

Jesus Calls The Twelve

Mark 1:1-3:35

Key Verses 3:13-14

“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach...”

Hello, Everyone! Welcome to Our Fourth GLEF 2021! GLEF stands for Global Leadership Empowerment Forum. It is simply not a conference or for casual attendees but for those who want to learn the leadership of Jesus seriously. The theme of our GLE Forum is Jesus’ leadership. For this, We are going to study Mark’s gospel in 5 Lessons. Let’s learn about Jesus’ divine authority and leadership in this first message. This message covers the first 3 chapters of Mark’s gospel.

Part I. The Beginning Of the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah

Mark Chapter 1:1 starts with ‘This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.’ Why is the gospel, the good news? At the beginning, God has created paradise. However, man disobeyed God’s commandment, and ever since then, sin came into the world and poisoned our mind and spirit. We became fearful of what happens after death and lost our position as stewards of God’s creation. In this way, we also lost the absolute truth and everything started to become relative. ‘Will you really die if you eat from the tree in the middle of the garden?’ Will we really have eternal life or is this life everything there is?

I didn’t know there were so many questions that could create such heavy doubts in every decision we make and how we live our lives. It seems easy to question our existence, fall into doubts, and be lost. Where is the good news in a world full of doubts? The story of Jesus is the good news prepared for us in God’s redemptive plan. Isaiah had prophesied 700 years ago about Jesus’ coming and it was prepared and announced by John the Baptist. This gospel of Jesus is not a man made story, but it is how God has fulfilled what he had promised throughout history. This good news proves that our God is faithful and powerful enough to keep what he had promised. This is a very important fact since people do not want to acknowledge the truth and history of Jesus Christ.

Then, how did Jesus begin his ministry? Look at verses 9-13. “At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he 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.” The first important thing that happens to Christ is His baptism. This is His Coronation as the new King from heaven. The Father says, “you are my son whom I love. With you, I am well pleased.” The Holy Spirit descends, settles upon Him, and empowers Him. He is now granted divine authority.

Jesus’ divine Authority has been clearly revealed.–First in His temptation in the desert for 40 days, His authority over Satan becomes clear. Satan had led all mankind into sin and death through temptation. But Jesus overcame its temptations by the word of God. He begins the ministry with a clear victory over the devil.

Second, in his healing the sick and the demon-possessed, His authority over impure spirits and sicknesses is clear. When Jesus commanded the impure spirit, “Be quiet. Come out of him,”

it could not but obey Jesus. When Jesus took the hand of Peter's mother in law, the fever left her. When Jesus touched a man with leprosy and commanded "Be clean," Immediately, the leprosy left him and he was cleaned. Jesus, the Son of God, has authority over impure spirits and even the sicknesses.

Third, in His preaching of the gospel, His authority over sin becomes clear. One paralyzed man was brought to Jesus. Rather than healing his paralysis, Jesus declared the forgiveness of sins, saying "Son, your sins are forgiven." Some teachers of the law accused him as a blasphemer. "He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Then, Jesus demonstrated his authority as the son of God by healing the paralyzed man. "I want you to know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Jesus, the son of God, has authority to forgive sins.

Part II. Jesus Called His Disciples

Let us read verses 1:16-18: "But as he walked along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, throwing their nets into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Come, Follow me; I will send you out to fish for people."(I will make you fishers of men! -KJV) They immediately left their nets and followed him." A little later, Jesus also saw James and John in the boat with their father Zebedee mending their nets, and called them to follow him as well. They immediately followed Jesus, leaving everything behind. What a surprise! When they recognized God's hope for them, they made a decision to follow Jesus right away.

It is very difficult to challenge someone to make a big life decision because it means that you are the one who has to take responsibility for their life from now on. However, Jesus believed that God would change the world through them. Indeed, the course of history was changed through Peter, John, James, and other disciples. Immediately at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus called these disciples as fishers of men. His selection amazes us. Shouldn't he appoint the best Pharisee graduates from the University of Galilee, young, highly educated, and great ivy league family background? However, according to some research that I have done, the Sea of Galilee was actually a really busy fishing place with a great demand for the highest quality of fish. There were at least sixteen harbors on that small lake. Fish was the primary meat in the Mediterranean world. There was a huge market for fish and it is very likely that they sold their fish all over the Mediterranean. They weren't day laborers, these men had a legitimate food business and were exporters of their fish as well. The point is that they weren't poor and had nothing to leave behind. They had families, businesses and their lifestyle.

Jesus called them to follow him and did it in an extreme way. He basically called them to abandon absolutely everything. In Mark 8:34 it says, "Whoever wants to be my disciples must deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow me." What is Jesus saying to them? Drop your family business. Drop your life and join me, let me train you to be a shepherd, a Bible teacher, or a disciple maker. Here Jesus established the means by in which the Kingdom of God will advance: Jesus called his disciples to be disciple makers through 1:1 Bible Study and Disciple making ministry.

In chapter 2, he saw Levi, the son of Alpheus, sitting at the customs and called upon him, "Follow me" Levi was a tax collector. Tax collectors were viewed as the lowest of the low, traitors, unclean outcasts. They couldn't go to the synagogues or temples but were like lepers. You were

to avoid them at all costs because associating with them made you fall into that category of sinners. However, Jesus called such a man, the worst of the worst, the lowest of the low, to be an official disciple, even to be listed among the apostles, not only a learner, but proclaimer of the gospel of Jesus.

This year, God called five men of faith from New Jersey UBF – Danny, Noah Yoo, Abraham and Sam Hong, and me – to study IBS and to grow to be a messenger. However, in many ways, we are like fishermen or tax collectors - we are primarily only concern about our own business and selfish achievements. Thank God for his Hope for us to be “men of God” for this generation. Jesus is calling us “Come, follow me! I will make you fishers of man!” His calling for a sinner like me is truly amazing grace. Preparing this message had been a great challenge to me. But Here I am! Thank God for my wife’s prayer, my mother’s prayer, my brother (Abraham, Sam, Noah, Daniel)’s prayer for me. Through them, I realize a little about Jesus’ hope and vision for me; How much God loves and desires for me to repent of my sins and be a spiritual man of God; be a bible teacher for sinners like me.

This is a small step for me to learn Jesus’ hope for all lost sinners. Eventually, God will raise us up as powerful servants of God so that the course of history may be altered through us as well. How can I trust his promises? Jesus is the Son of God who has authority to forgive sin, The son of God who can heal the sick and restore them as the kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This is his promise. All I need to do is to get up and follow him. When I follow him, God will surely make me a shepherd for 5000 Rutgers campus students.

Part III. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath

Let us read verse 1:21. “They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.” It says Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. After the captivity of Babylon, they didn’t have a temple since it was destroyed. However, they wanted to meet to study the bible The word synagogue simply meant to come together, it only took ten men to establish a synagogue. There were many towns and villages in Galilee and they each had synagogues. These synagogues provided a ready-made opportunity for Jesus to go from place to place, town to town, neighborhood to neighborhood and teach and preach the gospel message.

When Jesus began to teach the word of God, people were amazed at his teaching since his word had power and authority. Jesus’ teaching had absolute power and authority because Jesus had absolute faith that God’s word had the power to change anybody. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is alive and active, sharper than a double-edged sword. It penetrates even to divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” It is so powerful it can penetrate our soul and spirit and transform us, changing the thoughts and attitude of the heart.

In Chapter 1:29-34, Jesus heals Simon’s mother in law and many others who were sick with various diseases. In chapter 1:40-45, Jesus heals a man with leprosy telling the man not to tell anyone of his healing, yet he went and spread the news freely that he was healed, drawing many people to him. In chapter 3:1-6, Jesus had healed a man with a shriveled hand. To heal him, Jesus risked his life since it was on the Sabbath. The religious leaders were watching Jesus. But Jesus

healed the man right in front of them, saying “Which is lawful on the Sabbath; to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill? This threw the Jewish leaders into an outrage. Since Jesus did heal the man, they should have acknowledged or accepted that Jesus in fact was the Son of God and had the right to heal on the Sabbath.

Look at 2:18-21. The Pharisees criticized Jesus’ disciples for not fasting as much as they did. Jesus defended his disciples by telling that the disciples were the guests of the bridegroom. Look at 2:23-28. Again, the Pharisees accused the disciples for being law breakers. To the Pharisees, the disciples were working on the Sabbath. Picking the heads of grain, and rubbing, threshing, and winnowing all counted as different forms of work. But, Jesus defended his disciples by telling the story of King David. In a time of need, David took and ate the consecrated bread only for priests which was unlawful on the Sabbath. God’s law had a purpose to save people, not to kill them. However, the Pharisees used the law to oppress the people by creating more laws on top of the laws, regulations and more violations.

What was worse, they even waited in the synagogue to see if he would heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. Eventually, they became creative in different ways to kill Jesus. How has this happened to the religious leaders who were supposed to be the shepherds of their generation? The Pharisees loaded heavy burdens on people but never lifted a finger to help them carry them. Under the Pharisees, the people could never be free from the burden of their own guilt and lack of achievement.

Here, Jesus exposed the spiritual pride of the Pharisees. In the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthews 5-7, Jesus went on a long list of invisible sins and revealed the sins and ugliness of their heart. Jesus challenged them by saying if you aren’t transformed by forgiveness of sins, there is nothing you can do to deal with the wretchedness of your heart. Pride is the most satisfying of all sins. Why did the Pharisees hate Jesus? It was because Jesus attacked them at the point of their spiritual pride. It was because the Sabbath was their time to enforce their self-righteous proud system of laws and regulations. Jesus had shined light to their darkness, saying “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So Son of man is the Lord of the Sabbath”, “Which one is lawful on the Sabbath; to do good or to do evil; to save life or to kill?”

Jesus is the light of the world and shined his light on every man. But the Pharisees loved their darkness because it fulfilled their pride and they hated the light of the truth. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus is the Lord who defends his disciples. Jesus is the Lord who saved the weak and the poor. Jesus is the Lord who fights for the truth; fight against the evil.

Part IV, Jesus Calls The Twelve Apostles

With the coming of the Messiah came a new leadership. The previous leadership of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and rabbis were false teachers who misrepresented and misinterpreted the Old Testament. The previous leadership were replaced by the most unlikely group of 12 guys, none of whom came from the religious world of that time. This shows that God wasn’t pleased with the leadership of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. When many people came to him from everywhere, Jesus went up on a mountainside to pray.

Look at verse 13-15. “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed Twelve that they might be with him and that he might send

them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.” After much prayer, Jesus called 12 among the disciples and appointed them as apostles. These 12 had no special attributes, they were the most ordinary. It shows that God can use anybody even for such a tremendous mission. He even used me to share this message against all odds. Isn't 12 too small to help the world? The work of God is not about quantities; but qualities.

God raised one man, Abraham to be a blessing for all nations. God's work is not only to serve and help great numbers of people, but also to raise a few leaders through intensive discipleship training and then serve the multitude of people. UBF ministry is a discipleship ministry that raises a few leaders who can be a shepherd for hundreds of God's flock; GLEF Forum is a discipleship training program. It is my prayer that the GLEF Forum can be used to obey God's great commission commandment, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel”!

The purpose of appointing Twelve is very clear. Look at verses 14-15 again. “He appointed Twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.” He appointed 12 for two reasons; so they would be with Him, and then He could send them out to preach. Now, if they were going to be sent out to preach, first they had to be with Him to be trained. And these 12 men are the hope of the spread of the Gospel. They were the foundation of the Church, the first ones to fulfill the Great Commission. They were the new leaders of the new and true Israel, divinely selected, approved representatives of Christ to preach the new and true covenant of salvation by grace through faith in Christ which alone brings salvation and eternal life.

I pray that second generations can reassess the effect of the word of God in their lives starting from myself. I am surprised at how much I truly lack faith in the word of God and question my ability to preach the gospel to others. When I look back at my life of faith, at crucial times, I demonstrate my faith but I fail to teach the word of God to others. But I made a decision to start preaching the gospel and obey God's great commission commandment. Up till now I studied the bible to learn wisdom and Jesus. I dug the bible trying to increase my faith for my own personal development and growth but in the end it was all for my selfish goals. Under Jesus' new leadership, he challenges me to serve others, deny myself, accept the salvation by grace message and preach the gospel of Jesus to the ends of the earth. My decision begins with this small step to complete this message and to recommit myself to his Great Commission Commandment.

Today we learn about the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus began His work by preaching the Word of God, by healing the sick and driving out demons, also by calling the disciples and appointing twelve of them as apostles. Most of all, Jesus led such hopeless sinners to be his disciples by giving his life sacrificially, so that they may be a leader with the word of truth; with the love of God he gave; with God's hope for sinners, and the compassion for the lost. Jesus bore with them with great patience and love. Jesus never gave up challenging, rebuking, and teaching the word of truth; he never stopped loving them by sharing his very life with them. Jesus firmly believed that they would be a good shepherd like himself. May God bless GLEF to raise and appoint the disciples of Jesus.

One Word: Come, Follow Jesus. He will make you fishers of men.

