

Jesus' New World Order

Message 2

Beginning of the New World Order

Mark 1:16-39

Jesus the King

If God made you king of the world, what would you do? Suppose you had power to do anything you wanted, where would you start? Provide food for everyone? Establish peace everywhere? Heal all broken homes? Eradicate disease? Give everyone an iPhone? Make learning easy? Or would you focus your attentions on yourself, accumulating vast wealth and possessions, and settling all scores with any who irritate you? We can dream of lots of ways to improve mankind's condition, some serious and some frivolous. The fascinating thing about this question is that once there really *was* a man with this kind of power.

Mark begins his gospel with the observation in verse one that Jesus was the Son of God. He immediately introduces Him as the one to follow John the Baptist in fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. According to Malachi, God Himself follows the preparatory messenger. Then Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is at hand. If this was the case, that *must* mean that Jesus is a King. Everything points to the fact that Jesus came to earth with all the power of God. Tonight we are going to see what he did with that power.

At the end of last week's lesson we saw the first thing Jesus did, which is also the most surprising – He preached. This is particularly perplexing to Americans. We have little patience with talk. A nation is not built by words, but by strong arms, guns, and determination. Philosophers did not span the continent or reach into space. Our heroes are men of action – the cowboys, soldiers and entrepreneurs who made America great. But when Jesus began to establish His Kingdom, He preached. Why is that? Because it is effective, obviously. So unless we take Jesus for a fool, it is clear that we Americans have some serious flaws in our understanding of how to establish a Kingdom.

Now, we are not saying here that just any old talk will make a big difference in this world. Jesus' preaching involved a very particular message – the gospel. We saw the gospel in capsule form in verse 15, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." Of course, this whole book is also the gospel, in its expanded form. And as we proceed throughout the semester, we will see the gospel fully unfold before us. And if Jesus is right, if the preaching of the gospel is the key to establishing His Kingdom, then our studies this semester will have a powerful, transforming effect on us, just as the gospel did on the first disciples who heard it.

Authority Over Men

And what an effect it had! Jesus' second action was to call some men to follow Him. That Jesus should have followers is not by itself so amazing. It was common in those days, both among the Jews and the Greeks, for young men to attach themselves to a respected teacher. They did not go to class for several hours each day – all of life was a class. The rabbis and philosophers were surrounded by pupils who lived with them. They served their master and listened to his teaching, hoping to attain wisdom, maybe even the secret of life! What was unusual, however, was that Jesus *called* His disciples and that they immediately followed. It was not their idea initially. They did not ask to be Jesus' disciples, and neither did Jesus *ask* them. He *commanded* them to follow. This whole scene seems entirely wrong.

Furthermore, these were mere fishermen. Ordinarily one would need to undergo a significant period of study before one would be accepted as a disciple by an important rabbi. One second century Christian,

Justin Martyr, tells about his search for truth and how he was thrown out of one school because he did not know geometry. Now, fishermen were not at the bottom of the social ladder. They owned boats and employed servants. Still, they do not fit the profile of a disciple.

Nevertheless, they came. Here we see Jesus' divine authority at work. Without hesitation, without comment, they rise up out of their boats, abandon their father, the hired servants, and the morning's catch, and obey Jesus' command. What possible use could Jesus have for a bunch of rugged fishermen? We scratch our heads and try to think of an official position for them in a Kingdom – and are left puzzled.

Authority Over Teaching

What would you do with such a ragged team of raw recruits? Retreat to the countryside for some intensive training? Try to develop some minimal competency before you expose yourself to the challenges ahead? How about just charging right into the heat of the battle? Just after he called His disciples to follow Him, Jesus began teaching in the local synagogue. To a certain extent this was what one might expect. After all, he *was* a rabbi, and that is what rabbis did. The shocking part, however, was the way He conducted Himself – with authority. Rather than quoting ancient commentators, relying on the opinions of others as the other rabbis did, Jesus spoke as if He knew the definitive meaning of the scriptures. No doubt His teaching also made clear sense and gripped the congregation's attention. Otherwise they would not have bothered to listen to Him. You probably are aware that there are passages of scripture which are difficult to understand. Even today pastors and teachers disagree over the meaning of these. I often long for the final, authoritative answer to all the puzzles in the Bible, and anyone who provides help has my rapt attention and admiration. Such was the case with Jesus in His teaching. The congregation was spellbound, glued to their seats, thrilled with His teaching.

But right in the middle of this great sermon a cry rang out. "Let us alone! We aren't bothering you, Jesus. Are you trying to destroy us? We know who you are. Don't try to pretend to be a carpenter. You are the Messiah!"

Authority Over Demons

Every age seeks to come to terms with the evil in this world. During most of the 20th century it was fashionable to believe that evil spirits do not exist. Enlightened people fancied that demons were a product of the imagination in primitive cultures. Satan was considered a fiction by many. Now, however, we deal with evil, not by denial, but by accommodation. In our zeal to tolerate everything, we tolerate evil as well. Witchcraft is not seen as a primitive practice used by the unenlightened, but as an acceptable alternative lifestyle, or better. *Sabrina, The Teenage Witch* and *Charmed* are two recent TV shows, and there are the Harry Potter films which portray witchcraft as fun and beneficial. Well, considering the society in which we live, perhaps witchcraft *ought* to be accepted. It is little worse than some of the other evils in our midst. But there is absolutely no place for evil spirits in Jesus' Kingdom, as this passage makes clear.

If the world tends to deny or accommodate demons, the church sometimes gives them too much credit. It is true, as other scripture shows, that demons have superhuman power. Even in this passage we can see that the demon-possessed man was powerless to control his own actions. Such a force is terrifying. But we have nothing to fear, for the terrifying power of the demon is nothing beside the power of Jesus. Jesus does not even lift a finger. He simply speaks, and the demon immediately left the man. No incantations, no sacrifices, no prayers, no appeal to God, just His own word. Without a doubt, Jesus demonstrates power far greater than anything man can conceive. It is no wonder the congregation was utterly amazed.

Authority Over Disease

Although Capernaum was a significant port on the Sea of Galilee, that sea is really just a big lake

and Capernaum was not a large city. Even as Jesus and His disciples left the synagogue and went to Peter's house, word was spreading all over town that incredible miracles were happening. The rumor mill was further agitated by Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. He did not just set her on the path to recovery – her healing was so complete that she got up and served dinner to everyone. By evening the place was mobbed. From all over town streamed the people, hundreds or thousands thronging the streets and shoving to the door. And Jesus worked miracles. It was as if the exorcism in the synagogue and the healing of Peter's mother-in-law were just a warm-up. Late into the night Jesus worked, ministering to the people of Capernaum – people worn out with sickness and disease, people enslaved by demonic powers, people without hope of ever finding relief were transformed by the power of Jesus. The whole city was being renewed.

The Ultimate Authority

Hardly had Jesus begun his ministry than He experienced phenomenal success. By every measure, He was succeeding in establishing His Kingdom. All that was necessary was to continue, right? If it ain't broke, don't fix it, that's the American way. The people are responsive, the city is being revived, why risk some new approach? But Jesus got up in the morning and just walked away from the success in Capernaum. He did something really ineffective. He went out to pray. When He could have been healing more sick people, He was wasting His time talking to God. What sort of priority is that? How can you establish a Kingdom if the King keeps running off to discuss matters with His father? Not at all, unless your father happens to be God.

The point here is that it is God's Kingdom, and He gets to decide how it should be built. From Jesus' next move, we can see that God's plan was for Him to leave Capernaum and preach in all the towns of Galilee. *Our* wisdom might have been to establish a strong base, but God sent Jesus with the good news of salvation to all the Jews. No one shall be left out – all shall hear. *Our* plan might have been to emphasize healing and other “practical” types of ministry, but God's plan focused on preaching. In fact, preaching has been central in all these situations. Everything Jesus did involved preaching. Clearly, preaching has a power that we commonly do not recognize. How, then, should one know to proceed in building God's Kingdom? Obviously, by checking in with the supreme Commander.

The first President Bush was known for his desire to establish a “New World Order”. The Cold War was over, communism was thoroughly discredited as an ideology, and its chief proponents were rapidly transforming themselves into market economies. The world will *definitely* be a different place in the 21st century, and President Bush hoped to help determine what that difference will be. The Gulf War was a prime opportunity to demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of worldwide cooperation for the common good, and Bush masterfully coordinated the key players. But now that we are into the new century, Bush I is out of office, the Middle East is still a threatening, dangerous place, and no one talks any more of his New World Order. But Jesus lived 2,000 years ago, and His influence is felt daily. If anyone truly established a New World Order, it was He. He never carried a weapon or negotiated with kings and diplomats, yet He did more to change the world than all the weapons and diplomats combined. Our world is totally different than the ancient world, and it is all due to the effects of Jesus' ministry.

Conclusions

The passage tonight gives an overview of all the different aspects of Jesus' ministry. We saw preaching, healing, casting out demons, and calling men to follow Him. By doing these things for three years He established a New World Order. The rest of Mark's gospel will expand this ministry, but for now there are several conclusions we can draw.

First, Jesus has ultimate authority. Nothing can stand against His will. When He wished to cast out

a demon, He merely spoke His will. When He wished to heal Peter's mother-in-law, he simply lifted her out of bed. When He sought disciples, He just called to them, and they came. Furthermore, these were no half-baked acts. The healing, the calling, the casting out the demon were total and instantaneous. Jesus has total and absolute authority.

Second, Jesus loves people. With all the power He had, why else would He put up with a bunch of uncouth fishermen as disciples? What could motivate his late night vigil at Peter's house, but the desire to heal the sick. Why tramp all over Galilee except to bring the good news of salvation to all the Jews? Indeed, why leave heaven at all unless Jesus loved us and came to save us? Can you see from this passage that Jesus loves you with a deep and amazing love?

Third, Jesus has an important place for people in His Kingdom. Again, He did not need a bunch of fishermen to do His work. We see in today's passage that Jesus did quite well on His own. But He desires to use people in His work. He loves us and wants us there with Him. Now, if He could take fishermen and make preachers out of them, He can take you and use you in some important way, too.

Sometimes we get the idea that Jesus is all love. But his love would be useless without His authority. It would do us no good if Jesus loved us, but was unable to rescue us from demons, heal our diseases, and ultimately to save us. However, if Jesus has the authority to save, He also has the authority to command. No less than the disciples, Jesus calls you today, and He expects obedience.

We are a rebellious race. We hate authority and resist restrictions. Furthermore, our experience teaches us that authority can be abusive and self-seeking. That is why these stories about Jesus are so critical, for if He were self-seeking, His authority would be unbearable. But, on the other hand, if He loves us and always does what is good for us, His authority is our salvation. Only the one with authority over men, demons, and disease can save us from men, demons, and disease. And only the Holy One of Israel can save sinners from their sin.

The disciples did not go seeking Jesus, He came to them. This is how it works with all of us. We do not go looking for Jesus, to obey Him. We look for help from our problems, and often try to enlist Jesus to our aid. But He is calling you instead to *follow* Him. There is safety from evil, deliverance from disease, and friendship with God in His Kingdom, His New World Order, but outside there is fear, slavery, and death. It is not so much a matter of getting Jesus into your life, but of getting *you* into Jesus' Kingdom. Jesus is calling you today to follow Him. This is the gospel. Do you believe it?

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