

Mark 3:7-19

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[0 : 0 0] Well, and good morning to you, more officially. Sometimes I hate that my introduction each morning of myself is being silly with the kids,! but that's also okay. Please turn in your copy of God's Word to Mark chapter 3. We'll be looking together today at verses 7 through 19.

And as you're getting there, I just wanted to publicly say that I'm really thankful for our musicians. We have been just immensely blessed with musical talent in our little congregation, and I hope you can be as thankful for them as I am.

They get together and put together the arrangements of all of these songs on Sunday morning, usually about 8 o'clock, 8.30 they show up. Get up a little bit earlier than the rest of you and get here and work really hard at making that happen.

And I love Christmas songs here, and I don't normally like Christmas songs too much, and so I'm thankful for them. I'm also really thankful for Wes. I realized last night, Wes was telling me his little heads up on his voice failing him, and he's been feeling really sick, and realized that Wes has a perfect attendance record.

He has never once called in sick on leading us in songs. Sometimes he stands off to the side and lets somebody else sing more, but he's never actually said, I cannot get on stage this Sunday, and I'm thankful for that as well.

[1 : 1 7] Let's read together in Mark chapter 3, beginning in verse 7. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Edumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon.

When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him, and he told the disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him. For he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him.

And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, You are the Son of God. And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him.

And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve, Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder, Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanian, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Let's pray together. Father, we pray this morning that you will bless the reading, the preaching, and the hearing of your word. That you will find us humble, submitting to its authority over our lives, and finding it sufficient as a guide for holy living.

[2 : 5 3] Father, we cannot accomplish any of this on our own. We are not wise enough of ourselves to understand. I am certainly not gifted enough of myself to properly speak what this has to mean for us today.

So we pray, Father, you work by your Spirit in us, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So we've come through a number of different accounts of events that have happened, and Mark, he moves.

Boy, does he scoot right along. And he does it again to us here in 7 through 12. Just really presses through stories quickly. And I've said to you before, I've struggled a bit knowing, what do we preach about?

What do we say? I often read at the beginning of each week, kind of the next text as we work through this. And I don't really know where to stop, because often I read, in this case, I read all the

way to the end of the chapter until I really felt like, okay, that's enough to talk about on Sunday morning.

But then as I continue to meditate on it and re-read it and meditate on it some more and pray about what it means for us, I'm able to back up a little bit and see more of the value and see why it is that Mark's account is so punchy and he moves so quickly here through the text.

[4 : 06] Recall recently we've been talking about all of these encounters that he had with the religious culture, namely the Pharisees and the scribes. And he gets us now here to verse 7, saying that Jesus withdrew, which I think is rightly understood in light of verse 6.

That after all these encounters, the Pharisees went out immediately and held counsel with the Herodians, or would have been a kind of a political party of the day, against him, how to destroy him. And so he withdraws again to the wilderness to be by the sea.

And we see again a great crowd following him. And it seems that he always in his ministry was walking a fine line between making himself known, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and having people know that he was in fact the Son of God, and death.

And he did so because his time had not yet come. It had not been fulfilled. He was trying to perfectly complete his ministry. John chapter 7, verse 30, we see he says, excuse me, that it says, they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. And we see in our text here, verse 11 and 12, this account of the unclean spirits, or people who were possessed by demons, falling down in front of him and proclaiming who he is.

[5 : 30] You are the Son of God. And he gives to them a strict command not to let him be known. So it's interesting that we see this activity as it seems to be juxtaposed against the activity of all of those who were following him.

Notice these people are coming from all regions now. It's an expanding area as he's been ministering in Galilee. We see them coming from Jerusalem, which would have been the center of life for them.

From Edumea, which was south of Jerusalem, a whole region south of Jerusalem. From beyond the Jordan, which would have been east of Jerusalem, as Jerusalem lied to the west of Jordan.

And from Tyre and Sidon, which are far north, kind of northeast on the coast of the Mediterranean. So people are coming from all over. And I've said to you repeatedly that these people were not necessarily disciples of Christ.

Notice in our text, it says, because they heard all that he was doing. Verse 10, For he had healed many. So they came to press in around him to gain what they could from him for their benefit.

[6 : 45] They were following him for what he could do for them, not for who he was. So it's interesting that he records here that the demons, when they encounter him, recognize who he is.

They lay prostrate before him and claim that he is the Son of God. But it's not proper to think that they worshipped him in spirit and truth as they should have. James 2.19, James is giving us a case for faith and works and how they function in together.

And he says, even the demons believe in shudder. And he's setting that up against those who are of faith, who are disciples, who follow, are also obedient to his ways.

So I found that to be quite fascinating. So we see this juxtaposition going on here between the crowd and the demons, as well as great crowds and true disciples.

Remember in Luke chapter 10, Jesus sends out 72 disciples to begin advancing the kingdom work. We see here that he has 12 apostles, three of which were his close friends.

[7 : 53] And after his crucifixion and the beginning of Acts, we see that 120 are gathered, trying to figure out what they should do next. And so this seems to be the sum of the beginning of his ministry as he puts the wheels into motion for the gospel to advance amongst all peoples.

And that's where we find ourselves today, still in that process of preaching the gospel amongst all peoples everywhere. So recognize that. That Jesus in many ways was very narrow.

We live in a day of acceptance of all things. And you seem to be a good person if you're open-minded and willing to wrap your arms around all things.

I have a very good friend that I kind of went through the college years with who was, by his own definition, very open-minded. But if you weren't open-minded the same way he was, he didn't like you, which made him a very closed-minded, open-minded person, did it not?

Right? But we see here that Jesus is very specific about who he comes to preach to and who he calls. Verse 9 says that he has the disciples prepare a boat for him.

[9 : 08] We can understand this, that what he was going to do was put some water between him and the crowd so they could no longer come to touch him, so they could no longer come to be healed, but so that he could preach.

This is the primary thing that Jesus came to do. That was to preach. Remember that the signs that he was performing simply existed to validate the power of his message.

That's why they existed. Remember the message. Chapter 1, verse 15. Jesus says, This is what he's driving at.

So we can see chapter 4, verse 1. He teaches behind the sea from a boat. So it's likely that this is why he would have had them prepared. Right? Both to spare his life, but to separate himself from what they were coming for and to rather give them what they needed.

He steps away from this scene in verse 13. And in the ESV he says he went up on the mountain. And I spent some time this week trying to figure out what mountain this was.

[10 : 20] I thought there could be some significance and some weight to it. And had quite a time until I thought, you know, I really probably ought to check the original text. Or to see what it really means.

And in fact, you could easily render this and he went up on a mountain. There is no article in the Greek. So he just went up on a mountain. Likely to escape what was going on by the sea.

To step away. To go to a place that was more reclusive. And he calls out of the group that is with him, that are his disciples, those whom he desired and they came to him.

And we see here at work God's elective purposes. You notice that he does not go up on the mountain and post a job description and take applications and choose amongst the applicants the best fitted for the job.

But he rather calls those whom he desired. And then we see the poignant, short response of Mark. And they came to him.

[11 : 23] John chapter 6, verse 44. Jesus says, No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And the Greek for draw here is not a nudging.

Right? Imagine a tug of war. I hope that none of you get into a tug of war. It's probably been years for most of you since that's happened. Right? And I hope that in your mind when you're drawing somebody in a tug of war, you're not gently coaxing them across the line.

If you do that, I never want to be on a tug of war team with you. Right? You drag. And the Greek word here means literally that. To draw. To drag. Right?

We find often in Greek literature this word used. The way water is pulled up out of a well. Right? You don't beckon the water to come, but you rather put the bucket in and you bring it up by force. And it comes out of the well. So here we see God's good purposes in electing men to be his apostles. These are no great men that he called.

[12 : 29] You remember that some of these men are tax collectors. They would have been viewed as the lowliest of individuals in the society. They would have been seen as betrayers of the nation of Israel.

They were serving Rome by collecting taxes. They were extortioners. In fact, the way they made their money, they were given permission to tax at whatever rate they wanted to, provided that Rome got theirs.

Right? They were typically very evil men. They really weren't fair. And we see fishermen who were not wise men by any stretch of imagination.

In this region, this was the commons man job. The blue-collar work was to go and work on the fisher's boats. We see some rebels, quite possibly.

Those who were of the nationalist party, so to speak. I think they would have been tea party people in this day. Simon the Canaanite, which did not mean that he was from Canaan.

[13 : 28] You'll see in other texts him called Simon the Zealot, which likely means that he was part of this party. And there's some evidence, without getting into it, that Judas Iscariot was actually a mercenary, a hired gun for this party, that he would have actually carried out assassination attempts for money.

And we see him later being tempted by money in the betrayal of Christ. All throughout the Gospel of Mark, we don't see the apostles presented as very holy men.

He's very clear to point out all of their faults, and he does that for us here in verse 19 with Judas, who betrayed him. Never building up the men themselves, but the God of the men, rather.

These men are called together, and they are men who would have been in great opposition to one another. Remember, fishermen were the ones being extorted by the tax collectors. And those who were revolutionaries would have hated the tax collectors for being loyal to Rome.

So, a hodgepodge of men, all Jewish in descent to be sure, but calls together a group of individuals who would have never associated if it weren't for the calling of Christ.

[14:39] My mind was particularly drawn to the church in this day, and that we should look this way. We should be of different background and affinity, different ethnicities.

We ought to be called together with the great commonality of what God has done for us in Christ. I get a little bit burned up, although it's in good motivation, and I don't fault men for doing it, but men who want to do things like start biker churches, who have a very narrow and specific group of people, and they're going to tailor everything that they do for that particular affinity.

And the binding thing for them begins to be more about loud pipes and chrome than Jesus Christ.

So, these men, who would have hated one another, go up on a mountain with Jesus, and they become apostles, and they spend the next three years together ministering with one another.

And these ordinary men are called to do absolutely extraordinary things. We see two primary things that they are called to do.

Firstly, and it's easy to miss this, I think, so that they might be with Him. See that in verse 14. So that they might be with Him.

[15:59] Jesus communed perfectly with the Father and the Spirit in His Spirit. He had great communion with them. This was not something that was broken when He came down from heaven and became a man.

But He also communed with men in His flesh. He sets for us the example that while we need to commune with the Trinity in our spirit, we also need to commune with the church in our flesh.

We need one another. And this seems to be the case of Jesus Himself. Not that these men had particular gifts to offer to Him, but that He had a desire for community as a man.

Hebrews 10, verse 23-25 exhorts us to this. The writer says, Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

For He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. So He's giving us this exhortation to hold fast to our confession, to remain true in the faith because He who promised is faithful, and to stir up one another to love and good works.

[17:13] To be operating from faith for faith. Verse 25, not neglecting to meet together. They seem to be at odds with one another.

If we're to do these things, we must meet together. He says, As is the habit of some, so it's no new thing that people don't meet together with the church, but encourage one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

So as Jesus sets for us an example, we can learn from this. Do we come together on Sunday mornings and at various other times because it's the thing that Christians do?

You're doing your proper duty if you show up on a Sunday morning. You've paid your dues and you can go on about your week. Or do you do it because you long to be with God's people? Because you know that the mission that God has set us on requires community.

Because you have recognized that true Christian ministry can never happen apart from the context of the church. That you have felt your own weakness and seen that you need to be built up by the body of believers.

[18:20] I realize this more and more the more I mature in Christ. I'm not outgrowing community, but I'm growing into it. I need you.

The praises that you guys sing on Sunday morning have immeasurable encouragement to my heart. You have to know I love that we do two songs before. I usually don't sing. I'm just quiet and listen to you guys just belt it out.

From the back of the room I can hear you. I need that kind of encouragement to continue in the faith to love and to good works.

So he sets these men apart to be with him but also to send them out. In fact, this little parenthetical that Mark adds whom he also named apostles means sent out ones.

That's what that word means. And certainly these were specific apostles. apostles. These twelve later, some were added to that number. We know Judas actually was not.

[19 : 22] We added later Matthias and Paul get added to that number of apostles. But it means to us sent out ones. We all have an apostolic calling.

It would be wrong to call any of us apostles for our understanding to properly give these men their specific time, their specific authority that they had to author the word of God, some other things. But we must recognize that as these men were sent out to preach, so are we. Listen to Paul in 2 Corinthians 5 beginning in verse 17.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. If anyone. So catch that. That includes all of you who are found in Christ. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.

All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Notice that inclusive language. He gave it to us. That is, verse 19, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

[20 : 33] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal through us. We've been given this message of reconciliation. And it is therefore now our responsibility as ambassadors for Christ to make God's appeal through us.

And to be clear, he doesn't need us to accomplish that. Sit on your hands. Go right ahead. God will raise up new people to carry that message. He does this because he loves us.

The greatest thing that God could possibly give to us is himself. He has a mission in this world, and that is to redeem his church. To make all things new. To restore things back to the way they should be.

And because he loves us, he has decided to use us as the means to that end. He's given us this message of reconciliation. Which is what?

The last half of verse 20 says, We implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God. And here it is. Verse 21. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[21 : 45] It's that simple. He made him who knew no sin to be sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God owes sin eternal punishment. And he therefore had to punish it. He had to pour his wrath out on it. And he had to do so eternally.

So only an eternally perfect sacrifice could die in our stead for our sin. This is the gospel message. And this is the message that these men were sent out to preach the good news of the kingdom of God.

Don't let that be too complex in your mind. This is the thing that they were meant to go out and to preach. At the end of Mark chapter 16 verse 15 we see Mark's account of the Great Commission recorded this way and he said to them go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe. In my name they will cast out demons. They will speak in new tongues. They will pick up serpents with their hands and if they drink any deadly poison it will not hurt them.

[22 : 53] They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover. And here you see this prediction of the things that will happen as he has said he's going to send them to go do this work.

Right? For now they were with him later he sends them out to preach in this way. Now we're going to deal with I believe next week the authority to cast out demons and everything I just read at the end of Mark that seemed fantastical to you.

I think that's a made up word. I just made up. Right? Well we'll address these things. There are whole sects of our religion that bank on some of these verses at the end of Mark chapter 16.

I wonder if any of you have ever been in the hills of Appalachia and seen people handle serpents as a result of these verses. But primarily I want to focus on the fact that they were meant to preach. Notice it's ordered in that way. Right? And in Greek things were always ordered in that function. Greatest to least. Right? So this is the more important thing. Right? We've seen already that this was the major thrust of Jesus' ministry.

[24 : 00] Right? Was to preach the kingdom. The works just accompanied it to give validity to it. We've got to keep that straight in our minds. Paul said in Romans chapter 1 verse 16 and 17 the

thesis statement of the book of Romans.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written the righteous shall live by faith. Paul says I'm not ashamed of the gospel. And I would ask you this morning how many of you are ashamed of the gospel.

You're sitting in your seat you may not say that but how boldly do you proclaim it? Given a situation to speak of the good news of Jesus Christ do you press into it or do you shrink back?

The gospel itself is the power of God for salvation. You see that our religion is a religion of words. Romans 10:17 says so faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.

[25:03] It was through God's word that he created the world. It is through God's word that he sustained the world and it is through his word that he regenerates souls. This is an amazing thing.

The power of words is phenomenal in this way. The readers here of Romans would have had their minds drawn back as Paul talks about this being the power of God for salvation to all of the things that God had done on behalf of his people.

Think of all the wonderful things that God has done. magnificent things. Splitting red seas leading by pillars of smoke and fire defeating armies.

Walls of Jericho coming crashing down. And certainly the hearts of men have great stronghold walls around them of sin but it is the power of God to break those walls down and change men's hearts.

This is the gospel that we have been entrusted with. the message of reconciliation. And it is a simple message.

[26:10] A powerful but simple message. Jesus sums it up here in one verse. The time is fulfilled in the kingdom of God as a hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.

Charles Spurgeon once said, never lose heart in the power of the gospel. Do not believe that there exists any man much less any race of men for whom the gospel is not fitted.

We have been entrusted with this and I know many of you don't feel adequate for that task. Good. But the spirit that dwells within you is fully adequate. Completely sufficient to accomplish that task. Many of you may not feel smart enough to take on the debates of this day. You're probably not. And that's okay. Just preach the gospel.

Let God be powerful in it. You can trust that he will be. That he will accomplish his good purchase. That he will draw to himself those whom he desires as you go and you speak and you preach.

[27:15] In Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church turn here with me chapter 2 verse 1 of 1 Corinthians. Paul helps drive this point for us.

And I am amazed that numerous times in Paul's writing he claims to be a man of simple speech and low understanding and his writing is so phenomenally complex.

Maybe in the Greek day it was actually simple. To kind of set the stage for you Paul arrived in Corinth for the first time in AD 50. Corinth was a highly cultured town.

Possessed the best of Greek culture. And the Greeks really valued high learning. It was incredibly important thing to them. And in fact Corinth possessed a really famous outdoor theater that could seat 20,000 people.

One of the things they possessed that they honored higher than other things was lofty speech. It was an incredibly important thing to them. In fact here from I just lost the spot.

[28:21] Here we go. From Stephen J. Lawson's book *The Kind of Preaching God Blesses* for the citizens in Corinth public rhetoric was something lofty and noble. Something almost godlike. It was a refined form of artistic expression that replaced the savage violence of gladiatorial fights and barbaric sports.

It was worshiped. Imagine in your own mind we have lots of different things that we as a culture worship. But what is most highly worshipped in our culture? Football players, baseball players, celebrity, things that we highly, highly worship those things.

These men that were these fine orders that would deliver these rhetorical speeches to drive somebody to think a certain way were the great men that were praised in this day. And this is Corinth that he goes and visits.

He had encountered many troubles up to this point. Both physical things and spiritual things. There were a lot of closed doors to him as he had entered into Greek cultures before he gets to Corinth.

And I would imagine for him there would have been some temptation to change the methodology. To in some way think, okay, I've entered into now these arenas of these highly educated people

who really desire this high and lofty speech and have not gained any ground.

[29 : 34] What could I do to better reach people? Oh, good motivation in that. We see people all over this day doing that very same thing. Many slick tongues watering down the gospel in the desire to introduce people to Christ, but they therefore forsake the gospel altogether.

Spurgeon also said, I'm going to see if I can get this right in my own head, that if God does not save people with the truth, he will certainly not save them with a lie. Isn't that true?

Listen to what Paul says to the Corinthian church. 1 Corinthians 2 verse 1, And I, when I came to you brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. That's the cultural context for you to understand what he's saying. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.

And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, so that your faith may not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

[30 : 44] You hear him driving that very point that I've been making to you, right? The message that Paul brought was Jesus Christ and him crucified. Nothing more and certainly nothing less.

This is the power of God to salvation. The gospel of the coming kingdom of God. We live in a culture that's really has a great deal of aversion to this.

type of teaching. And I think possibly because we're the Bible Belt, I saw a map yesterday of all the counties of the United States and the predominant, at least claimed religion in each of those.

I was blown away that the entire southeast was solid red, which was Southern Baptist. Not evangelical Christian, but Southern Baptist.

We've seen people reject the church for all kinds of reasons. And I think in that process, well-intentioned people have begun to portray the gospel of Christ.

[31 : 44] In Paul Washer's book, The Gospel's Power and Message, he wrote this. Listen carefully. Lamentably, in recent decades, it seems that salvation has lost something of its value.

This is in people's perception. In the opinion of many, the promise of salvation is no longer a strong enough motivation to move the sinner to repentance or the saint to true devotion.

So we must add many other promises to make the gospel call appealing. Health and wealth, purpose and power, and getting the most out of this present life are the real drawing cards of contemporary Christianity.

In fact, the very things the pulpit now promises and people in the pews seek the most are often the very things that Jesus warned could be lost in the course of true discipleship.

See Matthew chapter 16 on that. According to him being Jesus, a man may have to lose the whole world in order to be saved. And yet, in Jesus' estimation, it was a bargain to get salvation at such a small cost.

[32 : 47] It seems that we this day don't really understand sin and the great atrocity it is against a holy God. So grown up in this culture of morality that just seems a little thing to sin, when it is a vast thing.

Your one objection to the law of God sets you up as a God yourself and an enemy of the Most High. And it is through this gospel message that we don't have eternal punishment.

You can wrap your mind around eternal punishment, misery, forever and ever and ever. Take the most miserable moment of your life. Oh, I've had some miserable moments in my life.

Times when you're frustrated beyond belief, when you're in extreme pain, when the kids are driving you nuts. And magnify that and do it for eternity. We are saved from this and we are saved in the presence of the Most High.

The one in whom we can find joy and blessing forever and ever and ever. And this is the gospel message. This is it at its core and this is what we have been called to preach.

[33 : 54] We must preach a pure gospel. And when I say we, I mean every single one of us. We all are ambassadors of Christ.

We have all been given this message of reconciliation. Here we speak specifically of the apostles, these ordinary men called to do these extraordinary things, but in the same way we are sent.

We must preach a pure gospel. I pray for us as individuals in this church that we would be like Ezra. In Ezra chapter 7 verse 10 we see the record.

Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. You see that he had set his heart to be a disciple, to study the law and actually do it, to actually follow God in his law and to teach it, to make disciples.

And this is how we are all called to be disciple-making disciples. And understand that the two cannot exist apart from one another. If you are a disciple of Christ, you will necessarily make disciples of Christ.

[35 : 08] But to clarify for you, we are all called to be disciple-making disciples. That is the great point of Mark's book. He's trying to drive his readers to that, to see that those who are going to follow Christ will also bring along others who will follow Christ.

And he does that in his very punchy way. He keeps driving at that point. And I find here for us again today, he does the very same thing. We are ordinary men and women.

And I would say, in fact, in a lot of ways, we are less than ordinary men and women. I know that's true of myself, but we are called to do extraordinary things.

That is why Christ's family church exists. To experience, to proclaim, and display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things, to all peoples.

And one day, Christ will return when that work is finished. Let's pray together.