

## **APPRENTICES OF JESUS**

**Mark 1:9-20**

**Sermon for Peace Church**

**March 1, 2009**

**PURPOSE** - To invite people into the life of being an apprentice of Jesus for Kingdom living.

**MAIN IDEA** – We enter Jesus’ apprenticeship for Kingdom Living through the waters of baptism, thereafter following him toward life with others.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Let’s open our Bibles to the gospel of Mark 1 (p. 1552)

1. On the first Sunday in Lent we begin a new series of sermons titled, “APPRENTICES OF JESUS”. That’s an important way of understanding the Christian life, especially over Lent - being an APPRENTICE of Jesus.

(i) Dan can tell us all about apprenticing – He’s in the 3<sup>rd</sup> of a 5 year Union apprenticeship – to be an electrician!

Here’s a definition that I came across this week (outline): *“An apprenticeship is a means of taking an individual who will learn the SKILLS and PRACTICES that are associated with a given career path. The apprentice is taken under the wing of an individual who is recognized and an expert practitioner of the craft, and over a period of years is schooled in all aspects of the career, until the apprentice is able to go out on his or her own and function effectively.”*

(ii) Being an apprentice is about learning skills & practices ... to function effectively ... in a career path.

Dan’s doing that to be an electrician – sometimes he’s in class; other times he’s on the field – training / practicing skills with a supervisor (the expert practitioner) ... all to go out and function effectively in that career.

2. Today’s Scripture invites every one of us to CHOOSE to be an apprentice of Jesus – THE “recognized” and “expert practitioner” in the craft of kingdom living (true life / eternal life).

(i) Christian, do you think of yourself as an apprentice of Jesus?

In our tradition of Christendom, this is a somewhat UNDERDEVELOPED view of the Christian life.

- Our Christianity was birthed in an era which needed correct doctrinal understanding of how to get right with God (= justification).

15-1600's - through Luther & Calvin, we came into the clear Biblical teaching that we are right with God through Jesus alone – His righteousness & our faith in Him.

CHRIST FOR US is our only hope for life with God. Amen!

A. That's our STRONG SUIT – that's our "right hand" (if you're right-handed)!

(ii) But the Bible makes equally clear that Christianity is CHRIST IN US ... empowering & teaching us the skills of living a TRUE LIFE!

A. A Christian believes that the MOST MAGNIFICENT PERSON who has ever lived is Jesus. He lived the BEST LIFE possible in this age. So we want to live LIKE HIM.

> "Train me, Jesus ... teach me skills & practices of life!

> "How can I be your apprentice?"

3. MARK 1 shows how it begins: John the Baptist came, calling people to repentance. Verse 7 – And this was his message ...

***Read Mark 1:7-20***

## **II. INITIATION**

1. A Christian's apprenticeship BEGINS in the very same place as did Jesus' PUBLIC MINISTRY. ... UNDER WATER! This water (baptism) – that's its meaning.

(i) I was reading this week the story of Jonah.

Because he resisted God's call on his life, choosing instead to jump on a boat going the OPPOSITE way of God's will, when he was in the Mediterranean a storm hit that boat. (Things can get rocky in life when you run from God!)

The sailors aboard did all they could to try to ride it out, but the storm was too big. So they cast lots, wanting to find out if anyone on the boat in particular was responsible for the storm. The lot fell to Jonah. He realized that this perilous storm was on account of his running away from God. So they asked him, "What should we do?". He responded, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea!"

They didn't want to! They weren't sure that would solve things. They tried to row out of the storm – but couldn't. So the sailors took Jonah and prayed, "God, don't let us die for taking an innocent man's life." They weren't sure.

They threw him overboard ... and, after dropping under water, "the raging sea grew calm". Jonah's sin WAS behind it – and his death under water was JUST COMPENSATION for running away from God! It appeased the rage of the storm.

B. That's what these waters SIGNIFY: DEATH. *"The wages of sin is death."* And all of us at some time, in some way have run away from God's will.

That justly puts us UNDER-WATER.

= not a good place to be! - Have you ever, just goofin' around with others, been held under water in a pool or lake? IT'S SCARY! Lungs start to hurt, panic sets in. Death encroaches!

*The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) ... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2. That's the meaning of Jesus' baptism here.

People wonder – why was HE BAPTIZED? If baptism signifies the washing away of sin, and we confess that this man, Jesus, was without sin - Why'd He go under? (John the Baptist himself wondered in another account of this story – but Jesus insisted.)

THE ANSWER IS – to find you and me trapped under the water of death. His submersion prefigures the suffering & death he would die for the sins of those He came to save.

(i) Now Travis, you like to SNORKEL! (put on the mask, look for things under water) ... Jesus plunged the depths to look around & seek all who have run away from God ... to extend his reach to you ... so that you might put your hand in his and BE BROUGHT UP out of those waters of death.

Verse 10 – *Coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

- Father God loves his Son for that willingness to enter the deep water of suffering & death and rescue his people. He's a HERO!. Such courage & grace & obedience, Father God blesses by raising Him up FROM DEATH. This rising prefigures THE Rising – the Resurrection.

(ii) But what does Father God say to me who has taken hold of that outstretched hand of Jesus underwater ... and now am miraculously back on shore, like JONAH.

I hear these words that Jesus received: "You are my beloved, Son" – but what does God say to me? (MY FOLLY put me in such peril in the first place!)

### 3. GET THIS – IT'S THE SAME WORDS!

The Rescued of Jesus have this gift / this title / this status bestowed upon them in Him: *"You are my son / daughter, whom I love; with you I am well pleased!"* – as you trust in my Son

(i) And that's where an apprenticeship with Jesus BEGINS!

Romans 6:3-4 – *"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized in Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

... as an apprentice of Jesus ... with these words from God the everlasting foundation of that new life in Christ: "You are my son / daughter; whom I love; with you I am well pleased."  
= "I AM FOR YOU!"

### 4. What an initiation!

(Imagine, Dan, the head of the Labor Union in which you're apprenticing – not just your skills-trainer, but the powerful Head himself! – starting your apprenticeship off with those words: I AM FOR YOU. I AM WELL-PLEASSED WITH YOU. I LOVE YOU.)  
= security & motivation ... Let's go – Let's learn!

(i) Visiting with Dan & Patty this week, we discussed ministering the meaning of baptism to our children. BEDTIMES ARE THE BEST:

"Who loves you? ... how much? ... the most? ... the best?"

You had trouble at school? Your sister's not treating you right? The economy troubling? Your pension crumbling? ... Who loves you? ... how much? The most? The best?

HOW DO I KNOW? (see this spoon (date) -God sealed that forgiveness & love on you in Jesus! – "You are my Beloved Son, with You I am well pleased"). That's the FOUNDATION of life-apprenticeship with Jesus.

A. Build that FOUNDATION as deep as you can - cause you know the deeper and stronger the foundation, the bigger & higher can be the building of a life to the glory of God!!

### III. POWER

But not only did Jesus hear WORDS at His baptism, He also received POWER!

= the SAME power an apprentice receives to work with for his life under Jesus.

1. Verse 10 – *As Jesus was coming up out of the water, He saw heaven being “torn open” (hands) ... and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*

= the power of the Holy Spirit

(i) This is the same power that John the Baptist referred to back in v. 8 – *“I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

- Jesus is first given the power to CULTIVATE a true human life in the Spirit and, through Him, it is bestowed on His apprentices.

Verse 15 – It is the power of heaven on earth. *“The time has come”, He said. “The kingdom of God is near (at hand – in front of you / present / available). Repent (which is the way to declare DESIRE) and believe the good news.”*

A. Now again, Dan can tell us quite a bit about an apprenticeship that works with power! This past Wednesday he showed me the results – on his thumb – of MISHANDLING 280 volts of power! (Marks!)

- Like an electrical apprenticeship that teaches skills & practices for handling electrical power for the sake of good living (thank God for electricity – keeps my milk cold and makes my coffee hot!); Jesus trains us in the skills & practices of handling HOLY SPIRIT power for the sake of TRUE LIFE ... ETERNAL LIFE.

(That’s what his apprenticeship is for!)

2. The Holy Spirit is a POWER sealed in the heart of a Christian.

It is a power that is manifested in our soul. It percolates into our desires / thoughts / and will. That power is actually a PRESENCE – it’s personal. (The 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Triune God.) It’s better described as a “HE” than an “IT”.

That power is God’s reality in us manifesting in thoughts & desires of TRUTH & GRACE.

(i) So Elly-Mae is now 5 years old – and she & her sister, Gracie, (who she idolizes) have gone to a birthday party of kids who are mostly Gracie’s age. And at that party Gracie has given her the cold-shoulder and because the rest of the kids are mostly older, Elly-Mae gets left out the whole time. And she’s hurt and she’s hardened by that.

And at night, when you’re putting her to bed, she’s sad. The person she looks up to – her mentor – has mistreated her.

And you who discern her heart CHECK IN. What’s bothering you, honey? ... And you help her name the mistreatment (sin) she’s received. And then you pray with her The Lord’s Prayer – “forgive us our sins as we forgive others” ... AFTER WHICH Elly-Mae says (from the DEPTHS of her spirit): *I love Gracie. I forgive her.*

... and you say: “THAT’S GOD’S POWER IN YOU – the Holy Spirit of Jesus – truth.”

A. As you apprentice others in Jesus’ name, you help them NAME the power that is sealed within in her.

In baptism, God promises that to her – so we anticipate manifestations of the presence of the kingdom of heaven in her. We name it. We work with it. We develop that power – so that the Spirit gains more influence IN & THROUGH her, as she GROWS in Christ. God forbid she ever BURY that “talent” – as many baptized will find out they have done on the Day of Judgment.

3. That’s what an apprenticeship with Jesus INVOLVES. Look at the quote on the middle of your outline from Dallas Willard:

*Living as Jesus’ apprentice, I am learning from him how to lead my life in the Kingdom of the Heavens everywhere I am, in ever activity I engage in. There are 3 dimensions of this learning:*

*1. I am learning to DO the things Jesus explicitly said to do. (= not be governed by the spirits of anger, contempt or lust ... able to bless those who curse me – because I am one in whom the character of Christ increasingly dwells)*

*2. I am learning to conduct the usual activities of life in the character & power of Jesus. (At home, school, community, business, government – He shows us how to live – as a mother, father, banker, computer programmer, teacher, artist – in the Kingdom of the heavens.)*

*3. I am learning to exercise the power of the kingdom to minister good and defeat evil in all the connections of earthly existence. (Jesus went about doing good, healing those oppressed by the devil, further God’s shalom.)*

Character / conduct / healing – that’s the Christian life, as an apprentice of Jesus.

Christianity is totally misconceived when it's merely viewed as believing certain things about Jesus and then just waiting for heaven. No! It is apprenticeship in KINGDOM LIVING NOW!

#### IV. TRAINING

Now this takes training. Too often the Christian life is enjoined by TRYING. Sure, effort is needed – but TRAINING is more important than trying.

1. So Gracie, when she's 18 & goes off to college, and hears a speaker at chapel about caring for the DOWN & OUT of society. She's stirred – yea, I'm gonna do that.

Well, that can be like any of us deciding to go & run a marathon tomorrow. (It's a good thing to do – healthwise & all, but unless you train ... impossible. You'll last a while, then peter out.)

(i) = No different than caring for the down & out of society ... unless Gracie has been TRAINED to do that – by caring for the “down & out” at a birthday party; keeping an eye out for those who are “least of these” there ... and in the foyer here ... and in the classroom ... and in the nursing home.

When her eye & heart is trained for the marginalized, then she hears that speaker, signs up, and is READY to run that marathon!

But if she's just allowed / trained by default to live for her happiness, there's no way she's going to be able to gruel out a life of serving the outsider.

APPRENTICESHIP IS ABOUT TRAINING!

A. That's why children are included in the covenant. They're the most trainable. And it's why Jesus calls all of us to become like children in order to enter the Kingdom. We must be HUMBLE of heart, seeking to be trained.

2. Jesus' own training took him to the desert – immediately after the affirmation & anointing of his baptism! He went for there 40 days.

He went there to be STRENGTHENED in the presence of the Holy Spirit power in Him for His life in this age.

(i) He FASTED & faced temptations. There are disciplines of ABSTINENCE that we can practice as apprentices of Jesus in order to be strengthened in the presence of kingdom power in us. Next week I'll teach on them. The week after, I'll focus on disciplines of ENGAGEMENT.

= Fasting and FEASTING – Lent is a time to renew ourselves in the disciplines that strengthen the kingdom in us!

3. After the desert, Jesus then exercised the power of the kingdom by moving to people. He didn't stay away from others. He had grace & truth in Him to heal others. People were why He lived!

So ... verse 16 – He saw Simon & Andrew & said, *“Come & follow me ... and I'll make you fishers of men.”*

- Apprenticeship involves times of training & withdrawal, but ultimately it's for the sake of PEOPLE!

“Come & follow Me ... and I will make you fishers of men.”

## V. CONCLUSION

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND IF JESUS ASKED YOU INTO THAT APPRENTICESHIP?

TODAY HE DOES!

1. It's important to note that both Simon & Andrew, James & John LEFT their nets & their father behind to enter this apprenticeship.

Those details are included in the narrative to remind us that there is a COST to it. Jesus will not have mixed loyalties. It doesn't necessarily mean that you leave your job or family, but you no longer put them first in your life.

Jesus is first. His training. His will. That's the cost of apprenticeship.

(i) He didn't come to make life comfortable or easy.

It's a lot more comfortable and easy to go to birthday parties just for the sake of my happiness! ... and not be attentive to the Spirit and others.

But that broad / easy path, Jesus warned, leads to destruction. It feeds the exaltation of the “me” that destroys lives & families & civilizations.

(ii) His apprenticeship is about loving God & others in truth & grace by the power of the Spirit.

- It's a NARROW road, Jesus said – and only few walk ... but it leads to TRUE LIFE – everlasting life! JOY!

He knows. He lived it. He invites you to follow Him and become His apprentice. AMEN!