

The Card Carrying Jesus-Club Member Meets a Real Disciple of Jesus – Mark 1:16-20
 Series: Look and Live #3

This morning we are going to think about *two contrasting views and understandings* of Christianity and the Christian life. They are *contrasting* or we could go even farther and say that they are two *opposing* views. Think first of all about being part of a club. The last club I joined is kind of an unofficial club. Last summer, I went out to Tipton and I rode home on my Kawasaki Ninja motorcycle. I got my motorcycle license, my helmet, my gloves, and all my gear. And *bam*, I'm in the club. If you've never had a motorcycle, you probably didn't even know that there *was* a club. There is. If you want proof, next time you're driving near a motorcyclist, watch what he does when another motorcycle passes on the other side of the road. Almost without exception, he'll extend his left hand and put out two fingers. That is an *acknowledgement* that you're in the club and that the other person is in the club too.

Now, think how different joining a club like that is from becoming a professional electrician. I bought a motorcycle, put on a helmet, I'm in the club. All I do to stay in the club is stick out my left hand and wave. Whereas to become an electrician, first you have to go to school. Then when you're done with school you have to become an apprentice. You have to follow someone around and clean up after them and do all the dirty work. And eventually, as you watch and learn and watch and learn, you get to do a little bit more, and then a little bit more, and so on and so on; eventually, if you persist long enough, now *you're the one* teaching the newest apprentice the ropes and making *him* clean up after you. But you see that *process*? Being an electrician is a dedicated *process*, vastly different from just being a club member.

Unfortunately, because God so freely and instantaneously forgives our sins and credits us with Jesus' righteousness when we repent and believe, so many multitudes of so-called Christians now think of being a Christian like being a member of a club. Whereas in reality, being a Christian is much less like being a member of club and much more like becoming a dedicated, long-term electrical apprentice.

Now pretend for a minute that we hadn't read the text and that we didn't know the story. We've just read verses 14-15; we've just heard Jesus say the most astonishing thing: the long awaited Kingdom of God is now drawn near! He is the one who is bringing the Kingdom. Now what would we be expecting in verse 16? We would expect to see something really spectacular happening now. We would expect to see the coming and the advance of God's Kingdom. How is Jesus going to advance God's Kingdom? Is he going to call down fire and brimstone on God's enemies? Is he going to walk up to Pontius Pilate and thrust a divine sword through his chest? How is he going to establish and advance God's Kingdom in this world?

No, actually it appears far less spectacular and dramatic than all of that. He calls a few people to follow him. Okay, but *surely* he's going to call the mighty warriors of Israel and the nobles and the elders, right? Nope. He's going to call stinky, burly fishermen! I think the modern equivalent would be those 30 year old guys you see working on the highways in 90 degree summer days, shirts off, cigarette in mouth, pants tattered. We might call them a little rough around the edges. Probably they aren't up and coming future presidents or kings. They're working class folks. And in Jesus *calling*

them, we see the eternal Kingdom of God advancing. In them, we see God's plan and purposes from the creation of the world, and his plans for eternity to come, we see that coming to fruition and fulfillment in fishermen.

So here's what we learn: Jesus is going to *advance and establish* God's Kingdom by calling unspectacular men and women to become his disciples. It's true that Mark only tells us here about the calling of Simon and Andrew, John and James, and then in the next chapter he'll tell us how Matthew or Levi was called. One of the reasons Mark only gives us the calling stories of these five men is because they are pivotal figures in the Jesus story. John, James, and Simon will form the inner-core of Jesus' 12 apostles.

But the other reason Mark only gives us the story of Jesus calling these five men is because their story is *our* story. This story is the *model* of how Jesus is going to call *all of his disciples*. Whether we're talking about the Apostle Peter, or you and me.

So we learn that when the Kingdom of God comes to *us*, it is much more like becoming an electrician than it is like joining a club. Jesus didn't say, "Hey Simon and Andrew, would you come on shore for a minute. Now, will you accept me as King? Okay, good, now get back out in your boats."

Entering into the Kingdom of God looks like a man laying down his tools, saying goodbye to his profession, leaving his father and his workers, getting behind Jesus, and committing himself to go where Jesus goes, to do what Jesus does, and to serve Jesus' cause instead of his own. In other words, it looks like *following Him*, like becoming *his disciple*, not just carrying a card that says, "I belong to the Jesus-club." Life as a Christian, life in the Kingdom of God today means being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

This text tells us that a discipleship kind of Christianity is different from a club-Christianity in four ways. There are four differences when we begin to understand that the Bible speaks of being a Christian as being a disciple.

1) Christianity as discipleship means Jesus initiates and commands our following him.

- a) So Jesus is "passing alongside the Sea of Galilee" and two times, he just walks up to the shoreline and he addresses the men by name and says, "Men, FOLLOW ME!" Immediately they do. It's not like he was engaged in conversation with them. He just walks up and commands that they follow and then they do.
- b) Verse 17 in the Greek actually has no verb. Jesus just said, "Here! Behind me!" You can almost see him pointing his finger right behind him as he called them. This was very literal for them. Get here, behind me. In other words, as I lead you, walk with me, travel with me, eat with me, talk with me, learn *from me*. That's the essence of what he was calling them to do. Go behind him through his life. He wants them to experience life behind him. That's discipleship.
 - i) Now I you about the Greek because I want you to hear the *force* of Jesus' call. He didn't say, "Hey Pete, you gotta minute? I'd like to talk to you." No he says this with such force, and with such glorious authority! "Here!" Mark, and Matthew when he tells the story, says about both pairs of men, they "immediately" obeyed.

- c) Our following Jesus was completely initiated *by him*. He called us, he commanded us, and we obeyed. He called us with such authority and he made his calling so compelling that we immediately laid down our nets and followed. In club-Christianity, you lose all of that. The club version thinks, “Following Jesus makes sense. It suits me. It will be good for me. Yeah, sign me up.”
- d) But true Christianity, Christianity that has as it’s model *discipleship*, understands that our Teacher came to us and gave us a command with powerful authority saying, “Ryan Haider, ***Follow Me!***”
- e) I simply obeyed that command because of Jesus’ authority (*that doesn’t mean I get credit for obeying, it just means that he graciously gave me the desire and the ability to obey*).
- f) This makes for such a firm foundation! My *following Jesus Christ* is not based upon my easy decision one day that I’d like to join his club. Rather, it’s based upon the fact that one day, he authoritatively and compellingly commanded my obedience. And I’m following today because the King of Kings, the Sustainer of the Universe bid me come and follow him.
- g) Did you know that God *commands* our belief and trust in the Gospel? Acts 17:30 “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he **commands** all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.”
- h) He’s not just asking for it. He’s not saying, “Whenever it fits well in your schedule Ryan.” The King of Universe demands that I repent and submit to Christ.
- i) Doesn’t that sound like an entire different *breed* of Christianity?

2) Christianity as discipleship means it’s not a matter of being part of the club; it’s a matter of having a new disciple-relationship with Jesus.

- a) A true Christian has taken on a new relationship. Before, she was following her own ways and she was learning the ways of the world. But when she became a Christian, she entered into a new disciple-relationship with Jesus. She has entered into a new relationship with Jesus Christ, one where he is the *teacher, the authority, and Lord*, and where we are his disciple.
- b) Jesus *could have* commanded that these four men do any one of a million different things to become part of his Kingdom. He could have said, Fill out this card; pray this prayer; bend over and touch your toes. But instead, he calls them to enter into a new relationship with himself, where he is the leader, and they are his devoted followers. Where he is the authority, and they are the servants and the submissive ones.
- c) And, aside from one exception when they abandon him in the hour of his arrest, the disciples are with Jesus for good. They are there when Jesus sleeps, when he wakes, when he prays, when he heals, when he teaches, when he explains his teaching, when he lives what he teaches. They are there when he worships, when he attends synagogue, when he clears the temple, when he prophesies, when he fulfills prophecy. They are *with him, following him, looking to him for instruction, learning from him, observing him* as students for the rest of Jesus’ life.
- d) And here’s the crazy thing, this didn’t stop when Jesus died, resurrected, and ascended to heaven. We *might mistakenly* think that once Jesus ascends into Heaven, all of this following and disciple business will be over.
- e) But to keep us from wrongly thinking that, after Jesus rose from the grave and just before he ascended into heaven, he actually gives us the permanent mission of the Church: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and…” and do what? What’s the

church up to now? Go therefore and get people to make decisions? Go therefore and get people to join our club? No, Go therefore and make disciples! I have made *you*. Go and replicate yourselves.

- f) Even *after* Jesus is ascended to the right hand of the Father, Peter, James, John, Andrew, and all the others, they *still* were able to have communion with Jesus and to *learn* from Jesus. They were still able to be directed by him and to be submissive to him. In other words, they were still to be his disciples, his followers, even though he wasn't with them bodily. And so too are we!
- g) So here's the mission of the church: be disciples, makes disciples, for God's glory. That's the mission of the Church!
- h) Doesn't the club version seem so worthless compared to being a personal *disciple* of King Jesus? We spend our time, we devote our *lives* to learning from Jesus in his Word, from learning from Jesus by observing his life in his Word; we devote our lives to communing with him through the indwelling Holy Spirit; we devote our lives to submissively doing what he commands us. Jesus is not just the giver of a list of rules that we try to live by. And, Jesus is not just our pass into heaven. No, we see Jesus as the one today who continues to disciple us, each and every one, individually and corporately. Our lives *literally* revolve around him.
- i) So, is that how we think about our faith, about our Christianity? Do we think about it as a club that has certain rules that we're supposed to abide by if we want to be a good club member? Or, do we think about ourselves as disciples of Christ. Are we content with being a club member, or are we striving everyday to follow Jesus Christ, to *continually learn from him*, to continually be *instructed by him in His Word*, to continually commune with him in *daily prayers*?

Now, we know *what Jesus calls us to do, to follow him*. Point three is going to answer the question: why does Jesus call them and command us to spend our waking moments *right behind him*? What's his *goal*?

3) Christianity as discipleship means our goal is conformity to Jesus.

- a) So much of the "Christian" world has no goal. Club-Christianity *has no goal* because once you're in, you're in. But, when Christianity is discipleship, then we understand that the Christian life is a process. It's a continual process of change, and the goal is looking like our Master, Jesus. If you're still on this earth, then you still have change to strive after.
- b) Christ *chose us* and *commanded our discipleship* because he wants us to be like him: holy, blameless, righteous, and pleasing to the Father.
- c) Why else would he have called us to follow him? Does he delight in having a bunch of people tagging along behind him? Of course not. His purpose is that we'll apprentice ourselves to him, learn from him, focus on him, and delight in him, until we actually begin to walk and talk and pray and love *like Him*.
- d) Jesus tells Simon and Andrew that the *result* of their following him is that they will become fishers of men.
 - i) These men are out in their boats, trying to grab fish, trying to haul fish in. That's their whole lives, getting more fish. Jesus says, "Follow me, and you'll soon be trying to grab and haul in and gain more *men*!" In other words, if you follow me, you'll eventually be making disciples.
 - ii) Why does Jesus think that following him will make them into fishers of men? Because that's what Jesus does. Jesus, well right here even, is making disciples. He is training men to quit their worldly lives and to quit their sinful ways and to pursue holiness. So if these

four men will follow him, they will become more and more like him and *they* will be, like him, fishers of men.

- e) **ATTENTION: God's plan for you is to turn you into an image of Jesus.**
- f) God wants nothing less from you than Christ-likeness, Christ-imagining. He is planning to so work in you that after you have followed Jesus, you will look like Jesus, you will talk like Jesus, you will have absolute trust like Jesus, you will obey the Father like Jesus. You will *be an image of Jesus* spiritually speaking.
- g) Not only is that God's *plan* for you, but he has already *predetermined that it will indeed take place*. It's not a matter of whether or not you, as a born-again disciple, it's not *if* you'll be transformed into the image of Jesus, it's just a matter of when. Romans 8:29. God *predestined* that you would be conformed to the image of His Son. Follow me. That is part of his plan for all of history, for the whole universe: that Jesus would be the chief among many brothers. God's eternal plan is for you to be a brother of Jesus, in other words, to be like him. And he is accomplishing that by your discipleship.
- h) In other words, I am suggesting that your discipleship, *when you pursue following Jesus and being his disciple*, when you do *that*, you are bring into fulfillment God's eternal, cosmic, redemptive purpose!
- i) That better be enough for us! If my soul is telling me that I need to make something out of myself, when my heart is whispering in my ear saying, "Hey, what happened to our life? I thought we were going to *be* somebody," I better start preaching this to myself. Be somebody? How could I be *any more* than conformed to the image of the Resurrected King Jesus, according to the eternal purpose of God, for the pleasure of God, to the glory of God? What *more* is there than that?
- j) The other day I heard about a man who was learning to be a violin *bow maker*. And this man was apparently getting really really good at it. These were the bows that people would pay thousands of dollars for. And the boss came in one day and said, "You know, you're really good at this. If you keep this up, you might just be one of the best bow-makers of your generation. But it's going to require some sacrifice. It's going to require hard work and probably six days a week and long hours. But it will pay off." And the man looked at his boss and said, "I can't do that. I have three children." And you know what the boss said to him? It just so summarizes the American spirit and so-called American dream. He said, "Your kids? Ask yourself this: where will your kids be in 100 years? But think that in a 100 years, people would still be talking about and using your bows."
- k) That's STUPID and a WASTED life!
- l) The King of Heaven has a very specific plan and calling for me. What an amazing thought to consider that there is only One Sovereign God, and that if my name comes to his mind, first of all, that he knows me. And second of all, that he has a thought out, specific plan and purpose for my life. And wonder of wonders, he has actually told me what it is. "Ryan, I plan on seeing you conformed into the image of Jesus. Here's how that's going to happen. You're going to be his personal disciple. You're going to *follow him*, and as you do, my Spirit will conform you to his image!" And I say, "Great God! But right now I'm kind of busy MAKING STUPID VIOLIN BOWS!"
- m) How many of us are wasting our lives on building our building our Kingdom by trying to be somebody, when all the while what we are really doing is giving up God's Eternal Universal Kingdom to try and build our own. Don't waste your life building your kingdom. Remember, "Whoever tries to save his life will lose it." (Mt. 16:25) What a waste.

- n) Paul David Tripp says something to the effect of this: In trying to live for more, we actually live for so much less. When my sin says, “Ryan, come on man. You’re smart. You’re this; you’re that. You could go and do this and become *that* and everybody would know you! Come on, *live for more.*” In doing that, in setting aside this one mission: be a disciple, make disciples, for the glory of God, in trying to find my life’s purpose somewhere else other than becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, in trying to live for *more than that*, I actually live for much much less. Be satisfied and rejoice in simply pursuing God’s purpose of building his Kingdom in and through you by being a disciple and by making disciples of Jesus. Be satisfied in that. Because it’s so much more than anything else the world has to offer.

4) Christianity as discipleship means Christ radically reorients our lives when we become a Christian.

- a) Mark is very deliberate in telling us what the four men were doing when Jesus called them, and what they had to do to obey.
- b) Peter and Andrew were net fishing in a boat. John and James were working on their nets in their boat with their dad, Zebedee, and with their hired workers.
- c) Jesus commands them, Follow me. Mark says, “Immediately they *left their nets, they left their workers, they left their boats, they left their father, and followed him.*”
- d) You see what disciples instinctively knew here? They knew that to do what Jesus was commanding them to do they couldn’t stay in their boats. They couldn’t keep hold on their nets. They couldn’t stay with Dad and with the workers. They had to willfully say *goodbye* to all of those things to be disciples of Jesus.
- e) Additionally, we’ve already heard Jesus telling them, “Come with me, and I’ll make you fishers of *men.*” They were fishers of *fish*. Now, their entire focus and center and purpose and function is going to be radically altered and changed.
- f) Here’s the point: when they become his disciples, their lives are completely repositioned and re-centered. Their lives are now totally about something else than they were before.
- i) It makes me think about wrapping up an extension cord. Sometimes I think to myself, I’ll just lay it on the ground and try to kind of loop and loop and circle it around by hand.
- ii) But every single time it gets messed up. So eventually I pick up the messy bundle of cord, I throw it all back out, start over, and this time I wrap it around my arm!
- g) That’s what Jesus does to these four men’s lives right here. He basically *shakes them out* and wraps them back up, this time, around a new center. Not fish this time. Not even family this time. Not boats and workers and money and jobs and lakes. This time, **he** is at the center. This time, Jesus, their teacher, his mission, his Kingdom, and his glory are at the center. And their lives are just rewrapped now around him.
- h) That’s what happens when Jesus calls a new disciple. For some people, that means that they will have to *quit everything they were and everything they did* and start over now with Jesus at the center. That’s what it meant for these four men. That’s what it meant for me personally.
- i) For others, it means that they will still do some of the same activities, whether that’s work and family and things like that, but now they’ll do them for completely different reasons and for a completely new Kingdom. So either way, **everything** in the new disciple’s life is radically changed.
- j) If we lose Jesus’ call to be disciples, then our Christian faith is something that we just tack on to the outside of our lives. We have our family and our jobs at the center, and then on the

outside we take a thumbtack and tack on PTA, and then fishing on Saturdays, and then basketball for our son on Thursdays, and then Lion's Club, and then church on Sundays. How many have joined club-Jesus and have committed to it much like we commit to working out at the YMCA! It's fun when it's new, but it quickly loses its appeal.

- k) Jesus commands us to *follow him*. Not join his club, but to devote our lives to him as disciples. And in so doing, he is asking for nothing less than the unraveling and the re-raveling of our lives around him.
- l) Maybe we *do still* serve on the PTA. But now, it's not to build our kingdom or our children's kingdom, now it's to be a disciple and to make disciples of Jesus. Maybe we still make violin bows. But now it's a means of being a disciple and advancing God's Kingdom. Everything in our lives now becomes an outlet for serving and following Jesus. And if it cannot do that, then we quit it! We set it aside. Everything now is done for the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)
- m) The Gospel is so glorious because it doesn't deal just with abstract things and ideas and concepts. The Gospel comes right to the heart of us, it redefines us, it rewraps us around Christ, it gives us a new identity, it gives us the biggest, greatest, most glorious purposeful existence imaginable, and it enables us to do even the smallest things like picking up trash and serving on a neighbor committee and doing the dishes so our spouse doesn't have to or sending a thank you card for God and in service to God!
- n) As Christians, as disciples, we can work at a job that we might not love. We can stay married to a man who might be far less than godly. Or we could even stay single. We can adopt children who can't or won't reciprocate our love. We can do acts of service and love to the grouchy old man next door. We can do all those things because those things and those people are not the center of our lives. They don't define us. A famous name doesn't define us. A fun job doesn't define us. We are *disciples of Jesus*! We can do them for him. We can do them in service to him. If my life was oriented around my marriage, then I wouldn't stay married to a difficult spouse. Or if my life and my identity were wrapped around my job, then I couldn't bear the thought of working somewhere I didn't really want to. But Christ commanded me to follow him. And when I did, he plucked out the idols that sat on the throne of my life, at the center of my existence, and he firmly placed himself, his agenda, his glory, and his Kingdom. And now, wherever I am, whatever circumstance I'm in, I can *do it*, I can persevere so long as I am serving and pleasing my center, my Christ! My rightful King.

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