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Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome. If you're new or visiting with us, we're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community, and as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word. We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. We're still in chapter 1. We're going to be starting at verse 16 this morning, and you'll remember the Gospel of Mark tells the story of Jesus in His life and His death and His resurrection, and as I've been telling you, when we talk about Jesus, we're not talking about an idea, an abstraction, a theory. We're not talking about a mythological figure, but instead we're talking about a real man who lived in real time and real space, and in fact still lives today. So I've been giving you these facts to kind of help us wrap our heads around the fact of Jesus' humanity. I told you last week that one of Jesus' brothers, Judas, not the same as Judas

Iscairiot, we have an ancient record that tells us about Judas' grandchildren, so these would have been Jesus' grandnephews, who held the family farm in Nazareth, which makes us believe most likely Jesus' family had a farm, which means Jesus was probably, most likely did some farming. Now if you're familiar, you know that's not the only thing that Jesus did. Jesus, like many of us, needed to get up and go to work so that He could support Himself. And if you were around back in the 90s, you might remember there was this thing for a while where people would have these bumper stickers that said, my boss is a Jewish carpenter. Now it's wrong on multiple levels. First of all, Jesus is seated at the right hand of God in heaven, so He's not a carpenter anymore. But secondly, the word in Greek is tekton, which could mean carpenter. It could also mean that Jesus worked with stone in some way.

So maybe Jesus was a carpenter, maybe He worked with stone, maybe He did both. The options are open. What we do know is probably likely, if Jesus did those things, He had a really strong grip. Now the Bible doesn't tell us that, but we can guess, based on that occupation, Jesus' grip strength was really good. So if you shook Jesus' hand, it would be an experience. If you want to know what a strong grip is like, just find Tom Gearing after the service today, and you can shake his hand, and then you'll know, okay? So Jesus, real person, real time, and real space. And we've been asking these two questions.

We've been asking, who is Jesus, and how do we respond to Him? And we started in Mark chapter 1, verses 1 through 8, we saw that Jesus is the physician. So what He says in chapter 2, verse 17, is true. Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came to call, not to call the righteous, but sinners. So remember, we talked about the fact that need is the price of admission. Then we looked at verses 9 through 11, we saw that Jesus is both the Psalm 2 king and Isaiah's suffering servant. He is so great that the heavens rip open for God to make a pronouncement about Him.

He's so humble that He receives baptism from John the Baptist, who says He's not worthy to untie Jesus' sandals. Jesus, when He receives baptism, stands in the place of sinners. And then in verses 13 and 14, we saw that Jesus is the perfect one. He succeeds, He obeys, where we fail, we disobey.

[3 : 29] Finally, last week, we looked at the kingdom of God, which is coming. We saw the kingdom is here in part, it is not here in full. The kingdom is a reign more than a realm, a power more than a place.

We're going to continue asking those two questions this morning. Who is Jesus? How do we respond to Him? And as we come to these verses, we're finally going to see Jesus calling His first disciples. We're still in our introduction to the Gospel of Mark, but we're going to get more directly at this question of how we respond to Him, because these disciples are going to model it for us. And so I invite you to turn now in your Bible, or in your worship guide, or in your phone. We're on Mark chapter 1, starting at verse 16. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word. God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. And it is sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. And so that's why we read it now, starting at verse 16.

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed Him. And going on a little farther, He saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who were in their boat, mending the nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and followed Him.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in Heaven, we thank You again for another Sunday where we come to meet with You and to hear from You clearly in Your Word. And we ask that You would do that this morning, that You would speak clearly to us in words that we can understand, and that You would open our eyes, You'd unstop our ears, You'd soften our hearts, and You'd clear our minds, that we would be able to hear and see and understand and believe everything that You have written for us in Your Word.

We thank You that we don't have to earn these things, and we certainly don't deserve them, but instead we simply ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. This has been going on for a while. I can't remember how many years, but recently it seems like it's happened more frequently that when I buy something online, I have to fill out this form at the bottom that says, or ask the question, how did you hear about us? And of course, right, there's a lot of options.

[6 : 04] You could have heard about them from a friend. That's the easiest one. Maybe it's from a referral. If they run ads in the same magazine over and over, they'll list that magazine's name. If they run a TV commercial, they'll list that as well, because they want to know what are the most effective methods that we're using.

How are we reaching people? How are they finding out about their product to the point that they're actually purchasing our product? They're giving us their credit card number. I bring that up because I want you to think about this question.

How did you first hear about Jesus? How did you first come to know about Jesus? If you're a Christian, how, when did you begin to follow Jesus?

Where were you at when you followed Jesus? Where were you at geographically? Where were you at stage of life? Where were you at in your lifestyle?

Where were you when Jesus came to your life? Now, there might be a variety of answers to that one as well, just like there is for things that you purchased.

[7 : 16] Maybe you heard about Jesus from a friend. Maybe you grew up in a family where you were taught about Jesus. Maybe you saw something in a movie. Maybe you read something in a book. There's a variety of answers. Maybe you're like me sometimes when you fill out these forms and you think, I can't even remember.

Remember, I've known about this product for so long. There's a variety of options. I'm not sure which one is correct. Brothers and sisters, I'm here to tell you all of those things are secondary causes.

Yes, you may have heard about Jesus from a friend. You may have learned about him in church. You may have been taught about him from your mother or your father. That is not primarily how you know about Jesus, though.

Those are means, not the cause. You know about Jesus because he saw you. You know about Jesus because he saw you.

The key to this passage this morning is the repetition of the words like it is many times when we come to God's word. I want you to look with me here first at verse 16 and then verse 19.

[8 : 15] Jesus is on the move. Remember, he has moved from the desert to Galilee, which is in northwest Israel. Verse 16, he's passing alongside the Sea of Galilee. He saw Simon and Andrew.

Then the pattern is repeated in verse 19. And going on a little farther, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother.

Risk of stating the obvious, Jesus saw them. They did not see him. Simon, Andrew, James, and John were not seeking Jesus out.

Jesus was seeking them out. Jesus' followers ultimately do not choose him. Jesus chooses his followers.

Brothers and sisters, the same is true for you as well. If you're a Christian and you're here this morning, why are you here? Ultimately, you are here because Jesus saw you. You are here because Jesus chose you.

[9 : 19] Yes, there might be all kinds of secondary means that he used to do that. And the ultimate reason is because he decided that you were going to be here this morning on August 22nd at our worship service starting at 1030 a.m.

It was Jesus' idea that you were going to be sitting where you're sitting right now, listening to this passage in Mark 1, verses 16 through 20. Jesus saw Simon and Andrew and James and John. Jesus saw you. Jesus pursues. That is the whole point of the incarnation. The whole point of the incarnation is that Jesus came down to us.

He didn't wait for us to call him. He didn't wait for us to invite him. He decided to come down into this world to be with us. You did not see Jesus.

You did not invite him. Jesus saw you. He called you. That is how needy you are. Remember, we talked Mark 1, verses 1 through 8.

[10 : 23] Need is the price of admission to the gospel of Mark. We are so needy, we needed Jesus to come and find him. We couldn't even find him on our own.

Now, you might be thinking, no, I found Jesus. I watched a bunch of YouTube videos about different world philosophies, and I finally came to the conclusion that Jesus was the Son of God. That's great. You know why you did that?

Because Jesus saw you. Jesus used those means to find you. Jesus saw you, no matter who you are, whether you're a Christian or not. If you are a Christian, wherever you became a Christian, whatever the answer to the question is for you, when Jesus found you, when you heard about him, it's because Jesus saw you.

He saw you when you were consumed only with worldly success and title. Jesus saw you when you were sitting in the waiting room at Planned Parenthood. Jesus saw you when you were too scared to ask for help, thinking no one would want to know you if they knew the truth.

Jesus saw you when you were living for your own pleasures and comfort and nothing and no one else. Jesus saw you when you were living and growing up in a dysfunctional and broken home, and the only thing you could feel in that moment was anxiety and fear.

[11 : 38] Jesus saw you when you were proud and arrogant, mocking anyone else who disagreed with you. Jesus saw you when you were aimless and you weren't sure what the purpose of life was. Jesus saw you when you were in a messy divorce and you weren't sure if there was a way forward.

Jesus saw you when you had an addiction that at that moment was stronger than anything else in your life. No matter where you came from and no matter how you ended up here, I know that you're here because Jesus saw you.

Period, dot, end of discussion. Who is Jesus? He is the one who's coming to seek after his people. You know we talk about this when we talk about people and suffering, that there's two kinds of help that you can offer someone.

The first kind of help is to say to someone, let me know if you need anything. The second kind of help is to say, I would like to help you in this way. Can I do that?

There's a radical difference between those. Let me know if you need help. First of all, that person may not be in a position. The greater the suffering, the harder it is for you to think clearly. That person may not know what they need.

[12 : 48] And they may not feel like they're able to actually admit their need. The greater the suffering, the more you need help. The more you need someone to say to you, hey, I am going to come over and I'm going to mow your lawn.

Is there any problem with that? I'm going to come over and bring you a meal. When's the time I can come? That's the kind of help that we need in the greatest moments of suffering. Jesus comes with type two help. Jesus doesn't say, let me know if you need anything.

Jesus shows up and comes and brings us what we need before we know that we need it. It's Romans chapter five where we're told that even while we were sinners, Christ died for us. Remember our first question, who is Jesus? We want to see him for who he is. Jesus is our savior who's filled with so much compassion and humility that he comes and seeks us now no matter how helpless we are.

And so our first response is this. We want to see how beautiful and wonderful and glorious Jesus is. Jesus saw us before we saw him.

[13 : 59] That is how great he is. Our other response is that we need to be filled with great humility. Not just are we comforted, but we're challenged. We needed Jesus to see us.

We were so helpless, no matter how little we want to admit it, that Jesus had to seek out us. We were incapable of seeking him out.

And so I want you to look with me at verse 17. Jesus tells these disciples, I will make you become fishers of men. What does Jesus need to be able to say that?

Someone's going to train you in something. You hope they know what they're talking about, right? Before Jesus is going to make anyone a fisher of men, we need to know that Jesus is the fisher of men.

That's who Jesus is. He is the one who is coming and seeking and saving the lost. That's what he says in Luke chapter 19, verse 10. For the son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

[15 : 05] The son of man, Jesus Christ himself. He is the fisher of men. He's coming to make fishers of men.

Not only is he the fisher of men, I also want you to see here, Jesus is the one who has great authority. That's one of the themes of this next section of the gospel of Mark. Jesus is able to say, follow me and have people follow him.

If you want to try and experiment later today, you could go to downtown Colorado Springs and you could just find someone random. You could just point at them and just say, follow me.

And that's a great test. You can see how powerful you are. And if anyone follows you, I really want to hear the story. And if they don't follow you, I want to hear the story even more. Jesus comes as the fisher of men.

He also comes with great authority. Remember our paradigm from before, from verses 9 and 11. He's so great and he's so humble. He's so great that he can command people to follow him and they do.

[16 : 11] He's so humble that he goes and he seeks them out. That is who Jesus is. He's the fisher of men. He's the one with great authority.

And so that takes us to our second question. How do we respond to Jesus? What do we do with the fisher of men? Well, thankfully, repetition is our friend. Again, remember we saw the word Saul twice.

Now we're going to see Jesus's command, which I just mentioned. Verse 17, Jesus says, follow me. Verse 20, it says he called them. We can assume he's saying the same thing.

He's calling them to follow him again. And that word then repeats two more times. So Jesus says, follow. What do they do? They follow. Verse 18, they left their nets and followed him.

Verse 20, they left their father Zebedee in the boat and followed him. How do we respond to Jesus? There's a simple pattern here. Leave and follow. Leave and follow.

[17 : 12] You'll notice, by the way, these are the commands that follow. The command from last time, Jesus said, repent and believe, verses 14 and 15. What's the next logical step? If you're going to repent and believe, then follow.

And you'll notice there's two kinds of leaving here. Those are vocational leaving. There's a relational leaving. Vocationally, they're leaving the fishing boats. Relationally, they're leaving Zebedee, their father.

That's James and John. And so there's something great here that's happening. They're willing to give up what's most valuable, what's most important in the eyes of this world for the chance to follow after Jesus.

They're willing to lose their jobs. They're willing to lose those connections, those relationships. Now we could take this to an extreme. Okay, don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying that Jesus calling you is to abandon your family and quit your job.

Now in certain circumstances, we can talk about those. There are challenging situations where Christians do those things, but it's important for us to understand there is a difference and a similarity between us and the disciples.

[18 : 13] So they model following for us, but it's not in the exact same way. They are literally following Jesus around. We're about to see them go to Capernaum. When Jesus goes to Capernaum, they're gonna follow him geographically to Capernaum.

You and I are not gonna follow Jesus to Capernaum. Okay, we're not following him around geographically. This does not mean that we need to find Jesus's destinations, map them out, and then take the exact same trip in the nation of Israel that he did.

Right, there's a difference between us and the disciples. Following Jesus might mean changing locations, right? It might mean leaving your family. We've had folks at this church, when they converted to Christianity, it created great tension between them and their extended family.

And they were willing to do that, right, for the sake of Jesus Christ. What I do know this means for all of us is that the disciples are modeling that Jesus is the king, as we've seen before.

He is worth giving up anything and everything for. There is no loyalty or allegiance that is greater than our allegiance to Jesus, our king. Do we leave our family and our vocation?

[19 : 21] Not necessarily. But are we willing to? Are we willing to lose anything for Jesus?

He is the greatest king. There's nothing and no one that takes precedence over him. He's worth dropping everything for. He is the only one in this world with that sort of authority and pull and sway.

And so the question for us is this, is there anything that we're holding back? Is there anything that we are not willing to lose? If you were here with us last week during Sunday school, we heard from Paige Clark, who talked about our college ministry that's expanding here in the West.

And one of the challenges he talked about for students today, Christian students, is the challenge of finding jobs in corporate America. You were there. You know he talked about the fact that being a Christian is not an asset.

It's a liability. Okay, in the United States today. If you're trying to get a job in corporate America, it's a liability. That's the kind of sacrifice we're talking about, right?

[20 : 27] And following Jesus. Are you willing to lose vocationally? Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to have a career where you make less money? Are you willing to not be able to take opportunities to advance?

Are you willing to leave everything to follow Jesus? Now, as I mentioned earlier, there's some difficulty in talking about the word following because there's differences between us and the disciples, right?

Jesus is not here with us physically. We're not going to imitate every action that he takes. And so thankfully, as the New Testament continues, it fleshes out this concept for us. The apostle Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, he doesn't really use the word follow.

He actually transforms this into a different word. He uses the word imitation. And so you may have heard many times the phrase the imitation of Christ or the imitation of Jesus.

He says in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 1, be imitators of me, that is, be imitators of Paul, as I am of Christ. And then he goes on to provide various examples.

[21 : 32] We see this in the New Testament. 1 Peter 2, we talked about this when we were in that book. Why do we endure suffering? Jesus was our model. We're following him in that.

We're imitating him in that. Philippians chapter 2. We've been in the book of Philippians, if you've been with us for a while. He says in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Why? Because that's what Jesus did. Following Jesus in humility. Following Jesus in suffering. And so imitation is the concept I want you to think of as much as following.

It's fine to say following. Following can get us confused. Imitation is easier for us, I think, to wrap our heads around. There's a reason that the apostle Paul uses this for those of us who don't literally walk with Jesus.

Right? People will talk about walking with Jesus. Not a bad phrase to use. Jesus is not literally here right now, at least in his physical body. Okay? I can't take a walk with physical Jesus.

[22 : 32] He's seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places right now. I can imitate him. And so as we begin to wrap our heads around this, this is something we're going to come back to over and over again in the Gospel of Mark.

I'm going to give you four categories for imitation, which comes from this very helpful book called *The Imitation of Christ* by a man named Jimmy Agin. And he breaks down imitation into these four categories, which helps us to understand.

It's, first of all, passion for the glory of God. If we're following Jesus, if we're imitating him, we're going to be passionate for the glory of God. Second, passion for the good of other people.

If we're following Jesus, we're going to be passionate about the people around us. If they're suffering, we're going to care about that. If they need help, we're going to care about that. Right? Just as Jesus did. Third, willing denial of self.

Willing denial of self. Jesus is going to get at this in Mark chapter 8 when he says, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself. And finally, this is what happens in 1 Peter chapter 2, patient endurance of hardship.

[23 : 36] Patient endurance of hardship. So those are four broad categories that help us think about, on the ground, in real time, what does it look like for us to follow Jesus, to imitate him.

We're passionate for the glory of God. We're passionate for the good of other people. We have a willing denial of self and a patient endurance of hardship. So I'll just give you a few examples.

Following Jesus might look like remaining faithful in a difficult marriage.

Following Jesus might look like losing out on job opportunities because we will not sacrifice, jeopardize our integrity or our faith. We might make less money.

Maybe you make a lot of money. Following Jesus might look like sacrificing your finances and your comfort to help those who need it. If you live in America in 2021, following Jesus might mean being misunderstood and slandered.

Right? That's the willing endurance of suffering. That's a peace. That's a beginning. That's an introduction to what it means for us to follow Jesus, just like these disciples.

[24 : 40] We're imitating him. We're following after him. We're leaving everything else. Not that we abandon our families, but that we know there's nothing that gets greater allegiance from us than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so that raises a final question for us. Right? These things that I've listed, passionate for God's glory, passionate for others' good, denial of self, endurance of suffering, these are hard things. How are we going to be able to remain faithful and steadfast in these difficult things that God calls us to? You may be aware of another concept, another principle, which is that the more difficult something is, the harder it is to do by yourself.

More difficult something is, the harder it is to do by yourself. So I'll give you an example. I'm sort of a runner, and I'm happy to go running by myself. It's not the end of the world.

I know how to do it. I've been doing it for years. I also do some strength training. I don't do that by myself. And I especially don't do leg day by myself.

[25 : 52] Okay, if you're familiar with internet memes, you know the phrase, don't skip leg day. Now, why is that a phrase? Well, first of all, leg day is really hard. No one wants to do squats and deadlifts.

And you don't want to skip it, right? Because it's so important. It's so important for you. I don't do leg day on my own. If someone's not coming to join me, I'm sleeping in, okay?

It's not happening. I'm not setting up that equipment by myself. I'm not putting bumper plates on a bar if it's just me. That's too depressing, right? That is too high of a standard for me to meet by myself.

Brothers and sisters, if we look at Jesus as our model and we have to do it by ourselves, it is impossible. It is too much for us to do it alone.

And so we have to remember when Jesus calls us to follow him, he calls us to follow him. In other words, he is with us. He is not calling us to do something by ourselves or alone.

[26 : 56] When these men leave everything, they're not leaving everything and going off to a tower by themselves to pray. They're going with Jesus who is there with them physically, showing and modeling for them the way to go.

The same is true for us. As we follow Jesus, we are incapable of doing it alone. We know that we need him to be with us by the presence of his Holy Spirit, by the example that he's given us in his word, by the community that he surrounds us with in the church, the instruction that he gives us here and now.

We have to be with him. That is the difference between us and all the other religions. Many religions would tell you to have a willing endurance of suffering.

Many religions would tell you to be passionate about the good of others. Jesus is the one who's actually with his people, enabling and empowering them to do it. He is the God who comes and sees us.

He's the one who actually became a man in real time and real space and therefore has a strong grip strength. That is how we're able to follow after and obey Jesus, not because we have great power, but because he does and he's with us every single moment and step in that process.

[28 : 12] He calls us to what we cannot do by ourselves and are only able to because he is there beside us and next to us, one step ahead as we follow behind.

Jesus is our great model. He's not just a model. He is the one who is present there with us. You can only imitate what you watch and study closely, right?

You don't imitate a textbook. You imitate a person. If we have any hope of imitating Jesus, of following after him, our eyes have to always be on Jesus.

That's inherent in the word follow. You can't follow something you can't see. Jesus sees us first so we can see him and follow him.

By the way, later in this book, just a couple sections from now, Jesus is gonna be in Capernaum. He is going to heal Simon's mother-in-law.

[29 : 25] Okay, so wrap your heads around this. Simon's following him. Jesus' power is there present among them. Jesus is with them. Jesus is performing a healing in front of them.

Jesus raises, that's the word that's used, Simon's mother-in-law who has a fever, and this fever is so severe, we're meant to think that she's near death. Jesus calls them to follow him.

He does not leave them. And so I'll go back to everything we listed before. How do we remain faithful in a difficult marriage? Because Jesus is with us.

How are we able to lose out on job opportunities because we won't compromise our integrity or our faith? How are we able to make less money? Because Jesus is with us.

Brothers and sisters, how are we able to sacrifice our finances and comfort to help those who need it? We do it because Jesus is with us. How are we able to be misunderstood and slandered and continue with joy?

[30 : 30] Because Jesus is with us. Jesus is going to repeat this same command to follow him later in Mark chapter 8, as I've mentioned before, and he says this.

It says, Calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it.

But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

For what can a man give in return for his soul? Who is Jesus? Jesus is the great fisher of men.

He is the one who sees us and is so great that he can command us to follow him. How do we respond?

[31 : 29] We follow him because we see Jesus. We follow him. We follow him because we know that he is with us every step of the way.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you so much that you have not left us alone to figure things out and piece them together on our own.

But instead, you've given us your word that has real power. And even more, you've given us your son who is our savior and our example and our model. We ask that you would encourage us and strengthen us by your presence.

You'd remind us of the great power that is at our disposal because of Jesus' death on our behalf and that you would work that deep into our hearts that we would love you and we would follow you more and more.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn. Amen.