

**Would You Follow this Man? By Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. E3090125**  
**Jonah 3:1-5, 10 and Mark 1:14-20**  
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It is strange, the way those four fishermen dropped everything to follow Jesus. According to Mark, Jesus said to Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people," and immediately they left their nets and followed him."<sup>1</sup> That is strange behavior. The account does not indicate that they even asked any questions! They could have asked, "Follow you where?" but they didn't.

"...immediately they left their nets and followed him." Were they tired of rowing boats and casting nets into the sea? What did they think "fish for people" meant? If hauling in nets of fish was heavy work, what did they expect from hauling in nets of people? Were they tired of their families? Mark says James and John left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men. Can you imagine Zebedee speechless as his sons left him? What did Jesus have to offer these guys? He didn't mention a pay scale or retirement or a dental plan.

A study group Sue and I led years ago began with the exercise of writing a want ad for the position of Jesus' disciple. How would you compose a want ad for disciples of Jesus? Our attempts yielded ideas like, "Work hard for no pay"

"Leave your homes and families and occupations to follow an itinerant preacher who has no transportation, no hotel accommodations, does have a tendency to get listeners riled up, and will probably be given the death sentence."

Would you follow this man?

If Jesus walked into this sanctuary right now and said, "follow me," you'd hesitate, to be sure. First, you would probably think such a person was crazy. Second, you would begin to count up all the reasons why you shouldn't follow him. Grandchildren. Spouse or girl or boyfriend. Income. House.

There must have been some reason why these men would drop everything to follow Jesus. It could be that they already knew him. Perhaps they, the four new disciples and Jesus, had been disciples of John the Baptizer. Perhaps they knew that the time was urgent. Did you catch the two times "immediately" was used in this short passage? The word "immediately" appears twenty-seven times in the Gospel of Mark.

There is a sense of urgency in Mark. Even Jesus' opening words reflect urgency: "the kingdom of God has come near."<sup>2</sup> This is also translated, "the kingdom of God is at hand,"<sup>3</sup> or as Eugene Peterson translates it, "Time's up!"<sup>4</sup>

The time was now. John the Baptizer had been arrested. Things were getting worse for the peasants in the Galilee with Herod Antipas drunk with power and taking another's wife with no feelings of remorse.

Jesus had a different way to offer. It was God's way, not of power, but of justice and of love for all no matter what their rank in life. This is the kingdom of God, and it is all around. The kingdom of God is at hand!

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<sup>1</sup>Mark 1:18

<sup>2</sup>Mark 1:15

<sup>3</sup>NRSV footnote at Mark 1:15

<sup>4</sup>*The Message* Mark 1:15, by Eugene Peterson

What did you give up to follow this man called Jesus? Did you leave your family? Your job? Your well-being? Frankly, it's quite easy in our culture, to "become a Christian." Most everyone around us is a Christian. Our parents, our friends, and our youth group leaders pressure us to be confirmed, to confess Jesus as savior and accept him as savior. In fact, we're enticed to confess Jesus as savior, because we're told that by doing so, we're going to inherit eternal life with him. That's a pretty good deal.

It's easy to say we're Christian, but that does not necessarily mean we're a follower of Christ. I'm not sure Peter, Andrew, James and John knew what they were signing on for. They may have been ready to throw off the oppression of rule by the Romans and their puppets. As they followed Jesus, though, they learned a different way. They heard a man preach about loving your enemy, turning the other cheek, and going the second mile.

There are times when it's quite difficult for us to follow Jesus. Jesus gives us the burden of conscience and the load of compassion. I shared tears with a man this week because of compassion about a nearly-hopeless legal situation involving a beautiful family. Jesus does that to us, darn it. He tears us apart. He often creates the dilemma between doing what is legal and "right" in the eyes of society, and doing what is right in the eyes of God.

The choice is ours to follow Jesus or not. The kingdom of God is here now. It is not just in the sweet by and by. How often do you think about your call to follow Jesus? Are you called to proclaim God's kingdom now? Now is the time.

There are two different kinds of time, the way we measure time, *chronos*, and the way God measures time, *kairos*. Kairos is God's time, the opportune time. It is a time, as Fred Craddock describes it, "in which the constellation of factors creates an unusually significant moment." Now is the time to change ways.

We have a new administration. There is a new hope in the air, not just here in the US, but around the world there's a new hope. It's palpable. Even Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said Friday that Moscow is prepared to help international efforts to combat drug-trafficking and terrorism in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

In God's time, God can work miracles. God can transform us. God can sneak up on us and fill even the darkest places with light.

We have the freedom to respond to God's grace and to Christ's call. Jesus didn't ask the fishermen to add one more task to their busy lives. He called them into new ways of being. He calls us into new ways of being.

So, would you follow this man? Think twice about it. Be prepared for a radical transformation.

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<sup>5</sup>*New York Times* January 23, 2009