

## Mark 1:16-28

### The Character of Christ Jesus the Teacher

**Introduction:** If it is your first time joining us - Welcome! We have dedicated this year to Biblical Literacy; meaning we as a church are reading the Bible for ourselves to know first hand what it teaches and in order to be shaped by the story of God. And along with that we are teaching through the Bible on Sunday mornings - the main themes, message and characters. This morning we are starting a new 5 week series on the Character of Christ. And this morning we are going to start by looking at Jesus the teacher.

When we think about Jesus what are the main identities that we give him? If we grew up in the conservative church we might instinctively blurt out - Jesus is God ..Another Identity of Jesus is that he is the Eternal Son of God...

Many of us of course think of him, and know him as the Savior of the world. Or maybe even another identity that scripture gives him - Messiah - the anointed one - the long awaited king of Israel. Jesus is the king. That's something we talk about a lot at Refuge.

Jesus was a lot of things. But, if you were a first century Jew and one Sabbath morning Jesus showed up in your synagogue and taught from the Torah or gave a series of teachings on the kingdom, the odds are that the category you would have put Jesus in was that of a Rabbi. A Rabbi is a Hebrew word meaning "Master" or "Teacher." A Rabbi was a master teacher who would travel around from village to village and synagogue to synagogue with his "yoke" or his set of teachings on the Torah - the Bible of his day.

Do you ever think of Jesus in this way? That Jesus is the not just a teacher but the greatest teacher that ever lived? As we read through Mark's gospel (BTW -the first gospel written), this is what we find - Jesus was a Rabbi - a teacher. So we're going to talk about Jesus the teacher this morning and also then what it means to be students or disciples of Jesus the teacher.

#### 1. Jesus the Teacher

1. I would like you to just listen to these verses as I read them. Listen for a theme.
  1. **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. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 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. 20 And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. - Mark 1:16-20**
  2. **He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. 14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. - Mark 2:13-14**
  3. **And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach 15 and have authority to cast out demons. 16 He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder);18 Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. - Mark 3:13-19**
  4. **And 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.35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? - Mark 8:34-37**
2. Did you notice a theme running through these verses? If I were to ask you - what was the message of Jesus; how would you

respond? Of course we would get a variety of answers. The all too common answer of the American church to the question of the message of Jesus is - 'to ask him into our hearts, to have our sin forgiven, so we can go to heaven' - An answer that you won't actually find in the Bible, or on the lips of Jesus. It's so important once again that we read the actual Bible to find that out - to know for ourselves, to be clear about Jesus and his message. One of the main messages of Jesus especially in the gospel of Mark was - Follow me or become my disciple. (Example of the Rich young Ruler - Follow Me)

3. This word "disciple" in Hebrew is "talmidim." There are different ways to translate it. Disciple is the most common. It can also be translated "follower" or "student." But our words follower or student in english don't really capture the idea because we go to schools and are students of certain teachers or schools of thought, but then we move on from these.. they are like stepping stones on the way to something else - we go to Berkeley or USC or UCSF - but no one talks about being formed in their image or being an apprentice of these schools or a specific professor - it's just not the way we think or function as a society. The way of a "talmidim" was not just to learn something from someone but to be an apprentice. In those days you didn't follow many teachers or rabbis - you had one - and the goal was to conform your life to your master or teacher in order to be like them. In fact Jesus says this in Luke 6:40 - **"A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher."**
4. A Rabbi wasn't just a teacher but an expert in the Law of Moses, they would travel from town to village to synagogue with their set of teachings on the Torah. These Men had huge respect in the jewish community.. *rabbi*, literally meaning "My Master", which is the way a student would address a master of Torah. The way the Rabbi or teacher role worked in Israel was very similar and maybe even borrowed from the greek philosophers. A rabbi would choose disciples or students, and these disciples would basically turn their lives over to their teachers - to become their apprentice.
5. This worked in 3 movements:
  1. They would be with their Rabbi - they lived life together, went everywhere together - watched him, listened to him took in his words and way of life..

2. They would become like their rabbi - They would fully adopt the rabbi's way of life, the rabbi's Rhythm and practices - they would imitate the voice, the body language, the dress, the whole thing - it was taking on the identity of your Rabbi..
3. Then lastly they would do what their Rabbi did - fully assimilated his life and person. Ultimately it meant to go with your rabbi in a attitude of study, obedience, and imitation..
4. Three goals of discipleship or apprenticeship:
  1. Be with your Rabbi - Time spent with him, listening, watching, just doing life together..
  2. Become like your Rabbi - contrast be unique, be yourself, be true to yourself...
  3. Do what your Rabbi does - he sent them out to preach and to cast out demons...

## 2. Jesus OUR Teacher

1. In Mark 8:34, Mark uses a literary device to engage the reader - he distinguishes the disciples with the crowd Jesus calls the disciples and the crowd to himself and talks about the cost of discipleship - Mark does this to get reader to ask - who am I? Am I among the disciples, the students, am I an apprentice of Jesus or just another face in the crowd, an observer? We might think - well I'm a Christian. Did you know that the Bible only uses the term Christian 3 times and it was used in a derogatory way? It was something the crowd said mockingly about disciples of Jesus. In Contrast, the New Testament uses the word disciple 269 times to speak of Jesus' people. Just let that settle in for a moment.. Sadly in our time you can be a Christian and not be a disciple of Jesus, you can be a christian without any intention of becoming like Jesus... Discipleship to Jesus, especially in the American church is optional.
2. This is so typical of our American consumer mentality - We see Jesus as an option among many teachings and ways of life - The idea of becoming like Jesus - comes in conflict with our American message of being ourselves; being true to ourselves, of being unique, of being authentic.
3. But what we are doing is lessening Jesus' call and demands - but when we do that we lessen it's potency as well.
  1. **"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 gospel's 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? - Mark 8:34-37**

2. Discipleship or Apprenticeship to Jesus is the only real way to follow him - every other way, every lesser way is untrue, and will not lead to life either in this life or the life to come... Even this morning - this might be the very thing you are missing - you know about Jesus, you believe in Jesus, but you have followed at a distance, thinking that this is enough. Jesus calls you to be his disciple

### **3. The Call of the Disciple**

#### **1. So here is the call of all disciples of Jesus:**

1. **Be with Jesus**
2. **Become Like Jesus**
3. **Do what Jesus did**

1. That's it. That's the program - whether you're brand new to following Jesus or you've been doing it your whole life.

#### **2. Be with Jesus**

1. An awareness and connection to the Spirit - I think that this is a piece of Christianity that has been lost in recent years. And maybe it's because we have tended to see the world in fixed, scientific, rational way - we speak of Jesus as an ideal, we speak of imitation of Christ, the way of Jesus, we might go so far to speak of him as the reigning king of heaven. And maybe that's just it - we speak about Jesus - so he becomes an ideal, but we don't speak to Jesus as a living person. We have not practiced and engaged the living presence of Jesus. We are not being with Jesus. This is the grandest offer of Christianity - we get Jesus - we get to be with Jesus.

1. I encourage you to go home today or sometime this week to read through John 14-16 and look at the way Jesus talks about his holy spirit being with his disciples - We are to cultivate that spirit of his presence - to walk with him to talk with him - to be with Jesus.

#### **3. Become like Jesus - practice the way of Jesus**

1. I mentioned a few times as we were doing our series on a creative minority that the sermon on the mount is the most important teaching of Jesus for God's people.. and it is. It is where we learn the way of Jesus, the way of the kingdom. Jesus says, **"Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these**

**commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven... and then as Jesus brings this sermon to a close what does he say? - "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock."**

2. These teachings of Jesus are not just to be heard, or learned like we often do in modern school, they are to be practiced they are to be applied.
3. The way of Jesus is not about trying it's about training - "*as disciples, we are not trying to be different people, but we are training to be different people.*" - Dallas Willard
4. The way of Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit, the character of Christ is the gymnasium for the disciple of Jesus - by practicing the way of Jesus, we do what Paul exhorted Timothy to do - "to train for godliness." This is how we grow in character to become more like Jesus, through practicing his way of Life - forgiveness, non-retaliation, meekness, peacefulness, mercy, sincerity, purity, fidelity, fasting, prayer, silence and solitude, to love our neighbor and our enemy..etc
5. "*Jesus does not call us to do what he did, but to be as he was, permeated with love. Then the doing of what he did and said becomes the natural expression of who we are in him.*" - Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*
  1. That's the idea of the apprenticeship - to practice the way of Jesus so that it becomes a part of who we are - that's how character is formed.

#### **4. Do what Jesus Did.**

1. **"And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. - Mark 3:13-15**
2. It's interesting to note that this is exactly what Jesus was described as doing in Mark 1:21-28 - preaching and casting out Demons. It's the idea that I mentioned before - Jesus said -

3. **“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”**
4. Disciples are called to do what Jesus did.
  1. “Preach the gospel; Teach the way of Jesus; Heal the sick; Cast out demons; Do justice; Eat and drink with those who are far from God; Pray and prophesy; Stand up against religious hypocrisy and pride; Speak truth to political power” - John Mark Comer
  1. That is what Jesus did.
  2. Your goal, my goal is to learn how to do all that - it’s a life long journey... Your whole life - Your life goal is to live as an apprentice of Jesus of Nazareth
  3. As we practice being with Jesus more will be revealed to us about the person and majesty of Jesus which will increase our transformation and our imitation of Jesus. This is clearly seen in the Gospel of Mark as the disciples spend time with Jesus more and more of the person of Jesus, who he really is, in all his majesty and divinity, is revealed to them. May the Lord do the same for us.

**Closing:** Jesus invitation to everyone of this morning is to follow him - whether this is the first time you are hearing this or it’s an echo of a call you heard long ago..

Follow him for the rest of your life as a disciple in these simple ways:

Be with him

Become like him

Do what he did... for the rest of your life.

*“The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as ‘Christians’ will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.” - Dallas Willard, The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*