

This Is Why I Have Come (Out)  
Mark 1:9-39  
January 24, 2010

## **SLIDE ONE: THIS IS WHAT I HAVE COME OUT TO DO**

When I met with leaders and members of the congregation this summer and fall two themes emerged. I heard you say that TVPC was anemic when it came to its stewardship effort. So we talked about that theme this fall, and I want to tell you today you get the pastor's star on your foreheads, for giving in 2010 is up 19% over last year, and we ended 2009 in a much stronger financial position than any of us thought possible (more on that at the annual meeting).

The second issue you talked about with me is the need for a thoughtful and consistent evangelism program. You told me that TVPC is an aging congregation declining in membership and worship attendance.

So, today, and continuing on for several weeks I am going to preach on evangelism. Or, to put it another way, I am going to talk about the ministry of Jesus—what his emphasis was—and how we can use his ministry to become a growing church—growing in numbers, growing in discipleship.

To help us on our way I want us to look at Mark, chapter one. Here we see how Jesus' ministry begins. The entire chapter takes us from his baptism by John in the Jordan, to his sojourn in the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan, and then on to Galilee where he preaches, teaches, and heals.

## **SLIDE TWO: PREPARATION, PROCLAMATION, PROPAGATION**

If you dissect Mark one, you will notice that there are three themes which emerge. Those themes all begin with the letter "P." They are preparation, proclamation, and propagation. Preparation, proclamation, and propagation. Let's take a look at each of them.

Preparation first. The story begins with Jesus' cousin John who

baptizes Jesus in the Jordan. We don't know what he was thinking, but for some reason he decides to walk into the water and let his cousin baptize him. None of his later disciples were there that day, so he must have told them, years later when they asked him what happened that day, he told them...how the heavens parted and the Spirit of God, like a dove, descended and he heard a voice addressed to him—no one else heard it—“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” Clarence Jordan translates it, “A voice came down from the sky saying: ‘You are my dear Son: I’m proud of you’” (The Cotton Patch Version of the New Testament).

### **SLIDE THREE: PREPARATION: WILDERNESS FOR FORTY DAYS**

And then He goes off into the wilderness. Mark's account is much more spartan and much less detailed than Matthew and Luke's, each of which tells us how Jesus jostled with the devil. He goes off for 40 days, the number 40 in the Bible always implying a long time: the story of Noah where it rained 40 days, the Hebrew children wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. The number 40 isn't meant to be understood literally, but is meant to convey to us that these events occurred over a long period of time.

So Jesus remains in the wilderness a long time. He steals off by himself. In the wilderness he asks himself those important questions that should always be in the forefront of our minds at any juncture of life: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Later, in verse 38 Jesus answers the question he asked while in the wilderness: “This is why I have come out?” In the wilderness he determines which course his ministry will take. In the wilderness he draws a map for this future.

And from that point on, he is intensely focused on where he should go and what he should do.

If you don't know where you are going, the old saying goes, “Any road will take you there”.

In Mark one, we see the first key of Jesus' ministry. A clear blueprint based on preparation, time apart for prayer and reflection.

## **SLIDE FOUR: JESUS IN PRAYER**

We see this habit of Jesus repeated in verse 35: “In the morning, while it was still dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.” How could he start the day, I ask myself, without a triple skim latte from Starbucks in his hand? In the morning, while it was still dark. In the dark, while everyone, including his disciples, were still sleeping. Before the day began with all of its stress and demands, He is out there by himself in meditation.

And Peter and his companions wake up and say, “Where is he?” “Where did he go?” “Everybody is searching for him.”

Peter would have made a good scheduler for President Obama. Everybody needs you, Mr. President. Everybody needs a piece of you, Jesus. We’ve got you booked today down to the last minute.

But Jesus, ever frustrated with people’s expectations, knows how he must begin each day. Not with a latte from Starbucks and the Chicago Tribune spread out before him, but quiet. QUIET.

Just a thought about this before we move on: If that was our Lord’s pattern, if that’s what he needed, what does that suggest to us. Preparation, first, and then proclamation.

## **SLIDE 5: PROCLAMATION : “Jesus came to Galilee..”**

And then he sallies forth into Galilee (verse 14 pp), proclaiming the good news. Galilee, was his home region. Galilee, where he hiked the high hills as a boy. Galilee, where he knew every bend of the road. He comes home. In Luke 4 we see that his first sermon was in his home-town synagogue, and he made his kinsmen and women mad with what he said. The first time, but not the last, in Christian tradition, where a preacher has told the truth and got the congregation riled up. A layman said to his pastor,

“That was a very popular and well-received sermon you preached last week.”  
“I know,” the pastor said, “the devil has already told me that.”

He comes into Galilee and he preaches the good news of God... or as other ancient manuscripts say, “He preached the good news of the kingdom.” What exactly did he say? What precisely was this message? What was the good news he was communicating? We don’t know. We just don’t know.

And then he says, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.”

The time is fulfilled. Biblical scholars are fond of telling us that there are two kinds of “time” in the Bible. One is called “chronos”-- chronological time. Chronos time is like this. I look at my watch and I say, it’s Sunday morning, 7:45 a.m.

But then there is “kairos” time. We don’t have anything in the English language to exactly approximate “kairos time.” Kairos time means the opportune moment, the supreme moment.

Let me try to explain it. It’s April 14<sup>th</sup>. You haven’t done your taxes yet. You know that it’s time.

You’ve been having some minor chest pains and you are short of breath. You are overweight and out of shape. You wake up one morning, look up your doctor’s phone number, and phone for an appointment. It’s time.

Your wife is nine months pregnant. She awakes you in the middle of the night. She smiles at you and says, “It’s time.”

The time is fulfilled, Jesus cries out. This is the pregnant moment. This is God’s D Day. This is the watershed moment in history where God is appearing in all his fullness.

So what do you have to do in response to this kairotic moment. Only two things, and they are quite simple. Repent, and believe in the good news.

Repent. The Greek means to do a “one-eighty.” Turn around. You have to change directions. You have to reset your compass to God’s true north star.

To repent is to acknowledge that no matter how hard you’ve tried, you

haven't lived up to your highest and best, much less to God's highest and best.

A few weeks ago Greg Buell was doing his children's sermon, and was talking about the bad things we all do and that we need to ask God for forgiveness for those things.

Greg made the classic mistake in children's sermons, a mistake any lawyer could have advised him against, which is "Never ask a question of a witness when you aren't sure of the answer."

So Greg asked the kids if they had ever done anything wrong that they needed to say they were sorry for. And one little boy said, "I used to do wrong things, but now I'm five."

When you think about it, it's incredible that anybody ever joins the church. Think about it for a second. Nearly any organization is glad to have us as we are. The Rotary Club, the PEO, the PTA. They are just happy to welcome us as we are. But, not the church. The church is the only organization in the world that tells us that we are not good enough as we are. The church tells us that there is sin in our lives that needs to be dealt with. The church tells us that we need to repent, and what's even worse, the church tells us that this a life-long effort which we will never quite achieve.

But this message, which seems hard and unwelcome at first, is for our own good. For sin blocks us from being the kind of people we can be. Sin separates us from our best selves, from the people we love, and from the God who created us. At the end of the day, the prayer of confession in this service is our greatest hope.

## **SLIDE 6– MARK MCGUIRE**

I don't know if you've been following the Mark McGuire story. The home-run king admitted that he used steroids during his career. If you saw his interview with Bob Costas you will have seen his deep remorse. Now McGuire is being hammered by all the sports pundits. They say that this is a ploy to help him get into the Hall of Fame, that it is disingenuous for him to

say that he was sorry he played in a steroid era. But as a person who has lived in a family of alcoholics, and as one who has attended many meetings of Al Anon, I have another take on the McGuire confession. Steroids or alcohol or whatever the crutch is to help us get by, to cope, to make it, ultimately all turn on us. And we have to lie and deny and run—to maintain the ruse. But if we are lucky, or if the star of grace hovers about our head, we come clean. We go into treatment. Or start attending AA. Or arrange an interview with Bob Costas. We say, “This thing is killing me.” “I want to get it off my chest.” “I want to start over.”

And the good news is that the gospel of Jesus Christ is that it is supremely the gospel of the second chance. When we fall, God is there to pick us up. When we mess up, God is kind. When we repent, we are forgiven. That’s all we have to do. That’s all we have to believe.

## **SLIDE 7: PROPAGATION: CALL OF DISCIPLES TO BECOME FISHERS OF PEOPLE**

Preparation, proclamation, and propagation. The story moves on to the Sea of Galilee where he calls his disciples, who were fishermen. (Mark 1:16-20). Jesus can’t do it alone. He needs help to spread the good news of the kingdom.

Follow me, he says, and I will make you fish for people. I think Jesus is saying here, “Give me a few people with no pedigree, no education, no social status, no promising future. Give them to me and we’ll change the world together.”

Now it’s entirely possible that Peter, Andrew, James and John had already met Jesus before. In John’s gospel we find that Andrew had already been a disciple of John the Baptist when he met Jesus. So the decision to follow Jesus may not have been sudden or impulsive.

But whatever the case, we can’t overlook the sense that the disciples had, the sense that we all have, the feeling inside of us that says, “There must be something more to life than this.”

The French historian Charles Augustus Sainte-Beuve once wrote, “There are people whose clocks stop at a certain point in their lives.”

No purpose, no potential anymore.

The syndicated cartoon strip “The Small Society” pictures a confrontation between a father and a son. The teenaged son is slouched down in an easy chair looking very depressed. His father seems concerned, trying hard to communicate with the kid. He says, “Of course we all want a purpose in life...but I promise you that after awhile you’ll be too busy making a living to worry about it.”

I suspect that whatever else Peter, Andrew, James and John were, they had longings that even bulging fishing nets could not satisfy. A livelihood, after all, is not a life, so they may have craved wider seas, their combustible hearts awaiting the flame Jesus offered them as he passed by. Maybe Jesus’ eagerness sparked their youth; maybe his tenderness kindled their love, his authority their loyalty.

I’m sure they didn’t know a lot about Jesus when they made their decision to drop their nets and come along for the ride. Which means there is hope for many of us, who don’t feel we know a lot about Jesus. For people who are all worked up about the matter of faith and believing I offer this simple test: “Give all of yourself that you can to all of Jesus that you know.” That’s enough to start out on.

Faith limbers up our minds, taking us beyond familiar grounds and personal comfort zones, giving us quantum amounts to think about. Certainly Peter and Andrew and James and John had more to think about than had they stayed at home. And so it is with all of us. If we give our lives to Jesus, we leave familiar territory and take the leap of faith, and what we receive in return fills our minds altogether as much as it fills our hearts.

If all that is true, why should we wait? Let’s once again hear those words, “Follow me,” and let Jesus woo and win our heart anew—that we might live larger, deeper, more reflective lives.

And as we follow him, we will gradually be transformed into the kind of people we always wanted to be. And you know what: the people around

us will notice. Friends, family, they will notice. And they will want some of this stuff that we have so freely received. And they'll ask us, "Where did you find that stuff?" And you will respond, "The Village Presbyterian Church." And the Village Presbyterian church will begin to grow again, one by one, just like the church has always grown from day one until today, one person telling another.