

Session 1

DECEMBER 3, 2017

JESUS CALLS

Mark 1:14-20

Our new Morkie puppy Sadie Mae is cute and fluffy and playful and...stubborn. She has inherited enough Yorkie blood to stand defiantly at one end of the yard and stare at a bird hopping around in the neighbor's yard, seemingly oblivious to my continued calling. I am her master. She is supposed to come to me when I call. Simple, right?

We may not be God's pets, but He is indeed our Master. And when the Master calls, we are expected to respond. Unfortunately, we too, have inherited a certain stubbornness. In this week's lesson, the proper response to Jesus' call is clearly depicted by His first followers: Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

Repentance requires a change in our attitude (vv. 14-15). One defining characteristic of Mark's Gospel is its pointedness. The book is pushed along quickly from place to place and story to story. A few verses about John the Baptist in chapter one are followed by a few about Jesus' baptism and temptations, and then Mark gets right to Jesus' message: "Repent!" While we sometimes think repentance is linked with feeling sorrow over our sin, it really refers to a change in thinking (see 2 Cor. 7:10). In order to be real repentance, that change in thinking will *always* lead to a change in our actions. That's why John the Baptist taunted the religious leaders of the day, challenging them to produce evidence of their repentance before granting them baptism (see Matt. 3:7-10). In these verses, repentance is connected to two important features. First, Jesus indicates a new era has begun. While sin always requires repentance, there is an emphasis on the *change in times* that warrants a change in behavior. This idea that the time has come is echoed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:2, "Look, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!" Not only does Jesus emphasize an urgency to the message, but second, He connected repentance to belief in the gospel. While repentance and faith are not identical, they are inseparable. They really represent two sides of the same coin: turning from sin always means turning toward Christ; and turning to Christ always means turning away from sin. The two requirements for Kingdom entry function together. *The Pulpit Commentary* puts it nicely: "Without faith repentance becomes despair; and without repentance faith becomes only presumption." Jesus' call to would-be followers has not changed; nor have the conditions: "Repent and believe!"

Discipleship requires a change in our allegiance (vv. 16-20). Jesus' call moves beyond a call to Him for *salvation*. It also involves a call to Him for *service*. Here, Jesus is hand-picking some men to serve as His disciples. Four interesting characteristics give insight to these initial followers of Christ. First, they were already busy. Church leaders have long followed the adage of giving responsibility to those who are already busy. That's a sure way to know things will get done! Who would be busier along the shores of the sea than fisherman? Second, the disciples of Christ were interested in people. Fisherman love to fish, or they wouldn't do it. But here, Jesus called them to cast their nets for something much more valuable than the fish they were after in the Sea of Galilee. The prospect must have sounded strange, but nevertheless appealing. Why gather fish for the market when you can gather souls for His kingdom? Third, these men were decisive in their commitment. There is no hesitation, but only eagerness to follow Christ. The word *immediately* emphasizes this in verses 18 and 20. Finally, these followers of Christ were committed to Him. Peter and Andrew forsook their nets (and thus their way of life), and James and John left their father; all to follow Christ. Remember: Christ's call always starts with repentance and faith, and ends with a call to serve Him.