

The King's Men

Text: Mark 1:14-20

Big Idea: Jesus told the people that God's kingdom had arrived. They could be a part of it by leaving their old ways and following him – right now!

Aim: To encourage the children to hear Jesus' call to follow him without delay.

The Story So Far

Lesson 1:

- John the Baptist announces that the Lord (Jesus), is coming.
- He tells the people that Jesus is greater than he is because Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit, not just water.
- He tells the people to prepare their hearts for the Lord by turning to God. They show this by being baptised.

Lesson 2:

- Jesus allows John to baptise him to show that he identifies with those he came to rescue.
- The Holy Spirit resting on Jesus in the form of a dove confirms that he will baptise with the Spirit.
- God's voice from heaven confirms that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Jesus overcomes the devil's temptation in the desert to prove that he has come to "crush the serpent's head".



Leader's Study Notes

Read Mark 1:14-20 taking note of the way that Jesus calls people to follow him and how they respond.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

The good news of the kingdom of God and the call to follow Jesus are crucial to Mark's Gospel. Mark is not only concerned with who Jesus is and why he has come, but he also wants to show us the implications of those two great truths for each and every person's life – we need to learn what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

1:14 — "After John was put in prison, Jesus went..." marks the end of the first episode and the beginning of the second. John has gone; Jesus has arrived. Read Mark 6 for the reason why John was imprisoned.

Mark tells us that Jesus proclaims the good news (gospel), then we hear how Jesus describes that good news.

1:15 — **When?** The time has come or literally translated, "the time is filled up" - which is a great picture of what Jesus means. It's as if all of history has been counting down to this event.

What? The kingdom of God is near. 'Near' is an ambiguous word. The kingdom of God (heaven), is not here yet, but the kingdom is near because Jesus Christ, the king of the kingdom, is walking amongst them.

How? Repent and believe the good news! 'Repent' means to turn around, stop going our own way and start going the king's way. To 'believe' the gospel is to trust that the king has arrived and by trusting him, we become part of the kingdom. The king is then our ruler.

The 'kingdom of God' is a concept described in various Old Testament prophecies. Isaiah speaks of the announcement of the arrival of this kingdom in these words: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news [gospel]. Who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion [the dwelling place or palace of God], 'Your God reigns!'" (Isaiah 52:7).

The arrival of the kingdom of God meant the end of war, oppression, evil and of being ruled by foreign powers. The king would rule and bring joy in every sense. That is what the kingdom represented.

So where was the kingdom? You can almost imagine Jesus' hearers looking over his shoulder, wondering, "I can't see a difference. This man can't be the king; he's just so ordinary."

1:16-20 — The right response to the announcement of the good news of the arrival of the king is to follow him. So these fishermen are a case study in what anyone should do when they meet the king. No argument, no delay, no chance to leave an 'out of office' reply, no wish to sell their business, no good-byes to family.

Only the king of God's kingdom can demand such obedience. They weren't following a teacher or a popular man; they were obeying the king.

The command - "Come, follow me". Said with authority.

- It's not enough just to know who Jesus is or to know about him; he requires obedience. I no longer rule my life; he does.
- The king's wishes are more important than any other activity.
- It's great following the king. We can run after him eagerly, excited about what lies ahead.

The response of the fishermen shows us all of this.

The promise – "I will make you fishers of men." Jesus will do it. He will call people to himself, bringing life from death. It's no accident that he chose fishermen to become fishers of men.

Reflect

- When you think about authority and being told what to do, what is your first reaction?
- Does what you have already learned about Jesus change how you might feel about his authority?
- The call to leave a familiar life behind to follow Jesus into the unknown can be daunting. What is it about Jesus that makes this change possible?



Review

Review the previous lesson using the following questions:

- What three things show that Jesus is the best? [*Dove – He received the Holy Spirit and can baptise with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:10) Voice – He is the Son of God and God is pleased with him (Mark 1:11) Temptation – He can resist the devil. Sinless, perfect (Mark 1:13)*]
- What does Jesus do to show he is on our side? [*He gets baptised by John (Mark 1:9)*]



Introductory Idea - Option 1

For younger children – Play 'Follow the Leader'. The children take turns to be followed by the other children who have to copy everything the lead child does. The lead child waves their hands in the air, hops, skips, jumps, etc. and everyone copies them while walking around the room in a line behind them. [Use the Bridge Questions below to make a link into the lesson.]



Introductory Idea - Option 2

Who will you follow? Give fellow leaders or helpers each a bag containing one of the following: money, fruit, vegetables, sweets, rocks etc. Give one leader an empty bag. If you don't have many leaders, then appoint some children to be 'leaders'.

Tell the children to choose a leader to follow. Mention that the leader might even share their bag with them. Once all the children have gathered around a leader ask them to explain why they chose their leader.

What would they have done if none of the leaders had bags? How would they have chosen which leader to follow? [Use the Bridge Questions below to make a link with the lesson.]

Introductory Idea - Option 3

For Older Children - It's a power thing! Have a few pictures of important world leaders and discuss some of the following with the children:

- What are some of the things that these people can do that ordinary people can't do?
- How well known are they?
- How many people follow them? (You might even discover some statistics from twitter about how many people follow these people online.)
- If you were the most powerful person in the world, what is the first thing you would do?

[Use the Bridge Questions below to make a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

In today's true story from the Bible, we are going to see what happened when people first started following Jesus. The children must listen carefully to discover the answers to the questions:

- Who started following Jesus? [*Fishermen - Simon, Andrew, James and John* (Mark 1:16, 19)]
- Why did they follow Jesus? [*Because he called them* (Mark 1:17, 20)]
- What did Jesus say he would do for them? [*Make them "fishers of men"* (Mark 1:17)]

Teaching Plan

The passage has two main parts - 1:14-15 is the announcement of the kingdom's arrival; 1:16-20 shows the correct response modelled by the fishermen.

Teaching the announcement itself is hard because it is abstract, but when we see the response of the fishermen, we understand what the announcement requires us to do.

So the general flow of the narrative is as follows:

- Jesus announces the kingdom's arrival and tells people how to respond (abstract).
- The fishermen respond (example modelled).
- Jesus says that he will teach them to call others to respond in the same way.

For younger children – your lesson will probably focus on the first two points above.

You could introduce the memory verse and use that as the basis for the lesson. Do this using the Memory Verse Pictures in the Media section of this webpage. The pictures represent the keywords in the memory verse. Explain with a sentence what each picture means in this verse.

Present the story (1:16-20), in the format of your choice. Spend time drawing out that the fishermen respond in the way the memory verse describes: they have understood that the king has arrived and his kingdom is near so they follow him to show they have repented and now believe. You could finish by revisiting the memory verse, relating it to the fishermen to emphasise the Big Idea.

For older children – the short action-packed stories we find in Mark make good Bible studies.

Before the lesson – write 1:15 onto a large sheet of paper. Use the Memory Verse Pictures from the Media section of this webpage to represent the key ideas of the verse. Then write 1:16-20 onto another sheet and place the two sheets side by side. Doing it this way will help the children to see how the announcement relates to the response.

Start the lesson with 1:16-20 covered with strips of paper so you can reveal one verse at a time as you discuss each of them. Use Mark 1:14 to set the scene.

Work through 1:16-20, uncovering each verse as you go.

Before uncovering verse 18 and the second half of verse 20, you could ask:

- What choice did the disciples have?
- What questions would you have had?
- What could they do?

As you go through the memory verse and talk them through the story, you could bear in mind the following questions – which are key even though they're not easy!

- What is the kingdom of God?
- Why is the kingdom of God near?
- What does it mean to repent?
- How does the disciples' action here in following Jesus show what it means to "repent and believe"?
- What does 'fishing for men' mean? How is following Jesus connected with calling others to follow him?



Game Idea - Option 1

Any games that require following orders very quickly.

Captain's coming – a leader calls out various commands and the children respond as quickly as possible. The last child to respond to each action is out. The commands should be explained before the game starts – they might be as follows:

'Bow' – everyone races to the front of the room.

'Stern' – everyone races to the back of the room.

'Starboard' – everyone races to the right of the room.

'Port' – everyone races to the left of the room.

'Captain's coming' – everyone stands tall, salutes and shouts, 'Aye aye Captain.'

'Scrub the decks' – mime scrubbing on hands and knees.

'Climb the rigging' – everyone pretends to climb a rope ladder.

'Man the lifeboat' – find a partner and sit holding both hands. Anyone without a partner is out.

Play the game quickly and perhaps more than once. **For younger children** – use fewer commands to make it simpler.

Simon Says – the leader calls out various commands, but only when the command is prefaced with the words, 'Simon says...' do the children respond. Being the last to respond or responding when the command does not begin with 'Simon says' means the child is out.

Knights, Horsemen and Cavaliers – the children move randomly around the room while the leader calls out the three words: 'knights', 'cavaliers' and 'horsemen' in random order. The children need to respond to each word by pairing up and doing the actions:

'Knights' – one child sits on the knee of the other who has one knee on the ground and the other foot on the ground.

'Horsemen' – one child sits on the back of the other who is on all fours.

'Cavaliers' – one child jumps into the arms of the other – be careful!

The last child or couple to respond is out.

All of the above games help to show that the disciples responded quickly to Jesus' call - it was immediate.



Game Idea - Option 2

The King Demands – divide the group into teams. A leader stands at a distance from the teams and calls for various items such as: a shoelace, shoe, sock, pin, ring, necklace, pen, Bible, tissue, piece of paper, anything red, etc. The first child to bring the item to the leader scores a point for their team. Some items may require the children to be inventive! Keep score to find the winning team.



Game Idea - Option 3

Chain Tag - a variation of 'tag', where every time a child tags someone, they join the tag team by holding hands so you progressively get a long line of tagging people until everyone is part of the chain. This will help make the link between 'fishermen' and 'fishers of men'.



Discuss and Apply

Think through the following questions to help you work out how to apply this lesson to the children you teach:

- Why did the fishermen follow Jesus?
- Why do you follow Jesus?
- What does 'following Jesus' look like in your average day?
- What might that look like in a normal day for the children you teach? They don't have jobs to leave and will not be leaving their families, but how will it be obvious that they are following Jesus?

For younger children - it will be enough to convey to them that following Jesus is the best thing to do. Why do they follow Jesus? Refer them to what they learned in the previous lesson - Jesus is the Son of God, he is God's special king.

If Jesus is the best person to follow then we should be telling everyone to follow him.

For older children - get them to think through why they follow Jesus. What is it about Jesus that makes him worth following? One way to explore this question is to get them to imagine they were speaking to a friend who does not follow Jesus. What might they say to convince them that they need to follow him?

If someone was to understand for the first time that Jesus was calling them to follow him, what questions might they have? What would we want to explain to them or make clear?

How is "I will make you fishers of men" encouraging to you or a Christian child?



Prayer Idea

Can the children think of one person they need to call to follow Jesus? How might they do that? What could they say?

Encourage the children to pray for opportunities to call others to follow Jesus.

You may wish to explore what it means for the children to follow Jesus. Encourage prayers that ask God to help them do that.



Activity A

For younger children, choose either this activity or Activity B.

From the Media section of this webpage print Activity A onto paper for each child.

The children colour the picture.

You may want to also provide them with some pieces of netting (the kind used to make orange or vegetable bags). This can be glued in place over the nets that Zebedee, James, John and the hired men are mending.

Make the best use of the craft time by reinforcing the story details.



Activity B

For younger children choose either this activity or Activity A.

From the Media section of this webpage print Activity B onto card for each child. You will also need a length of wool or string for each child about 50cm long.

Before the lesson cut the fish out and punch the holes marked 'X' on each fish. The long strip with the text on will become a fishing rod.

The children decorate the fish with crayons, glitter and sequins. They also decorate the fishing rod. You will need to help them to roll the card into a tight tube with the text and handle detail on the outside. Glue along the outside edge to secure. You could also attach an empty cotton reel cartridge to the handle of the fishing rod.

Attach the length of string and get the children to thread the fish onto the string. Can they get the order of the pictures right? Use this opportunity to teach the memory verse.

Explain to the children that we 'fish for people' by telling them the good news about Jesus and their need to turn to him and believe.



Worksheets

For older children choose either Worksheet C or Worksheet D from the Media section of this webpage. Print whichever is appropriate onto paper for each child and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.



Memory Verse

Mark 1:15 - *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"* [NIV]

Play a memory verse game. Print the Memory Verse Pictures in the Media section of this webpage which represent the keywords in the memory verse - clock (for time); crown (kingdom of God); u-turn sign (repent); thumbs up (believe); and newspaper (good news).

For younger children - simply put the pictures up in the correct order and get them to say the memory verse. Remove one picture each time until all the pictures are gone and they can say the whole verse.

For older children - print a set of pictures per group. If you need to help the children get rid of some energy then place the pile of pictures opposite each group far enough away that they need to run in a relay to collect the pictures one at a time.

Once they have all the pictures they need to arrange them in the correct order based on what they can remember from the lesson. They then learn the memory verse. Remove one picture at a time until they can say the verse without any pictures.

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