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Mark 1:12 - 1:20



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

In this passage, Jesus is baptized by John and then immediately goes into the wilderness for 40 days, where he is tested and empowered. He successfully resists temptation and begins his ministry, calling individuals such as Peter, Andrew, James, and John to be his disciples. The concept of forsaking all to become a disciple is discussed, with the idea that God may use individuals' past experiences and careers to prepare them for their calling. The importance of discipleship is also highlighted in the process of cleaning and preparing fish, which symbolizes the process of discipleship that followers of Jesus must go through.

Transcript

We're looking at the Gospel of Mark again tonight, and we're in chapter 1 still. We've had one session where we actually began going through the material, after we had an introduction to the book. And we got through the first 11 verses.

Now, I have more recently talked through the parallels of this material in Luke, in another setting. I've been teaching the last, oh, close to a year, I suppose, through the book of Luke in a weekly Bible study. And I've taught Matthew more than I've taught any other gospel in the Bible, because, I don't know, I guess Matthew might be my favorite, I'm not sure.

And I like Matthew and Luke especially because they have a lot of the teaching of Jesus. But Mark doesn't. Mark makes a lot of reference to Jesus' teaching, and how the authority of his teaching made an impact on people.

But Mark doesn't contain as many specimens of Jesus' teaching. Mark is mainly just the story of what Jesus did, with some teachings, some sample of his teachings, thrown in. Whereas Luke and Matthew both have lengthy discourses of Jesus, occupying sometimes multiple chapters, just of teaching.

And I think of Mark maybe as sort of a primer on Jesus. You know, maybe it's the first book a Christian ought to read when they're a new Christian, just to get the story rapidly. And it is a rapid story.

In fact, one of the things that characterizes the gospel of Mark is the repeated use of the word immediately. We already have encountered it once in verse 10, where it said, And immediately coming up from the water, when Jesus was baptized, he saw the heavens open. Now, we're going to have in the section before us the word immediately many times.

And in verse 12 it says, Immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan. And was with the wild beasts.

And the angels ministered to him. Now, after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.

And so we have, after the baptism of Jesus, he does not immediately begin preaching, but he first goes into the wilderness for forty days, and then when he comes out of the wilderness, he's preaching. And because Mark is a more rapid telling of the story, and has less detail on many issues, he gives almost no detail at all about the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, where both Matthew and Luke actually itemize the specific temptations that Satan brought to Jesus, which were three in number, and Jesus' responses to them. Mark passes over that.

But he does not pass over the fact of the temptations. And there are things that Mark does tell us that are significant, and they're apparently what he considers to be the most significant aspects. One of which is that it was immediately after his baptism that these temptations took place.

And his baptism involved not only his baptism in water, but you may recall that the Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove, and therefore he was baptized in the Holy Spirit also on that occasion. And immediately after that, he goes into a time of intense testing. That's what the word temptation means.

The Greek word means testing. So he was subjected to a test right after he had A, he had been baptized, and essentially formally entered upon his adult mission. He was about, according to Luke's gospel, Jesus was about thirty years old at this time.

And the life of Jesus altogether was only about thirty-three or thirty-four years, and yet we skip over thirty of those thirty-three or thirty-four years without comment, and it begins, the ministry begins with Jesus being baptized. And so we have the official launching of Jesus into the ministry. We have him being baptized in the Holy Spirit, which was his empowerment for the ministry, as it later would be for his disciples, and even for us it is.

And then there was something else that happened at Jesus' baptism, and that was of course the voice from heaven said, You are my Son, in whom I am well pleased. And you

are my beloved Son, to be more precise, in whom I am well pleased. Now, Jesus was empowered by the Spirit coming.

He was affirmed by his Father, and therefore no doubt greatly encouraged as well as empowered. And now, with all of that positive encouragement and empowerment, he has to go into a time of testing, and that testing was somewhat intense. Now, when I say he had to go into it, it was no accident.

It was not that he stepped off the right path and ended up finding himself in temptation. But rather, it specifically says in Mark, that the Spirit impelled him. The Spirit drove him into the wilderness.

The Holy Spirit that had come upon him at his baptism and empowered him, now was leading him. It's interesting in Luke's parallel, in Luke chapter 3, that it tells us that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and it tells about the temptation in detail. Then after the temptation, it says, then Jesus returned from the wilderness, filled, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

And the power of the Spirit apparently was increased upon him as a result of this time of testing. And if we wonder why testing or tempting is necessary, I think that part of it is this, that it does not only test but also prepare us. I think we learn things, necessary things, in warfare.

David said, Blessed be the Lord, my strength, who teaches my hands to war. It says of the people of Israel when they came out of Egypt and into the Promised Land eventually, it says in Scripture, Joshua I believe it is, or maybe it might be the early chapter of Judges, it says that God did not drive all of the Canaanites out of the land in front of Israel. He left some in the land so that later generations who had not been involved in this war might have opportunity to learn to wage war.

God leaves enemies deliberately in Israel's life so that they will not forget how to wage war. Learning warfare is something that God wants us to learn. And Jesus was going to conduct probably three and a half years of public ministry with direct confrontation with the powers of darkness.

Before this chapter is over, he is facing demon-possessed people who are challenging him and disturbing the meetings he is preaching at, and he has to deal with that. And throughout his ministry, he is confronting and dealing with the devil. And it begins with this testing where he learns by experience some of the devil's devices and what to fall back on.

And as you probably know from having read Matthew and Luke, there are accounts of this very temptation. Jesus always fell back on the word of God. Whenever the devil tempted him to do something, Jesus said, it is written, and he fell back on the power and

the authority of the word of God.

Having learned that, he lived the rest of his life, and all the rest of his warfare was conducted by submission to the word of God. This was his initial boot camp, I think, of spiritual warfare, and it was also a time to test and see if he was going to qualify for his mission. And it was the Holy Spirit's intention.

The Holy Spirit drove him into the wilderness to be tempted. When you are tempted by God, I see when you're tempted by the devil, although it says in James, you should not say, I'm tempted by God, yet you may indeed be tempted by God's will. It is the devil who is the tester, but we know from the book of Job that the devil cannot test or intrude into the lives of God's people without God's permission.

God had put a hedge around Job, and if around Job, then certainly around us, who are the children of God, and Satan complained to God that he could not attack Job in any way. And so God said, well, apparently in God's own counsels within himself, he decided, well, I guess it is about time for Job to go through some testing, and so he gave the devil permission to do a few things, but he set distinct restrictions on the devil. You can do this much and no more.

And so Job came under some rather intense testing, and he passed that test, and so the devil came and asked permission to test him even harder. And God actually did give Satan permission to bring even harder temptations to Job, harder tests. But he, again, put restrictions upon him.

And we see that in the life of the man of God, and I think this is perhaps one of the main values of the book of Job to us, is we see what's really going on when we are tempted, when we have trials. What's going on is that the devil is maliciously meaning us harm, but God means it for good. And God will measure out the temptation.

God is not the one who actually tempts, but he is the one who allows the temptation to occur. And you are never tempted except when God allows you to be tempted. And that should be encouraging when you have tests and suffering and trials of various kinds.

These are all part of, no doubt, what the devil is trying to use to break you, to corrupt you, to discourage you. But the focus in our lives should not be on what the devil is doing, because we realize that the devil wouldn't even be involved with us unless God, at this moment, wished for us to endure such a thing as this. So that even when Job suffered at the hands of the devil, his statement was, the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away.

He didn't say the Lord gives and the devil takes away. He said the Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Job did not focus on the devil. He might not have even known about the devil. We don't

know how much Job could have known.

But we know. And we know that Job overcame by having his focus on God, not on the devil. Because Job did know enough to know that God was sovereign.

And we need to know that too. Jesus' temptation was a result of God's sovereign leading in his life. Jesus would, from now on, always be led by the Holy Spirit.

And sometimes led, as in this case, into testing. Now you might, in connection with this, be thinking of the line in the Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught where we're to pray, lead us not into temptation. That is, we would pray not to be led into temptation.

The very prayer itself suggests that God might lead people into temptation were we not to pray that he wouldn't. You know, if God never would lead anyone into temptation, then there's no need to pray that he won't do it, because if it wasn't one of his activities, then he wouldn't do it. Whether we ask him not to or not.

But there's something more to it. If God wished to lead us into temptation, why would we ask him not to? Why does Jesus say, when you pray, say, lead us not into temptation? Well, the answer, I believe, is seen in the fact that that's not the complete petition. That's half of it.

The other half is, but deliver us from the evil one. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Now, so that you might, I think, understand what Jesus is telling us to pray for, he's not praying that we will not be tempted.

He's praying that we will not merely be tested, but we will also be brought successfully through the test, that we will be delivered from the evil one. There is a figure of speech we'll find in the scriptures, and in the New Testament especially, but also in the Old, which I have been told is called the limited negative. It's an idiom.

Now, someone challenged me on this once and said, where can I find information online about the limited negative? And I did some googling on it and couldn't find a thing about it. And so maybe it isn't called the limited negative. But it must be called something, because it exists.

And if it isn't called anything, I'm naming it the limited negative. Actually, I heard that term from a teacher years ago, an older teacher, so I assumed he was familiar with it. He said, this figure of speech is called the limited negative.

He wasn't talking about the passage I'm talking about now. But maybe it isn't called that. But I don't know that it has another name, so it's apparently available to be named.

I'm going to name it a limited negative. And what is it that I'm calling by that term? It is a phrase which will say, not something, but something else. Not A, but B. That's how it's

worded in the text.

Not this, but that. But where in the context it clearly means, not only A, but also B. When Jesus said, do not labor for the food that perishes, but labor for the food that endures to eternal life, he clearly was not forbidding people to work at a job to earn their bread. He did say, if you take just one half of that without the other, do not labor for the food that perishes.

I've known some cults that actually went so far as to say, it's wrong to have a job. Because Jesus said, don't labor for the food that perishes. But that wasn't the whole statement.

It's don't do this, but do that. And clearly the meaning is, don't only labor for the food that perishes, also labor for the food that endures to eternal life. That would be an example of what I'm calling a limited negative.

Not this, but that. Jesus said, do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

But didn't Jesus bring peace? Of course he did. And he said so in other places too. He said, these things I've spoken to you, that in me you might have peace.

In John 16, 33. Certainly Jesus came to bring peace. So why did he say, do not think that I came to bring peace.

I did not come to bring peace, I came to bring a sword. It's a limited negative. He's saying, don't think that I only came to bring peace, but I also came to bring a sword.

You think the Messiah is just going to bring a reign of peace. Well, I am bringing that, but not only that. You better be prepared for more than that.

Don't think I'm just here to bring peace. I'm bringing also a sword. And there's many statements of that kind in the Scripture and in the teaching of Jesus.

Now, I believe that that petition in the Lord's Prayer is a limited negative. Do not lead me into temptation, but do deliver me from the evil one. I think it means, do not only lead me into temptation, but also lead me out.

Also deliver me out of it. I can count it as a given that I will be led into temptation. Jesus was.

Jesus elsewhere said to his disciples in the 17th chapter, no, the 18th chapter of Luke at the beginning, he says, it is inevitable that stumbling blocks will come. What are stumbling blocks? They are temptations to fall. He said that's inevitable.

He said, woe to those by whom they come. But he said it's inevitable that they will come.

And therefore, certainly you can't pray that God will not allow there to be any stumbling blocks.

Jesus said they're inevitable. They're part, they're on the road. They're part of the path.

They're part of the training. You are going to experience temptation. But remember Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 13, that no temptation has taken you, but such as is common to man.

And God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to endure, but will with the temptation provide a way of escape that you might endure it. So, what's Paul saying there? He's saying, you will be tempted, but God will not permit you to be tempted more than he and you together can beat it. Now, you can't beat it on your own, but with him you can.

And so you pray, Father, don't just lead me into temptation, but also, having taken me into the stage where I'm being tested, deliver me out of it without failure. Deliver me from the evil one. So we're praying that though we know we will be tempted, and though even in the will of God we will face temptations and testing.

Adam and Eve did. It was God who put the serpent in the garden. The serpent didn't get in there when God wasn't looking.

God created the serpent, the Bible says. And where did he put it? Where it was. Where? Where Adam and Eve were.

What on earth for? To test them, that's why. God wanted them tested. And Eve was tested.

And Jesus was tested. Both of them, it would appear from the text, three different temptations. And where Eve failed, Jesus succeeded.

He passed the test where Eve failed the test. That means there's two results that could come. You could be like Eve and fail, you could be like Jesus and pass.

And it's a good thing, too. It's a good thing that Jesus passed. Not only because he couldn't be our Savior if he had failed, but also because it lets us know there is that option.

If Jesus had never passed the test, we wouldn't know that it could be done. Because no one else has ever done it before him. He's the only one who ever successfully overcame the temptation of the enemy.

Successfully. And so, he comes out empowered, tested, you know, ready for action. And we're not told all the details of the temptation here, and apparently Mark didn't feel that he had to focus on that.

He was in the wilderness 40 days, tempted by Satan. Interestingly, Mark tells us, and the other Gospels don't bother to do so, that he was with the wild beasts. I don't know if that means to say that we already are beginning to see some of his divine prerogatives in the fact that he could live among wild beasts and be unscathed.

We know that he rode a wild donkey once. Usually, if you take the colt of a donkey and put a person on it, it's going to buck it right off, right? I mean, you've got to break that thing before you can have a rider on it. But the Bible says that he rode on an unbroken donkey colt into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

And so we know that he could manage a wild animal. We don't think of donkeys as wild animals, but they are wild until they're broken. And so some feel that what's being said about him being with the wild beasts is telling us that, though most men would be endangered in such a situation, Jesus was, he had them for his companions, like Saint Francis of Assisi or something.

But I think maybe more like it, Mark is trying to say, the situation Jesus was in was a dangerous one. Jesus was, of course, mortal. And there were leopards in that desert in those days.

There were bears in that desert in those days. At some days earlier, in the times of Samson and David, there were lions in that desert, but they were gone by the time Jesus came along, but there were still leopards and bears and other carnivores. And Jesus spent 40 days out there among them, and we don't know if he had encounters with them, but Mark seems to be impressed with the fact that that was a place where wild animals were, and that Jesus spent his time there.

How long? 40 days. Why 40 days? It's one of the few details that Mark tells us, and so it must be important to him. Many people think that the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness are representative of the 40 years that the Jews, the Israelites, having come out of Egypt, spent in the wilderness.

Because the Gospel writers, at least Matthew and probably others as well, see the life and ministry of Jesus as sort of a replay of the history of Israel. Israel is a type of Christ. And so when Matthew's talking about Jesus as a baby going out into Egypt and coming out again, he says, this fulfills what was written in Hosea the prophet, I called my son out of Egypt.

But in Hosea 11.1, which says, I called my son out of Egypt, it's not talking about Jesus, it's talking about Israel. In the Exodus, Hosea 11.1 actually says, When Israel was young, I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt. Meaning Israel was God's son called out of Egypt.

Matthew quotes that verse about Jesus. Why? Because the apostles saw Israel and its

history as a type and a shadow of Jesus, the Messiah. He's the antithete, he's the fulfillment of the type of Israel.

And so at the beginning of his ministry, like Israel at the beginning of their career, they spend 40 years tested in the desert. Jesus can't spend that much time, he's going to die at age 33, can't spend 40 years. So one day for a year.

After all, the Israelites spent 40 years, because that corresponds to 40 days, that the spies had been in the land and brought back a bad report. So for each day, God gave them a year wandering. God seems to reverse that in Jesus' case, so he could get everything done in one lifetime.

And so 40 days were tested. So he's going through the same kind of experience Israel went through. Why? Because he is Israel's king, he is Israel's shepherd, and he is going to make an appeal to Israel to follow him.

So as he was baptized, though he didn't need to be, he did so because he wants those who follow him to be baptized. He is tested in the wilderness because he's going to expect his disciples to be tested and to pass tests. So the good shepherd goes ahead of his sheep.

He doesn't expect the sheep to do things he don't do. And so Jesus spends this time, even as Israel had, in the wilderness at the very beginning. But it says the angels ministered to him.

This would be probably a reference to after the 40 days, although it doesn't say so specifically. It indicates, actually the way verse 13 is worded, that the entire 40 days were a time of testing. It seems.

Because as he was in the wilderness 40 days tempted by Satan, the way that's worded, it sounds like he was tested for the whole 40 days. In the other Gospels we have only three temptations which seem to have been given at individual times. But the entire season of fasting in the wilderness was a test of his endurance and of his obedience and so forth to the Father.

And so he passed that test, the angels came and ministered to him, and he's ready to get out in public and start doing what he's got to do. And that is to preach. But we are specifically told in verse 14, after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee preaching.

Now, John's imprisonment, we know from having read ahead in the story, because it is told later in retrospect, that John was put in prison by Herod because of his denouncing Herod's lifestyle. This story is actually told later in Mark in chapter 6, but at this point he only gives John's imprisonment as a time marker, not as a point of interest, which it will later be. But when John was taken out of commission, Jesus came and filled that gap.

John had been preaching the kingdom of God, then he got taken out of circulation by Herod. And it was at that point that Jesus stepped into circulation, as it were, to say, well, Herod can try to silence the message of the kingdom, he can silence one messenger, but the message of the kingdom is going to outlive any one messenger. And when one messenger is taken out, another will pick up the torch.

In this case, the better one. Jesus is a better messenger than John, and John himself said so. But Jesus now comes and brings essentially the same message.

John was preaching. And it is summarized for us by Mark, saying that Jesus came preaching the gospel, and the way our translation reads it, of the kingdom of God. Some translations just say the gospel of God.

There's some manuscripts, the Alexandrian text is saying the gospel of God, whereas the Textus Receptus says the gospel of the kingdom of God. It doesn't matter which it says because even if we leave out the word kingdom of God in this phrase, we get them in the next one, where it says that Jesus said the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.

Now there's two announcements and two imperatives here. The summary of the gospel message. The gospel message is an announcement of a fact and a command of a duty.

There is the indicative and there is the imperative. The indicative, the mere fact that is proclaimed, is that first of all the time has been fulfilled. The second thing is that the kingdom of God is at hand.

The two of course are sort of saying the same thing, but the first phrase tells us that the coming of the kingdom of God at that time was not just an afterthought for God, but it was a fulfillment of a long time dream that God had given and nourished through the prophets of the Old Testament and indicated there was a specific amount of time that had to run its course before Jesus would come and bring the kingdom. He says that time has now run its course. We sometimes wonder why did Jesus come at that time instead of a different time? And some people are critical because they think he came later than he should have.

Others are critical because they think he came earlier than he should have. In the rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar, Judas Iscariot in one of his monologues criticizes Jesus for coming so early at a time when there's no mass communication. And he thought, well, why didn't you come later? Why didn't there be mass communication? And you can get your message out more.

Well, the criticism is a hollow one because even though Jesus came at a time when there wasn't mass communication, look, the world is filled with his message anyway. He did something right. But the more likely question arises, why did he wait so long? Why were

there 4,000 years after the fall before Jesus came and brought the kingdom of God? And I don't know the answer to that, but I do know that in Galatians 4.4 that it says that Jesus came in the fullness of time.

There was a need to fulfill certain purposes of God before the kingdom would come. Those purposes probably had to do with the testing of the nation of Israel and the preparing of a remnant for the coming of Christ. Why it would take so many centuries, I don't know.

Maybe it took that long for Israel to go through cycles of persecution and so forth that made them long for the kingdom or hunger for the kingdom like they would not otherwise. I don't know. But we do know that Jesus said that his coming was at the fulfillment of a certain time.

The time is fulfilled. We do know that Daniel had predicted the amount of time it would be. In Daniel chapter 2, Daniel said that in the days of these kings, which in the context, Daniel 2.44, the context is the emperors of Rome.

Because he's talking about four kingdoms, the last of which is the Roman Empire. And he says, in the days of these kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall endure forever. So Daniel predicted that the kingdom of God would come and he said it would come in the time of the Roman Empire, the fourth of the four kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

So this was the right time in that respect. Jesus came during the time of the Roman Empire. But Daniel is even more specific in a later prophecy in chapter 9 of Daniel where we won't get into it in detail now because that would detain us too much away from the gospel of Mark.

But essentially the prophecy was that from the going forth of a particular decree from a Persian ruler which would allow the Jews who had been captured in Babylon to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild and restore their capital city. There would be a decree from that point, it would be 483 years before the Messiah would come. Now that's pretty specific.

Almost half a millennium before Jesus actually came, God pinpointed the year that he would come. From the beginning of the decree that is made forward 483 years. And Jesus came at that time.

When Jesus began to preach, I believe it was at the end of that 483 years. And therefore he said the time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God that Daniel said was coming and all the other prophets spoke about is coming.

So the kingdom wasn't some divine afterthought after the old covenant didn't work out. So he thought, well what will I do next? I'll send Jesus and establish a kingdom. All through the Old Testament he was predicting even the date that it would come.

And therefore it was very easy for Jesus to say that time has run its course. We're at the end of that prescribed period. The time is fulfilled and the kingdom is at hand.

So this is a proclamation of God's kingdom. That is the core of Jesus' message. You will find that it's the core of all of his teaching throughout all the Gospels.

But there's also the imperative. You know when Peter preached his first sermon on the day of Pentecost, it was essentially an announcement. He didn't give an altar call.

He didn't tell people what they must do. He just announced, let all the house of Israel assuredly know that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ. Essentially he said Jesus is the King.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the King. He proclaimed it and the people came to Peter and said, what must we do? And then he said, oh you want to know what to do? Well you need to repent and be baptized and receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. So Peter too when he preached, first of all gave simply the announcement of the kingdom of God.

But then upon request he also gave the imperative, what you must do. And here Jesus having said the kingdom of God is at hand, tells people what they should do about it. He said repent and believe the Gospel.

Actually literally believe in the Gospel. This is the only place in the Bible that uses that phrase, believe in the Gospel. But whatever.

You believe in the message. The Gospel means the good news. And Jesus has just proclaimed what the good news is, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom is at hand, that's the good news.

Now you need to repent and believe this message. Believe in the King. Believe that he is the King.

Believe that he is the Lord. That's the message. He is the King.

There is a kingdom. And so you need to repent of what you were doing. Whatever you were doing, you got to change that.

And now you need to acknowledge the King. And believe that message. Believe that he is the King.

And so that is how Jesus' ministry initially in Galilee was summarized. Now, Matthew's Gospel indicates that Galilee was, you know, Jesus began in Galilee because actually there was a prediction that he would. In Isaiah chapter 9 where it says, Galilee of the Gentiles in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali.

It said, they that sat in darkness have seen a great light. And those who sat in the

shadow of death, upon them a great light has dawned. The opening verses of Isaiah 9. Matthew quotes them at this point in the story to tell us that Jesus' ministry in Galilee was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prediction 700 years earlier.

That there would be a light shine to these people in Galilee. And Jesus now preaching the kingdom is that light. The fulfillment of Isaiah's prediction.

Verse 16. And as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea. For they were fishermen.

Then Jesus said to them, come after me and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And when he had gone a little farther from there, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets.

And immediately he called them. There's another immediately there. He called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and went after him.

Now the story of these four fishermen being called is also of course recorded in Matthew and Luke. Matthew compresses it a little bit. It doesn't mention that he called Andrew and Peter and then walked down the sea shore a little bit and found James and John.

Matthew just tells us about him calling all four of them. Doesn't give us the detail that's given here. But see, of the gospel writers, well of the synoptic gospel writers I should say, Peter, who's the mind behind the gospel of Mark, was the only one that was one of these four fishermen.

Matthew and Luke were not among the four fishermen. Peter was and Mark was writing what Peter had preached. And we know that because he wrote the gospel as he heard it from Peter.

And there are details here that aren't in the other gospels, but there are some that are left out here that are in Luke. For example, Luke tells it this way. Jesus was preaching on the seashore and the crowds were pressing him.

And Peter and these disciples were actually on the shore mending their nets after a day's work. And their boats were there and Jesus hired the boat. Actually he didn't hire it, he just commandeered it.

And so Peter rowed out a little bit and Jesus stood in the boat and preached and Peter listened there in the boat. And after the preaching was done and the people were sent home, Jesus turned to Peter and said, why don't you throw your net over into the sea and bring some fish up. Now Peter probably thought, well Jesus probably is trying to reimburse me for the use of my time on my boat.

And so he's suggesting, you know, take some fish home. But Peter had already been fishing all night and there had been no fish caught, not even once. And Peter said, Lord, we've been fishing all night and we've caught nothing.

Now this was perhaps, you know, a complaint on more than one level. One is, we're tired, we've been fishing all night. And now we've had to sit and listen to a sermon all day.

We're ready to go home. We'll catch some fish tonight if we're lucky. You know, we've fished all night.

And the other thing is, we didn't catch anything, so it's not really a good spot. This isn't the hole where we should be fishing. And by the way, daytime isn't as good as nighttime anyway for fishing.

So I mean, Peter kind of thinks that Jesus is making a suggestion that's a little ill-informed. After all, Jesus, you're the carpenter, we're the fishermen here, you know. We'll make the decisions about fishing.

You make the decisions about where to pound the nails. But Peter didn't say it that way. But he seemed a little perturbed.

He said, Lord, we've been fishing all night and we've caught nothing. But then, sort of, he acquiesced. But at your word, we'll go ahead and put the nets down.

And so he did. And of course, a great catch of fish came in. But what's significant is that when Peter saw the great catch of fish, he was suddenly convicted and said, Lord, depart from me, I'm a sinful man.

And some people think that Peter's confessing that he's an unusually sinful man, and he might have been, but I think not. I think Peter and all the people that Jesus called his disciples were among the Jewish remnant of faithful. I think they had been followers of John the Baptist, and they were faithful Jews.

I don't think Peter was unusually sinful. But he was probably convicted about his impatience with Jesus a few moments earlier, or his lack of trust. I mean, when, I don't know if you've ever been there, I certainly have, where I was up against some kind of a test of my faith, and I failed the test, like maybe for some financial provision at the last minute.

Money has to come in, and I'm supposed to just trust God, and I'm not trusting God for it. I'm complaining, and I might even try to manipulate things to make money come in. And then suddenly the money comes in from someplace it would have come from anyway, and just in time, and I see it's the provision of God, and I think, I feel very sinful at that moment, because I should have trusted God from the beginning, and just the lack of

faith itself is convicting.

And I think Peter, because a moment earlier he had been, as it were, chiding Jesus, saying, you know, Jesus, listen, this is not a good suggestion you're making. We're not going to get any fish right now. But we'll, to humor you, we'll put in the net.

That's essentially what Peter's words seemed to have meant. And then when he realized that, you know, this is a miracle, and he realizes how out of line he was, and I think it's that that makes me depart from me, I'm a sinful man. But Jesus then said, don't be afraid, from now on you'll catch men.

What we have here is a little more and a little less detail, more than Matthew and less than Luke gives, because it doesn't talk about Jesus preaching and using the boat, and then this business about catching a catch of fish. It just has Jesus at the seashore calling these men. And interestingly, there's a detail that the first two fishermen are out casting their nets in the sea, and then the second two that they come to, James and John, are already done with the day's fishing, and they're mending their nets in their boats.

These details, along with the fact that when James and John followed Jesus, they left their father in the boat with the hired servants, these are details that aren't given in the other Gospels, and they kind of have the ring of an eyewitness, someone who remembered, you know, he can remember them leaving the boat, leaving their dad and the servants in the boat, and remembers that Peter and Andrew were casting nets when Jesus called, and the other two were mending their nets. These details are like the details of an eyewitness. And you might say, well, how do you harmonize the different stories? They seem different.

I believe they can be harmonized, we just don't, that's not what we have time to do here right now. I believe that you'll find that I think Matthew compresses the story, and Luke emphasizes one set of details that Mark leaves out, and so forth. But the point here is that these men, at this point, leave everything and become disciples.

But we need to examine that a minute, because since Jesus at another time said, unless you forsake all that you have, you cannot be my disciple. He said that in Luke 14, 33. Unless you forsake all that you have, you cannot be my disciple.

Well, that would apply to us, I would assume, as well as anyone else. I'm not sure why other people at other times would have to forsake all they have to be a disciple, and we wouldn't have to. I don't think discipleship is something different now than it was then.

There's something about being a disciple that requires that one forsake everything to be one. But what does that mean? Some people feel it means you can't really have anything. You should sell everything you have, give it to the poor, and be a pauper for Jesus.

And there are certainly people that God no doubt calls to do just that. But not everyone. If you want to understand what it means to leave everything, note that that's what the disciples did here.

They left everything. But did they sell their boats? No, they still owned them. How do I know? Because they used them for the next three and a half years as transportation for Jesus and themselves across the lake, back and forth.

Even after Jesus rose from the dead, they pulled the boat and the nets out of mothballs and went out fishing again in John chapter 21. They still owned these things. Peter still owned a house.

Though he had forsaken everything, he owned a house because we find that shortly after this, the disciples and Jesus are staying in Peter's house. In fact, Peter's house seems to become the outreach center in Capernaum from which Jesus did his ministry and came home to there as his base of operations. Now, we're talking about a man, Peter, who was a fisherman.

He owned a boat, nets, house, had a family. We're told that he left everything and yet throughout the rest of the story, he still has those things. So what does it mean to forsake everything? And certainly Peter is one who did it the right way.

Remember in that time when the rich young ruler was told to sell what he had and give to the poor and he didn't. And so Peter said to Jesus, Lord, we have forsaken everything and followed you. And as we've done the right thing, Jesus didn't say they hadn't.

He said, you who have forsaken these things, you'll have a hundred times more later. But the point is, Peter is no doubt a good example of what it means to be a disciple. He is a good example of what it means to forsake what you have.

Yet he didn't sell everything he had. He didn't even dispense with it. He didn't part with much of it.

As far as we know, we don't know that he parted with anything. He probably didn't have much more than the things I listed a moment ago. His house, his boat, his net.

He was a peasant man. He didn't have a lot of goods. He didn't have stereos and things like that to consider.

Everything he had, it looks like he kept. Yet it says they forsook all. What does it mean then to forsake all? Well, you can see that in Peter's case too, because though he still had his boat, he still had his house.

These became Jesus's boat and house. It's not so much that he signed over the pink slip to Jesus, but it was just a given. Now that he was a disciple of Jesus, all that he had was

Jesus's.

Everything he had was at Jesus's disposal. He was just a steward now, who had only one obligation, that's to make sure that whatever Jesus wanted from his life and from his possessions, Jesus got. And so, to forsake what you have appears to simply mean you transfer ownership, you transfer title of what you have to Christ.

You might or might not part with it, but you do part with it in your heart, and you no longer have the sense of ownership of it. And that's what it means to forsake it. It's a heart matter.

It's not necessarily a physical matter. But of course, if it is a heart matter, then if the time should come that Christ would say, OK, get rid of that. Sell that, give it to the poor, whatever.

Well, you've already done that in your heart, so it's easy to do the second part. If it's hard to do the second part, you probably haven't done the first part. But when you forsake it all in your heart for Christ, then you never feel that you own it anyway.

So if it comes time that you have to physically part with it, you're not losing anything, it wasn't yours anyway. You didn't even pretend that it was. And so you're simply the distributor and the dispenser and the manager of the things that belong to him now.

That's what's transpired in your heart. And of course, the way you live out your life with your possessions and so forth is the stewardship of those things that now are his and not yours. I would point out that when Jesus called these men, they were not religious leaders in any sense.

Peter and Andrew, James and John, these men became the leading apostles. Not just of a little, you know, local church in Jerusalem, eventually of the whole church worldwide. To this day, we still view the apostles, as we should, as the founders and directors of the worldwide church.

What they wrote stands as the canon law of the church. That is to say, their authority is still unchallenged. Yet they weren't trained theologians.

They weren't even untrained theologians. They weren't religious leaders of any kind. They were fishermen, they were peasants.

They were probably barely literate. That's what it says in Acts chapter 4, when it says that when Peter and John, two of these men, stood before the Sanhedrin with the man who had been healed of lameness, it says the Sanhedrin looked on them and saw that they were unlettered men. They were unlearned, uneducated men.

But it says they saw that they had been with Jesus. And that's what qualified them, being

with Jesus. These men were going to become qualified to be spiritual leaders, not by any education they'd had, but by being with Jesus.

That's what he called them to do, is to be with him. Now, they had met him before. We don't have to turn there right now, but in John chapter 1, in the latter part of that chapter, we find that two men, disciples of John the Baptist, heard John when he said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

Then it says two of those disciples left John and followed Jesus. Then we're told that one of them was Andrew. And it says that he went and found his brother Simon, who was Peter, and brought him to Jesus.

So Andrew and Peter had met Jesus on this earlier occasion. The other disciple of John is not named for us in John chapter 1, and therefore it's probably John himself. John makes a habit of not naming himself in his gospel.

And so he says there were two disciples who followed Jesus. One of them was Andrew, but he doesn't tell us who the other one was. But since Andrew and Peter and James and John were all partners in the fishing business in the same town, it's a good chance that unnamed disciple was John.

Which means that three of these four men had met Jesus on this earlier occasion, which most scholars think could be many months, perhaps as much as a year earlier. And it was in a different part of the country. So here Jesus meets them at the Sea of Galilee.

These people know him already. They spent a day with him before, but they had never followed him. And at this point he says, Okay, I'm calling you to follow me.

Now were they disobedient before this? No, not all people who believed in Jesus were called to follow him around physically. Mary and Martha and Lazarus were great friends and loyal to Jesus, but they didn't follow him around. They had a home in Bethany, and they hosted him there.

There were no doubt lots of people who believed in Jesus who didn't have the luxury and didn't have the call to follow him around. They weren't called to be the leaders of the future church like these men were. These men had to leave what they were doing, change vocation, and be with Jesus steadily for a long time so he could prepare them and train them for what they were eventually going to do.

But had he told them that at this time, they would have been greatly intimidated. Suppose he had said to Peter, a fisherman, who's hardly literate, Follow me and I'm going to make you a leader of one of the world's greatest religions. I'll make you the first pope.

You'll be the spiritual guide of millions and billions of people. Well, Peter would have said,

You've definitely got the wrong man here. I'm not even that religious.

I can't even read. And all I know how to do is catch fish. Well, Jesus knew all that.

So what did he say? Follow me and I'll make you a fisher of men. That didn't sound so intimidating to a fisherman. Fishing? I know something about that.

He didn't say, I'll make you a church leader. He said, I'll make you a fisher of men. And so in doing so, he finds a connection between what Peter already is, what already motivates Peter, what career he'd already chosen.

Perhaps even indicating that because God knew that he was going to call him to be a fisherman, he might have even directed his earlier life into fishing so that it would be something that he would have some sophistication in, some knowledge of. And when Jesus called him to be an evangelist, he said, you're going to be a catcher of men now, fisher of men. And that, maybe Peter might have thought, well, I've never done that exact thing before, but fishing is something that is not intimidating to me.

And so fishing for men, I might have to learn a few new skills, but it's kind of more or less along my line. I remember back in the late 70s when I was in Santa Cruz, there were three men, myself, Danny Layman, and another man named Dale Jensen, who were leaders in the Jesus movement in Santa Cruz at that time. And we decided to join forces.

We were all heading up Christian ministry houses in different parts of the city. We were all friends, but the ministry houses were unrelated. They were independent ministry outreach houses.

And I was leading one, Danny was leading one, and Dale was leading one. And we decided maybe we should just combine our ministries. So we got together to pray on a regular basis about whether we should just start a ministry with the three of us, leading one thing together instead of three different things.

And as we did, we actually eventually didn't end up working together quite like that. Danny and I continued to be close. Dale moved somewhere else and so forth.

So it didn't really happen. We prayed about it and God didn't do it. But as we were considering it, we were looking at the ministries that each other had and how they supplemented each other.

But it was interesting because I was at that time not in full-time ministry. I started to work for a living, and I was washing windows. That's what I did.

I cleaned windows for a living for the first many years of my ministry years. Danny Layman was a trained concrete mason before he went into YWAM full-time. He actually laid slabs and sidewalks and things like that.

And Dale was an auto mechanic. But if you actually would look at the ministries that each of us had, it was really kind of interesting because Danny was an evangelist and I was a teacher. At that time, probably doing more conceptual kind of teaching.

And Dale was teaching more practical kinds of things at that time. And we thought our ministries would merge together well. But if I was interested, Danny was one who in his career laid foundations.

That's what he was, a concrete mason. He was a foundation layer. And his ministry was that of evangelism, just laying the foundation of Christ in people's lives.

He didn't really do a lot of discipling beyond that, but he was winning people for Christ. That's what he was called to do. And I was a window cleaner.

I like to improve people's vision. And that had a lot to do with the way I was motivated in my teaching. And Dale liked to fix things and make things work right.

He's a mechanic, auto mechanic. And his teaching was kind of that way too. And we thought it's kind of interesting how God worked that out.

All of us were involved in some trade that had sort of a correspondence to the kind of spiritual work we were later doing. And I thought of this incident where Jesus called a fisherman and said, I'll make you a fisher of men. It seems like there are things that God does in our lives, in our natural lives, before he calls us into ministry that may be preparatory.

They may correspond in some way. They may be analogous to what God's actually going to have us do spiritually speaking. And that was certainly true with Peter and the fisherman here.

I'm not sure about Matthew, the tax collector. I'm not sure how that may have prepared him. So it may not work out in every case.

There may be times when a person's called to ministry entirely different than what they did. But Moses, who was called to lead Israel, what did he do for 40 years? He watched sheep. He led sheep in the wilderness even.

In the same wilderness that he was going to later lead Israel for 40 years. He spent 40 years leading sheep, real sheep in that wilderness. And then he spent 40 years leading Israel like sheep through that same wilderness.

That seems preparatory. And David, of course, who was the first really godly king that God gave to Israel, was also a shepherd before him. And shepherding, everywhere in Scripture, is treated as sort of the profession, the secular profession, that resembles spiritual leadership.

So God sometimes prepares people for spiritual ministry by having them involved in some kind of what we might call secular activity that later is going to be, there's probably transferable concepts that when they go into ministry, they can say, well, when I led sheep, I had to do this. Like that guy who wrote A Shepherd Looks at the 23rd Psalm, Philip Keller. Anyone read that book? I have not read it, but everybody talks about how ingenious it is.

He was actually a man who took care of sheep and later became like a pastor. And he wrote a book showing all the ways that being a shepherd corresponded with taking care of God's people. And it was not a lightweight book, it was a book that's a classic.

And everyone who read it just said, man, it's really deep and really insightful. And no doubt so. The man spent time taking care of sheep, then he took care of God's sheep.

And he saw the parallels. Peter later probably saw parallels in the way that he would catch fish and the way he later would evangelize and catch men. But like fish, men, once they are caught, need to be cleaned.

There needs to be a discipling. And Jesus on this occasion caught these four fish. And this began a three year process of cleaning the fish.

Cleaning Peter and those guys so that they would be suitable for the kind of amazing, significant leadership that they would later have in the church. Well, we're going to stop there because of the time.