

## Follow me: Mark 1.12-20

*"The lake is the same, the fish are the same — only our clothes are different."  
That's what the fishermen tell the pilgrims as they demonstrate the age-old  
method of casting their nets into the Sea of Galilee.  
Thanks to Robin for today's TFTD.*



There are times when the Gospel of Mark proceeds ‘at pace’ to use the government buzz word of the present day.

Our passage today covers in rapid succession:

- The temptation of Christ
- The proclamation of the Kingdom of God
- The calling of the disciples

In my translation, the word ‘immediately’ drives the narrative along.

After he is baptised by John, the Spirit immediately drives Jesus out into the wilderness. Jesus found Peter and Andrew casting their nets, called them to follow him and immediately they left their nets and followed him. A bit further along Jesus found James and John mending their nets and immediately he calls them. The Holy Spirit, the disciples and Jesus himself are all working 'at pace.'

This injection of immediacy has a profound impact on our understanding of the nature of the call of the disciples. It emphasises that their response was made very quickly. They didn't stop to think. Jesus called them and they upped and left. We are given the image of the nets left behind on the shore and the father left behind in the boat with the hired men.

This immediate response is very much to the disciples' credit or they think so anyway. Later in Mark's Gospel when Jesus begins to explain what will happen when they go to Jerusalem, the disciples, understandably, find this hard to grasp and hard to accept. At one point Peter refers back to the unquestioning loyalty the disciples have shown Jesus as he pushes back against the words that are difficult to hear.

*Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you,'* (Mark 10:28). There will be another Thought for the Day that examines the answer that Jesus gives when he interrupts Peter at this point and the context in which this exchange takes place.

But for now, we respect and admire the immediacy of the response of the disciples recorded so beautifully in the verse of the hymn Dear Lord and Father of Mankind:

*In simple trust like theirs who heard,  
beside the Syrian sea,  
the gracious calling of the Lord  
let us, like them, obey his word:  
'Rise up and follow me,  
rise up and follow me!'*

But we also note that before the disciples were called, Jesus had already proclaimed the Gospel, calling on all the people to repent and believe in the good news. Even before he called the disciples, Jesus was proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom — it's what he came for. As we shall see, the Gospel of Mark intertwines stories of discipleship with stories of the Kingdom like a double helix.

As we read Mark's Gospel together this Lent, there will be moments when we respond to the text as disciples of Jesus, people who desire to emulate the simple trust of those who

have gone before us, who have left things behind to follow Christ.

And there will be times when we respond to the text as people who wish to believe the good news and taste and see the Kingdom of God — God's action in the here and now.

We will be travelling at pace as one thing immediately follows from another. The time to respond is at hand.

*Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?*

*Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?*

*Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,*

*Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?*

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