

Title: More than He Bargained For

Mark 1:14-20, 29-34

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31 He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Opening illustration: When I shared at the dinner table that I’d accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior that morning because the Sunday School teacher said it was a good idea and I figured that sounded alright to me, mom’s ecstatic reaction was my first indication that I had gotten in over my head.

Perhaps Peter felt something similar. Sure, it was great that he was invited by a rabbi to be his disciple, but when Jesus heals his mother-in-law, it’s clear that Jesus is no ordinary rabbi. As word spreads and the crowds gather, desperate for physical healing and spiritual cleansing, Peter must surely have realized that following Jesus was going to involve far more than he bargained for.

Core

Saying yes to Jesus ends up being more than we bargained for, and mean becoming more than we could possibly imagine.

We know that Peter's given name was Simon, and that Peter was a nickname, essentially meaning "The Rock" or "Rocky." Jesus surely gave it to him as a term of endearment, and meant it as a positive. Did it refer to his physical strength? His imposing presence? Or was it because he was hard-headed? Maybe it was all of those things. Mark's gospel certainly provide plenty of evidence to support them all.

We've just finished studying Peter's first letter to his churches. At the very end he indicates that Mark is with him and sends his greetings. We believe this is the same Mark mentioned several times in Acts and is also the attributed author of the gospel that bears his name.

Since Mark was a protégé to Peter, I am struck by the fact that his gospel doesn't paint a very flattering picture of his mentor. His moments of brilliance are quickly overshadowed by instances of totally missing the point. Some examples:

- Peter rightly recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah and then, a few verses later, prompts Jesus to look at him and say, "Get behind me Satan!" (Mark 8).
- Peter is privileged to witness the Transfiguration, but quickly spoils the moment by telling Jesus his big idea about building tabernacles there. God the Father himself must silence Peter by saying, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him!" as if to say, "Why don't you stop getting ahead of Me and my Son's plan?" (Mark 9)
- Full of bravado, Peter wants to set himself apart in Jesus' eyes and declares, "Even if all fall away, I will not." In no time he collapses under pressure and denies Jesus not once but three times. (Mark 14)

The author of 1 Peter who preached humility knew a lot about getting humbled. Mark makes sure everyone knows it. And I can't help but believe that is because *Peter wants everyone to know it.*

I like to imagine Peter looking over Mark's shoulder as Mark is writes and saying, "Don't forget to tell them how slow we were to understand. Tell them that we were constantly competing with each other instead of serving each other as the Master had been serving us. Tell them how we rebuked the little children and he had to correct us. Make sure they know I couldn't even stay awake for an hour with him in the garden. They *need* to know that the Master was great. They *ought* to know that we weren't – especially me."

This series will focus on the parts of Mark's Gospel where Peter comes off looking really bad. As we do, we want to keep asking: Why is Peter's failure included here? How is this a necessary part of a whole and complete gospel proclamation? How can Peter's blind spots help us see more clearly? How can Peter's mistakes help us avoid the same ones?

We continue to be obsessed with perfection, achievement, and greatness while the gospel portrays a group of people - chosen by God and called by Jesus – who were far from perfect.

Perhaps a good metaphor to work from is the Japanese artform *kintsugi*.

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The term literally means “gold mending,” in which pieces of broken pottery are mended and the mends are colored with gold. Perhaps the fact that it is an artform that comes out of Japanese culture – a culture renowned for its love of precision – makes this artform even more compelling to us. The practice emphasizes the beauty and utility of breaks and imperfections. It invites an appreciation for flaws. It is a physical manifestation of resilience.

If Jesus chose the likes of Peter to be his disciple, then he can choose us too. If Peter could become a humble-yet-brave leader who built up the church, then Jesus can use us too.

There is one thing that Peter did in this story that was right... really right.

17 And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

They didn’t hesitate. They didn’t know everything. None of us ever do. But they knew enough to say yes. They knew enough to know that this opportunity was once-in-a-lifetime, and they dare not miss it.

Call

If God prompts you to do some act of love, care, or generosity this week, embrace the example of the disciples by doing it immediately.

“And immediately they left their nets and followed him.” Would that we would be able to do the same.

Amen.