

Pastor Craig Schill  
Lake Cities Community Church  
Series: On Your Mark  
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## A New Sheriff in Town

(Mark 1:14-28)

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The young man thought to himself; “So this – this – was the legendary Morgan, the peace officer who had cleaned up Coterro County single-handed. This tired, old, defeated man...” The years had reduced John Morgan to a kind of bookmark, which only marked the place where a great lawman had been. The disappointment of it made Paradise guard his voice. “Hi - Name’s Matt Paradise.”

Sheriff Morgan touched his stiff mustache. He seemed to notice Paradise’s badge for the first time. He tried to make his voice sound friendly: “Glad to see you. Business or just traveling through.” “Business, I’m afraid.” “Afraid?”

Matt Paradise inhaled deeply. *Better get it over with. Why beat around the bush?* He said almost harshly, “Your house isn’t in order, Sheriff. I’ve been sent here to help you clean it up. **I’m the new sheriff in town.**” He saw the color rise in Morgan’s cheeks, but held the sheriff’s sad glance. “You’re just a kid,” Sheriff Morgan said, “I don’t need any amateur help.”

“Afraid you’ve got it whether you want it or not.” Paradise walked forward to the desk and spoke flatly. “Doc Wargo is wanted for murder and has been in this town for two weeks and you haven’t done anything about it. “I’m arresting Doc Wargo,” Matt Paradise told him. “Will you help me or not?” (*The Peace Officer*, Brian Garfield).

In those great books of the Old West - when a new Sheriff comes into town – he often has to shake up the status quo. He calls people to accountability and commitment. He is ready to battle evil and restore order. That is the job of a new Sheriff. In our passage today Jesus is like a new sheriff in town. He is going to shake up the status quo, make people uncomfortable and call for commitments. It is a bold beginning to Jesus’ ministry. Turn with me to Mark chapter 1, today we are in verses 14-28.

### **Preaching (14-15)**

We begin with a transition from John the Baptist to Jesus: “**Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee**” (1:14a). The transition is highlighted by the surprising detail that John has been taken into custody – literally “handed over.” What happened? Who arrested him? We don’t know – we are left in suspense. We are immediately aware that if the messenger has been put into jail – then Jesus Himself is certainly in danger!

We also see a transition from the desert to where? Galilee. From a big picture – Galilee is up north by the Sea of Galilee. Jerusalem is further south. The Jordan River connects the Sea of Galilee with the Dead Sea. This is a closer view of the Roman province of Galilee - located west of the Sea of Galilee. It was comparatively small in area, some fifty miles long and thirty miles wide. It was an exceedingly fertile area and beautiful area. It was primarily an agricultural and fishing community. However it also had a cosmopolitan flavor because the major trade routes went through Galilee. It was the childhood home of Jesus - Nazareth is in southern Galilee. This is familiar territory for Jesus.

And so Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee: “**Preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel”** (14b-

15). Right from the beginning, like a new sheriff in town, Jesus says, “I am here – and things are must change” He begins by preaching – proclaiming that the time has arrived for a new rule of living – God’s Kingdom living – which means “repent” turn from any other rule of living – allegiance and believe in the good news of God.

In my HR days, I remember when the American’s with Disabilities Act was passed. I was trained on that law, and was responsible for compliance on the staffing side. Many times I went into a department proclaiming the time in the fullness of time a new law has been passed – the old way of doing things must go – and the new way has arrived. Turn away from the old systems and values and follow what I am going to tell you. Believe the HR guy and you will be blessed! Those were never very popular meetings – because people don’t like to change – they don’t like to be told that they way they have done thing is wrong they don’t like to be confronted with a decision. David Garland said, “The divine rule blazed abroad by Jesus, therefore, requires immediate human decision and commitment: repentance, submission to God’s reign.” There is a new sheriff in town calling for a personal response.

### **Calling (16-20)**

Now in our western movies after the Sheriff puts the law out there – what does he do next? In many cases he begins to surround him with helpers. He appoints some deputies, he maybe gathers a posse to capture a bad guy. Jesus is not going to be a Lone Ranger. He moves from preaching to calling: “As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed Him (1:16-18). First notice Peter and Andrew were brothers. We have a family dynamic in the ministry. Thursday night Tammy and I went and heard Dr. David Jeremiah at

Nokia Theatre – He and his wife began by introducing some of the staff at Turning Point ministries, and two of his key staff were his adult children. He said, “People tell me dozens of reasons why I should not work with my children, but I can give you hundreds of reasons why it is great!” Family together in ministry is part of the divine plan here. Second observation is that they are fishermen – not surprising given the geography. Mark says they were “casting a net in the sea.” We can’t say for sure, but this was probably a poor family. The poor fishermen did not have a boat – they would have to cast their net from the shore.

Continuing: Mark 1:19 Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother (another set of brothers) who were also in the boat mending the nets. Mark 1:20 Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him. What do you notice here? They left Dad in the boat with the nets and hired help! In light of the call of the gospel – **here** they are called to leave family behind to follow Christ. They also have hired servants – and a boat. They are a little better off economically than the previous two – different economic backgrounds.

One more thought: Does it strike you as a little odd that they would immediately leave their family and occupation – to follow Jesus. Church Father Jerome speculates that there must have been something special about the countenance of Jesus for them to leave so quickly. Maybe, but I have a different theory. Remember last week – the time of preparation with John the Baptist. Jesus did not arrive “out of the blue.” There were months of prep work by John the Baptist. I think we are seeing here the fruit of John the Baptist’s preparation. The arrival of the Promised One does not surprise them – they have been looking for Him, and they are ready to respond with obedience. So Jesus (1) **preaches** and proclaims a new way of living – he (2) **calls** disciples to be with Him in this new work. Now, we get to work.

## Teaching (1:21-28)

And so Jesus with his new disciples “Went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach” (1:21). Preaching leads to calling, which leads to teaching. If people were going to understand about the New Kingdom, they would need to be taught I remember one of my professors in college, Heiko Obermann. He was a Harvard Professor – a worldwide expert on the History of the Reformation. He retired to Tucson, Arizona where I went to College and I took his class on the reformation. I’ll never forget those classes and how he held our attention from beginning to end – he taught with the authority of one of the top experts in the world Well can you imagine what it would be like to show up for Sunday School one day, and to have God teach the class? Talk about teaching with authority. [Mark 1:22](#) They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

But then there is an interruption: [Mark 1:23](#) Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out. As a teacher it is always a challenge to know what to do when your teaching is interrupted. We were at a Family Life marriage weekend, when in a general session, a person had what looked to be a heart attack. Also, I heard about a pastor once who taught in a movie theatre and the previews sometimes came on during his sermon. How would you do if you were interrupted by a demon who says: [Mark 1:24](#) “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” Jesus is not interested in the testimony of a demon and says [Mark 1:25](#) “Be quiet, and come out of him!” [Mark 1:26](#) Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.

I've never witnessed, to my knowledge, demon possession or an exorcism of a demon – but I believe they are real. It was not a normal synagogue class that day! [Mark 1:27](#) They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him. [Mark 1:28](#) Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. Everywhere into all the coffee shops, fish markets and homes, *people are talking about one thing* – one person. “Did you hear that James and John have left home to go with him? Yes – they just left. What is that? You heard him preaching? What did he say? The Kingdom of God is here – are you sure? You would not believe what happened in Capernaum – a demon – spoke – no fooling. And this man cast him out!” The news spread like wildfire. It is a bold beginning to Jesus’ ministry – the status quo has been upset. *There is a new Sheriff in Town.*

### **Application**

Do you like to people-watch? Sometimes Tammy and I - at the mall, or at Six Flags, will just sit and watch the diversity of humanity pass by. To observe how they dress, and what they look like; some laughing, some arguing, some in a hurry, others walking slowly. As we move to application, in today’s passage we do not want to just people watch. It is easy to do. Oh look – Jesus is preaching *to those people* – they really need it. Now – listen in – Jesus is calling those other folks to follow Him – *they must be special.* Check this out – those people are amazed at Jesus’ teaching and he cast out a demon –*how interesting, how nice for them.*

**He preaches to you today that the time has come – the Kingdom is at Hand!** Will you repent of your sins? Will you believe in the gospel? Or will you hold onto your sin, will you

maintain other allegiances. Jesus' sermon on the Kingdom, and repentance and belief is for an audience of one – He preaches to you today – how will you respond?

**Jesus calls you today** – He says, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.” You are not asked to follow a program, or a denomination – but Him. Are you ready to sacrifice everything for Jesus? Are you willing to leave your father (so to speak) in the boat and your occupation on the shore? If God calls you to the mission field – will you go? How about if he calls you to bury a child on the mission field – is that price too high? If God calls you to give up your career to follow him – do you have the courage? To the rich young ruler Jesus said, “There is one thing you lack – sell all your possessions and follow me.” But the cost was too much - and the young man turned his back on Christ. How much are you willing to sacrifice for Jesus? “Follow me” he says – are you ready?

**Jesus wants to teach us today about the new Kingdom.** Are you ready to listen? It is not a popular message – there might be opposition and interruption. As we continue in this study, can you be amazed again that these words – are words from the mouth of God? Are have they become too familiar? Do you have ears to hear Jesus' teaching?

**Conclusion:**

Someone wrote this letter from Jesus' perspective.

Dear Church,

This is my commission to you – in fact, you might even call it a great commission. You are to go to all people everywhere and call them to become My disciples. You are to baptize them and teach them to obey all that I have commanded you.

Don't forget. I will be with you always to help you, even to the end of the world. I will never leave you nor forsake you, because I love you. Please don't forsake me.

With all my love, Jesus Christ.

And this is our response:

Dear Jesus Christ,

We acknowledge the receipt of your recent communication. Your proposal is both interesting and challenging; however due to a shortage of personnel, as well as several other financial and personal considerations, we do not feel we can give it proper emphasis at this time. A committee has been appointed to study the feasibility of the plan – we should have a report out to the congregation on the matter in the near future. You can rest assured we will give this matter careful consideration, and we will be praying for you as you seek to find other resources and other disciples. We do appreciate your offer to serve as a resource person, and if we decide to join this project in the future, we will be in touch at that time.

Cordially, The Church.

Jesus still preaches the gospel. He still calls people to follow Him. He still teaches with authority. May we respond in obedience – no matter the cost.