. You can register for a daily email reminder at [asburybham.org/easter](http://asburybham.org/easter) or you can access the podcast from your favorite podcast app.
- Journaling is a wonderful spiritual practice. Pick up your complimentary Asbury journal at any Welcome Center. After listening to the Lent meditations, write about the ways God is stirring in your heart.