

**Trinity Baptist Church**  
**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2020**  
**Andy Banks - Mark 1:16-20 'Jesus' Call'**

**[Play game of Simon Says]**

Now, in that game, you have to do exactly what Simon says, and *only* what Simon says, yes? You have to *follow* his instructions. And today's passage in Mark's Gospel is all about Jesus' call to *follow* him. Let's read from Mark 1:16-20

**[Read Mark 1:16-20]**

*16As 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.' 18At once they left their nets and followed him.*

*19When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

**[Pray]**

So, what made these fishermen follow Jesus so quickly and so totally? The first thing to say is that it wasn't quite as quick as we might think. Mark is all about the action, and he almost gives the impression that Jesus just rocked up at the edge of the Sea of Galilee, saw some fishermen, called them to follow him and they went. But the other gospel writers make it clear that at least Andrew and Peter, and probably James and John, spent some time with Jesus before this call. And just before he called them, he also demonstrated who he was by giving them a miraculous catch of fish – which made Peter realise what a sinner he was, and ask Jesus to go away from him.

And that leads us on to Jesus call itself. Who has ever lined up for a game, while two captains pick their team one by one? Who do the captains pick first?

**[take answers]**

They pick the best players, don't they? Have you ever stood in that line and seen a captain pick all the least able people first?

1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish schooling was a bit like that. If you were a boy, you would have gone to synagogue school when you were five. And you would have learnt the Scriptures (our Old Testament) by heart. By the age of 13, most boys would have memorised most of the Old Testament! Now there's a challenge!

If you did *really* well at school, you were encouraged to study further, by reading how people had *interpreted* God's word through the centuries. And if you excelled in that phase, around the age of 17 you could ask to become part of a *rabbi's* group of disciples, in the hope of one day becoming a rabbi yourself – the rabbis were the people who taught God's law to others, and it was the *best* job any Jewish boy could hope for.

Girls, sadly, were excluded from the very beginning. And most boys wouldn't make it either, and would take up a trade instead – like being a fisherman. But the best of the best would be questioned repeatedly by their chosen rabbi, to see if they could eventually become just like their teacher. If the rabbi believed they could, he invited them to become his disciple with the call, "Come, follow me." That meant, "Spend time with me, live in my community, learn from me, follow my rules of interpretation, and become like me."

Now Jesus proved himself to be rabbi material even at the age of 12, when he amazed all the rabbis in the temple with his answers to their questions. And more than that, the miracles he performed showed that he was specially blessed by God. But could ask to be his disciple, because no-one could look at Jesus and think, "I can become like him one day!" So, Jesus didn't wait to be asked; he took the initiative to call the disciples he wanted. And, unlike other rabbis, he didn't choose the best of the best. He went to people who dropped out of the system long ago – fishermen, and the like – and he gave *them* the rabbi's call, "Come, follow me." "Be with me, form a community around me, learn from me, follow my rules,

become like me.” And, in a radical move, he included many women in his school as well – as is shown when Mary sat at his feet listening to him.

You see, Jesus doesn’t call people because of their abilities. He calls people because *he* sees in them the potential to become like him in *character*. Peter didn’t think he had that potential; that’s why he asked Jesus to leave him alone. James and John were known as the sons of Thunder, with good reason – they were full of unrighteous anger – but Jesus saw in all of them the potential to become like him. I think that’s what these first disciples responded to most of all: the fact that Jesus believed in them. This amazingly great man – their promised Messiah or Saviour – believed that they, of all people, had the potential to be his disciples, to become like him!

And, likewise, Jesus looks at each one of you, and he sees the same potential. That’s right. Jesus believes that you have the potential to become like him! Because *we* don’t make it happen – Jesus does. We have to cooperate, but the power to change and become like Jesus comes from Jesus. And that means that *anyone* can become his disciple. You don’t have to be the best of the best. You just have to be willing to follow Jesus, to learn from him, and to grow to become like him. Isn’t that exciting?

But that does mean being all-in! The disciples left behind everything for this amazing new life. And Jesus wants to rule over every part of our lives, not just some parts of them. Having said that, we don’t lose out by allowing him that rule, because following Jesus’ rules is the best life we can possibly have!

And Jesus doesn’t stop there. He also gives us a job to do. “I will send you out to fish for people.” These first disciples knew all about what fishing entailed! You throw out your net and you gather them in. That’s what Jesus wanted them to do with people – he wanted to use them to share who he was and bring many, many more people to join his band of disciples. And that’s still what he asks and empowers his people to do – to tell others about him and bring them into this great privilege of being his disciples too.

But we will never be very motivated to do that unless we have made the conscious choice to accept his invitation to be his disciple ourselves. I think sometimes ask people to share God’s love with others before they know it for themselves. Interestingly, Jesus didn’t do that. It wasn’t *long* before he sent these disciples out to tell other people about him, but it wasn’t the *first* thing he did with them. First, they did life alongside him, heard him teach, saw him work miracles, began to understand who he truly is – God the Son in human flesh. Once they’d begun to get their heads around that, *then* he sent them out to fish for others. And they were delighted to go. Because they were selling something that they themselves found exciting.

On your last birthday, how many people did you show your presents to? I’m guessing you showed your parents or carers, your grandparents, your siblings, maybe your cousins, and your friends as well. Am I right? *Why* did you show them your presents?

**[take answers]**

You were excited about them. And, when you truly get what Jesus has done for you, and what it means that he calls *you* to follow him and be his disciple, it’s the same: you’re excited to tell others about him. But we can also lose that enthusiasm along the way. And that’s one of the major reasons why we’re doing this series: to look afresh at who Jesus is, so we can get excited about him again.

So, I’m not going to ask you today to share this news with anyone. I’m just going to ask you to look again at Jesus. Think about the fact that he thinks you have the potential to become like him. That’s why he’s called you, “Come, follow me.” How does that make you feel? Now, following on from that, what one thing can you work on with his help this week, to become a bit more like him? If nothing comes to mind, why not work on one of the qualities of love listed in 1 Cor 13, because Jesus said the greatest two commandments are to love God with all we have and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Could you replace the word love at every point in this list with your own name? If not, pick one of these qualities to work on:

“Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is not jealous. Love does not boast. Love is not proud. Love does not dishonour others. Love is not selfish. Love is not easily angered. Love does not keep a record of wrongs. Love is not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects. Love always trusts. Love always hopes. Love always keeps going.”

Which quality could you work on this week? But remember, Jesus believes you can become like him. And Jesus is committed to helping you become like him. So, don't work on this on your own; ask him to help you. Amen?

**[Pray]**