



## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

**Study Guide Full  
Mark 1:14-20  
July 14, 2019**

We are beginning this week to read the Gospel of Mark together as a church.

Mark was an extraordinary book when it began to circulate among the churches of the First Century. Nothing like it had ever been written before, so the early Church had to coin a new term for the kind of book it was. They settled on “good news” drawn from the opening verse. It’s not a book of philosophy, a play, or a history; it’s a good news.

Its substance is equally puzzling. It contains some of Jesus’ life (but not much), some of His teaching, a few of His actions, and an extended account of His death. It has the most surprising ending; seeming to stop mid-sentence and not including a single resurrection appearance of Jesus.

Further, it was written for the benefit of an audience, most of whom could not read; with a focus, not only on who Jesus is, but also on what His followers should be like.

As we read and study the book over the coming weeks and months, we will take two or three weeks to look at each chapter, and we will particularly concern ourselves with these two questions:

Who is Jesus?

and

What does it mean to be His disciple?

— Anthony Brown



14 *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.*

15 *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

16 *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. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."*

18 *At once they left their nets and followed him.*

19 *When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets.*

20 *Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

## Mark 1:14-20

Notes:

### Commentary Notes: Verses 14-15

In just these two verses, we have a number of key terms taking centre-stage early on in Mark's gospel: these include "the good news/gospel", "to be put in prison/handed over," "the kingdom of God" and "repent."

It is helpful to note that εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*), the Greek word for "gospel," was used in the Greco-Roman world to refer to Roman imperial decrees that demanded a response from the hearers; as such, Mark is likely taking a common term of the time and reemploying it for Christian use to stress the life-changing power of the gospel.

Regarding "the coming of time," in his *Church Dogmatics III* Karl Barth wrote in 1968: "The mission of the Son actually brings the fullness of time with it, and not vice versa. With the mission of the Son, with His entry into the time process, a new era of time has dawned, so far-reaching in its consequences that it may be justly called the fullness of all time."

## Discussion Questions: Verses 14-15

1) *Reflect*: In what ways has God's call to repent been good news to you in your past experience, unleashing the grace of God anew upon your life?

2) *Discuss*: This verse is the first time after verse 1 that we see the appearance of the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*), translated as "the gospel" or "the good news." Based exclusively on what we read in service last week in Mark 1:1-13, how would you define the "good news"?

3) *Discuss*: Another essential term surfaces here, one of the key terms in the gospels—"the kingdom of God," ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (*he basileia tou theou*). How would you, initially at this point, define the kingdom of God? (You might Google "The Kingdom of God, Jerusalem Perspective" to find a helpful article, or consider reading the introduction from George Ladd's *Gospel of the Kingdom*, available online.) How did Anthony define the term in his sermon?

4) *Discuss*: What do you make of the fact that the fulfillment of time, with reference to God's kingdom drawing near, is expressed by Mark in terms of...an imprisonment? What might this say about the essential nature of our Christian faith?

5) *Pray*: Pray for the Spirit's empowerment to live out, in other's lives, the truth that the kingdom of God has come near. Ask the Spirit to put on your heart the names of specific people to whom he would have you minister.

6) *Pray*: Repentance is clearly one of the key aspects of the coming of the kingdom of God, as made clear in the preaching of both John the Baptist and Jesus. Ask the Spirit to be fully working his ministry of repentance in your heart, in terms of repentance as a continual reorientation towards God's ongoing call for our lives—towards God's future for our lives rather than our own created past.

## Commentary Notes: Verses 16-20

The public ministry of Jesus begins not with a miracle but with a call—a call that is paradigmatic for all of us who follow him along the life path of Christian discipleship.

Key to understanding this call is that it is pronounced by the one who has just been identified by the Father as “the beloved son”—the one who is empowered by and entrusted with the love of the Father to usher in the kingdom of God.

Inextricably linked with the notion of the call is the notion of a response. The command, “follow me”—most directly translated “Come after me!” from the Greek ΔΕΥΤΕ ΟΠΙΣΩ ΜΟΥ (*deute opiso mou*)—inherently demands a decision: Will we remain in our “own boats,” to be concerned with our own affairs, or will we disembark from the boats of our own fishing so as to embark on a lifelong path following after the one ushering in the kingdom of God?

And if we will “disembark” to follow after Christ, such a response has an inevitable goal—that we might fish for people, seeking and gathering them as Christ does us.

### Discussion Questions: Verses 16-20

1) *Study*: In last week’s Mark 1:1-13 passage, we looked at Isaiah 40, the source of John the Baptist’s prophetic Old Testament quotation. Continue reading Isaiah 40, focusing on verses 21-31. In light of these verses, how does the call of Jesus upon our lives make sense?

2) *Pray*: Pray that the summer life in our Kickers and VBS “Miraculous Mission” camps would be a powerful opportunity for us, as fishers of people, to proclaim the good news.

3) *Meditate*: Jesus is not suggesting with the disciples that they abandon their career entirely, but that they change a bit their target target. Correctly understanding Christian vocation, how might God be calling you to “change the target” of your work/retirement focus to—in the language of John the Baptist and Isaiah 40—“make straight the highways of our God”?

4) *Confess*: One of the key words of this passage is the little adverb “immediately” (εὐθύς, *euthus*). Mark expresses the call of discipleship in terms of immediate implications. But, as we all know, responding *immediately* to the ongoing call of Christ in our lives is difficult. Confess your hesitation to God’s voice, and experience afresh his call to follow him.

5) *Discern*: How is God calling you this summer to live as a fisher of people?

6) *Listen*: Close your time listening to Rhonda Vincent’s bluesy “Fishers of Men” (YouTube).