

Come After Me

Mark 1:14-28 | Jonathan Dodson | January 17, 2014

We're following the biography of Jesus, the Son of God, and this morning we will follow him from the Sea of Galilee into a synagogue in Capernaum. [map] As we follow him, we'll see how his message, the gospel, calls people to: come after him, create community, and cause a stir.

Come After Me

Jesus comes into Galilee beginning his public ministry by making a bold, intriguing announcement: [“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel”](#) (1:14) What does he mean? The gospel is the keystone of the Christian faith, which we often summarize as: [“The good and true story that Jesus has defeated sin, death and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new even us.”](#) Jesus says the kingdom of God has come, is at hand, near, close. The gospel is a *true story about a universal kingdom with cosmic impact*. It makes definite claims about truth, morality, and human purpose. Now, look at who is making these claims. Jesus, the person Mark has shown to be a cosmic King whose red carpet is mountains and valleys. And wherever there's a king, there's a kingdom. How do we know it here? You can feel the kingdom values; its laws and policies are manifested in society. [Democratic] Jesus is bringing God's values and laws. His claim is enormous. He's starting something *epic*. *What will it be like? Will he train a military force, march to Rome and topple Caesar? Enter the temple at Jerusalem and resume David's reign? People are on the edge of their seats. What does Jesus do next? He goes for a walk by the sea...where he sees some fishermen casting their nets, and commands them to come after him. The bait? “I'll make you fishers of men.”* Weird. This is the kingdom? A beachside stroll? Jesus does begin his kingdom on the shores of a lake, with *fishermen*. It is mundane, but this isn't a gospel for the poor. As modern people we read our own context into fishermen, assuming they are poor, working class people. We see them through the eyes of Marx & Nietzsche who read the gospels and concluded that Christianity is for the weak, the poor. But fishermen were not among the poor. In fact, they were among the few that constituted a kind of middle class in Palestine. Their start up costs were big, owning their own ships, nets, and as verse 20 shows us, they had servants to help them. Fishing was a lucrative industry. Simon, Andrew, James, and John were partners together and had come a long way, *and they're willing to walk away from it all. Men who had servants become servants. Men who fish become fishers of men*, an ironic phrase because they will join Jesus not in catching fish but rescuing men (change in vocation!). Jesus will call a tax collector, eschewed but well off, but also traffics among the poor and the marginalized of his society (lame, mentally ill, women). Jesus seems to move seamlessly between the rich and the poor, the elite and the marginalized. His order is of another world. His kingdom is coming with **countercultural values**. So what compelled these affluent fishermen to follow Jesus? [And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, \(Come after me\) and I will make you become fishers of men.”](#) 1:17 The translation here is unfortunate. He doesn't say “Follow me”; instead, he says [“Come after me.”](#) There's another word for follow. In Mark 8:34 Jesus says: [“If anyone desires to come after \(opiso\) me, let him deny himself take up his cross and follow \(akolouthelo\) me”](#) 8:34. The word translated follow in our verse means “after, back, or behind.” Jesus isn't saying follow me;

he's saying, "Get behind me. Come after me." What's the difference? When we think of *following* someone, it puts the emphasis on us. We choose to click the button to follow someone on Twitter. We make the effort to follow our an athlete's career. If you follow a band, you'll spend effort and money to read their interviews, watching videos, go to shows, and buy their merch. WE follow. But Jesus says come *after* ME. Where does he put the emphasis? **Not on our following but on his leading.** Jesus says come after me, get behind me. I'll pioneer, go ahead, make a way. Remember, **he's the God who goes before us**, the cosmic king. He's bringing the kingdom. If this is true, you'd be crazy not to get behind him. But that's what sin is, a lapse in sanity. *It's believing there are better causes and greater people to get behind.* Who we get behind makes or breaks us. If you get behind your career, you'll be consumed with success. The company making it or you making it in the company? This will *rule, break*, you. There's always more to do, higher to climb. I have a friend whose job description is to be "awesome." No pressure. When you're busy trying to be awesome, you get out in front of Jesus. When we do this, we are out in the open, vulnerable. We have to take that call, cut it short with the family, stay up late working, all while family, community, and Christ come after *you*. Why? Caus you're awesome! Who you get behind makes or breaks you. Moms do this too. Out in front of Jesus they praise or condemn themselves for a house well kept, children who behave, organic gluten free meals, positive influences, and gospel-centered parenting. It overwhelms; bends, breaks you. You're not meant to bear all that pressure; Jesus has gone ahead to bear it for you. He's the hope of your children, not their diet, clothes or influences. [] Jesus wants to make you, fisher of men, people who lead others to rescue. All other leaders will break you. Sure they can cut a path but they cant save. When we're behind the King, his awesomeness, we discover our true purpose—**living behind him, in him, for him. Our true vocation—fishing for men—getting people off the hook of judgment and onto the hope of Christ.** When we come *after* Jesus, we get a better King and countercultural values. Rehumanizing the office. Dignifying people. Carrying kids to Jesus in prayer. Leading them to a King who reorders their lives. They don't have to prove their awesome; they follow Awesome. You don't have to make it; just stay behind the King who orders this world.

Creates Community

Next, Jesus moves to Capernaum: "[They went into Capernaum...](#)" (21). Now he walks, not as a lone king but with a community, but it's a countercultural community. Remember the values (weak and strong, saving over success). Its countercultural because it encircles him, it takes his values. Today, whats passed off as community is really nothing more than a circle of friends. An insular, self-affirming circle of homogeneity. Everyone's alike. These circles of friends become closed off to other perspectives and see the world through their own cult of connectivity. The locus of authority, truth, and morality is determined by the circle. Media critic and documentarian Adam Curtis has suggested that since the explosion of information and celebrity culture, we now determine reality based on our own experiences with our **circle of friends**. Our peers possess more authority than government, history, reason, or god. For example, what you do on the weekends, with your time, is primarily the result of friendship influences, not deep values. Your views on sexuality, politics, and marijuana are shaped more by your circle than by a transcendent authority. If you're Christian, you may consume immoral media or refuse to sacrifice your time and money for others because, well, your circle of Christian friends has settled for the

less. They're not fishers of men; they're men who fish, consumers not disciples. Are you part of the Jesus circle, the countercultural community? Look at your values, look at your community. Is **your morality, your commitment, your service, your very identity is shaped more by your circle of friends than by the kingdom of Christ**. You say you come after Christ, but you really hide behind your friends. It's hard. There's a lot of social pressure. And if we don't have a bigger story to shape our lives, a more universal narrative to reorder our world, then why not go with the ones you trust and admire. Why not fall in line with them? So we dig in locally, disbelieving universal stories, and create our own narrow-minded versions of reality. But Jesus doesn't create a circle of friends; he creates a kingdom community. The disciples are from all kinds of vocations—fishing, taxes, etc, different places, but the one thing that holds them together is Jesus and his gospel message. It not just a new community; it's a new family. He calls them out of a family (they left their father) and into a new family. **"Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."** Do you bear the family resemblance, getting behind Jesus as opposed to someone else? Some of you are, and you need to disciple those who aren't. Those who aren't, need to seek out those who are. A circle forms around Jesus, not around one another. Different people do life together as a witness to the world of a better authority, morality, and truth. Not our friends; it's a new countercultural family that comes after Jesus.

Causing a Stir

We see Jesus take his community into the heart of Jewish religion, into a synagogue, where he teaches. It was customary to let rabbis like Jesus teach. We're told **"they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."** This embodied divine authority, who moves seamlessly between classes, religious and irreligious, arouses astonishment. His teaching is more impressive, not because of his hook, delivery or charisma, but because authority accompanies it. He carries the message like its true, likes it transcends boundaries. Not just social boundaries, spiritual boundaries. We're told a man with an unclean spirit cries out in the gathering. Jewish speak for demon possessed. Secular speak might say he was mentally deranged, but **the demon is more clearheaded than anyone in the room: What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.** Evil trembles in his presence. They know his kingdom will upset their cause. Jesus commands the demon to be silent and to depart. Convulsing the man cries out and the spirit leaves. There's friction and there's faith when the kingdom comes. The Holy one of God establishes **authority**—evil bows. Overthrows conventional **morality**, which blamed the man for being unclean, who was avoided at all costs. How does Jesus respond? He delivers him, fishes for him, cleans him. [Sarah] How people respond? In awe, yes, but they also pay attention to his teaching. **And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."** They recognize his authority and puzzle over his **truth**. They can't just pass over Jesus. Their encounter with the king of a universal kingdom was so riveting, so visceral, and teaching so countercultural they had to stop and *think about it*. The word means to seek, inquire. It generated so much intrigue that they inquired after *one another*. Jesus creates another circle, a circle of seekers. Jesus creates concentric circles. He can't be

brushed off as a nice savior or moral philosopher. He's claimed to bring the kingdom of God. When people get around Jesus they have to respond. His authority reverses the order of things. **The insane, sane. The marginalized to the center. Rich men who fish become poor fishers of men.** And if you'll get behind him, if you'll come after him, you'll find a better vocation (making disciples) and greater authority than your friends. You'll find Jesus is a restorer of broken, a comforter of the mourning, the king of creation. He's the God who goes for a walk by the Sea and calls your name, come after me. Will you abandon lesser leaders, get behind Jesus, in countercultural community, and cause a stir?