

Lake Cities Community Church  
January 18, 2008  
Series: On Your Mark  
Pastor Craig Schill

**“Start Spreading the News”**  
Mark 3:7-19

*In today's world - news travels fast.* On Thursday January 15<sup>th</sup>, at 3:27pm less than a minute after takeoff, the pilot of US Airways flight 1549 ditched his disabled jetliner into the frigid Hudson River after a collision with a flock of birds apparently knocked out both engines, But rescuers safely pulled all 155 people on board into boats as the plane sank. Gov. David Paterson pronounced it "a miracle on the Hudson." News of this traveled quickly. A picture of the crashed plane, moments after impact, was taken by Janis Krums with his iPhone and uploaded it to the Twitter photo service and became instantly shown throughout the world. CNN and every major new network were on the story in minutes. News travels fast. Within minutes of the crash, the story was in every corner of the globe.

In our passage today – we see that this good news of the arrival of God’s Kingdom is now beginning to spread quickly - out from Galilee to the surrounding region. The first manner of this movement of the gospel is organically – and the second is through an organized program. God works through both organic grassroots ways, and also through planned initiatives – and that is what we have here – look first at verses 7-12.

**Mark 3:7-12 – Spreading of the Good News Organically**

Verses 7-12 are often described as a summary of Jesus’ ministry. Mark takes a wide-angle lens: **“Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee**

followed.” This sounds like a summary: (1) Jesus and (2) His disciples, a (3) crowd of people (4) in Galilee. Because it is a summary, most commentaries essentially skip this section – but Mark adds an important note next -

Look at the text. Jesus is by the sea, and people are coming from all over the region: from Galilee; from the province of Judea and the City of Jerusalem to the South; from Idumea – which further south than Judea. They are also coming from the east beyond the Jordan River –in the Decapolis region; and from the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, which are to the north and northwest. The news about Jesus is spreading quickly! People are coming from all over the region, from 20, 40, 60 miles away and father. Why? Verse 10

(10) For He had healed many, with the result that all those with afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. Hundreds of hands reaching out to just touch the Lord. Because Jesus is not selling snake-oil - He is healing real people with real problems: blindness, skin disease, paralysis, demon possession. As a result hundreds or thousands of people are rushing to see him. There are so many people – to actually get an appointment and talk to Jesus is unlikely – but perhaps they can at least *touch the Healer*.

A teenage blogger named Marco had the chance to shake hands with president-elect Barak Obama some time ago. He wrote: “I actually got to shake hands with Barak Obama after his “Growing American Jobs” event today. Consequently, my acne has been cleansed, and I no longer need glasses. I can feel hope radiating from my hand to every cell in my body. I’ll never wash my hands again.” I assume Marco is exaggerating, but Jesus is so effusive and powerful and radiating with healing - that even to touch Jesus was a divine experience – in chapter five we will meet a woman who thought: [Mark 5:28](#) “If I just touch His garments, I will get well.” And she touches Him and *is healed!* To touch the Lord was to touch God – and to never be the same.

And so the good news of Jesus' arrival is spreading – but before we move on – let's consider: "Why?" Why does Jesus spend all this time with the growing crowds? On the one hand we have seen Jesus try to keep the crowds down by commanding silence from demons and from healed people – now on the other hand Jesus seems to be encouraging them. We know not everyone in the crowd believes in Jesus – some do, but others are there for the show. The crowd is fickle – and by chapter 14 they will turn. As I have mentioned before - Mark often describes the crowds in negative terms – they prevent people from getting to Jesus, they force Jesus to live in the wilderness, and we will see they even prevent him from eating. The crowd wants a piece of Him – so why encourage them? Why not keep a lower profile?

There is a one-word answer – listen to pick it out: [Mark 1:41](#) Moved with **compassion**, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." [Mark 6:34](#) And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and He felt **compassion** for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; [Mark 8:2](#) "I feel **compassion** for the multitude because they have remained with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat. [Matt. 14:14](#) When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt **compassion** for them and healed their sick. [Matt. 20:34](#) And moved with **compassion**, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight Beloved - Compassion is the emotion of the Kingdom of God. Larry Moody defines compassion as, "your pain in my heart." Jesus saw the crowds of people and he was moved emotionally to feel compassion for them – and so He healed them. How are you doing in the area of compassion – feeling someone else's pain? If we are a compassionate church – people will come for all over the Metroplex to be here – Your pain in my heart. I care for you.

## **Mark 3:13-19 – Calling of 12 Disciples**

It is an observation here that sometimes God's works organically – word of mouth and other times He works through organized programs. That is what we have in verses 13-19 – Jesus' calling of his twelve disciples: “**And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach and to have authority to cast out the demons**” (1:13-14).

I was a Residence Hall Director for three years at Northern Arizona University. Well, each semester we had to hire Resident Assistants to fill the vacancies we had. All the different hall directors would come together on what we called “draft day.” All of the candidate's names were put up on the walls on butcher paper and we had studied their applications beforehand. And during the meeting, we would jockey and negotiate for the best candidates – like selecting a kickball team in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade – you wanted to best people on your team. The top candidates went first and those who were not picked were encouraged to apply again the following semester.

Now Jesus had a large group of disciples to work from – dozens of men – maybe 100? What criteria did he use to select his 12 disciples? I mean of all the billions of people that have lived since creation – why these 12. Why did they get the most coveted invitation of history – selected to spend time with God? Well, to be honest, we don't know – the text doesn't tell us. One of the other gospels tells us that he spent the night in prayer seeking wisdom – and then he came with his list. But even though the text doesn't tell us – we do have some theories. You may or may not have heard of them – but I'd like to think through them together.

The first theory is that Jesus had been quietly watching the broader group of disciples around him, and took note of those who were the most faithful. The previous weeks were a

testing period. These 12 showed potential. They were FAT Christians – have you heard that? Faithful, available and teachable. In other words, the disciples were the cream that rose to the top. This was the talented and gifted group. The corollary is that when you go to disciple another person – look for a faithful, available and teachable person. That is what I have believed most of my life, but I don't believe it any more – I have two major problems with this theory.

First, if these were the top performers in the class, they sure didn't show it. The gospels record more of their failures than successes. They are not teachable – they often don't understand Jesus, or they miss key lessons they were suppose to learn. They jockey for top position pridefully arguing who is the best. Thomas is doubtful, Peter has his foot in his mouth half the time. Judas will betray Christ – and they all desert him in the end. They certainly don't act like the most spiritual group available.

My second problem with this theory is that it just doesn't seem to me to be how God works. If Jesus' plan is to only use the most gifted people – where does that leave you or I? Does God only use the best and brightest? And the rest of us are left behind with the “other people.” *If Jesus only selected the top players - he certainly would not have chosen me*, and probably not you either. I would propose that the “Jesus chose the most spiritual people” theory does not work.

Consider another theory – which is that rather than choosing the top people, *Jesus chose those from the bottom of the barrel*, on purpose. He chose those no one else would choose. These were uneducated men – sinful men. The disciples fail over and over, but Jesus is not surprised by this and he never gives up on them – he teaches them and restores them. This is the “Bad News Bears,” of the first century, and through their selection Jesus is saying – “If I can use even these people – then you know that I can use you, too.” If you have ever failed God in your life – if you

have denied Him, if you have stuck your foot in your mouth, if you have doubted – then you are in good company because if you are willing to repent and learn from your mistakes - He will forgive and use you to change the world. As long as you are willing to follow-him completely. This seems to me to be how God often works: [1Cor. 1:27](#) but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the **weak things** of the world to shame the things which are strong, [Mark 10:31](#) “But many who are **first, will be last**; and the last, first.” Maybe Jesus chose the last ones and not the first ones.

So Jesus [Mark 3:16](#) appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), [Mark 3:17](#) and James, the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”); [Mark 3:18](#) and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; [Mark 3:19](#) and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him. And this group of rag-tag fishermen turned the world upside down and pay the ultimate price. After the resurrection they became a galvanized force of spiritual power. We don’t know all the details of their lives, but church tradition holds (most of the following is from the Fox’s Book of Martyrs):

**Simon Peter** – Preached the gospel powerfully. Was killed in Rome by crucifixion – Jerome records he was crucified upside down because he said he was unworthy to be killed in the same manner and form as the Lord. **James (son of Zebedee)** – First of the remaining 11 to be martyred. Killed by Herod Agrippa in A.D. 44. His accuser repented of his sin and they died together – beheaded. **John (brother of James)** – the “beloved disciple” who wrote the Gospel of John and Revelation – ministered in Ephesus and Rome. The only apostle to escape a violent death. **Andrew** – Preached in many Asiatic nations. Upon arrival in Edessa was crucified on a cross, the two ends fixed transversely in the ground – hence the term “St.

Andrew's cross." **Philip** – Ministered in Upper Asia – was whipped and crucified in Heliopolis in Phrygia in A.D. 54. **Bartholomew** – Translated and brought the gospel of Matthew to India – where he was cruelly beaten and crucified. **Matthew (Levi)** – Wrote the gospel that bears his name. Took the gospel to Parthia and Ethiopia where he was martyred – killed with a halberd in the city of Nadabah, A.D. 60. **Thomas** – Preached the gospel in Parthia and India – where he was killed by being thrust through with a spear. **James (Son of Alphaeus)** – Preached the gospel in Egypt where he was crucified and later his body sawed into pieces. **Thaddaeus (St. Jude)** - Preached the gospel to the Armenians. Martyred in Lebanon by clubbing – A.D. 65. **Simon (the zealot)** – Preached the Gospel in Mauritania, Africa and even Britian – where he was crucified in A.D. 74. **Judas Iscariot** – Betrayed Christ and committed suicide. But had he repented of his betrayal, like Peter, he would have been forgiven.

Even before his death Jesus said “**If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.**” If you want to save your life, you will lose it – if you lose your life – you will find it. What I want you to remember from this message is that you don't have to be the smartest person to follow Jesus, or the most gifted. You don't have to have great talents and be able to give a polished speech – Jesus says – I'm looking just for one thing – “A person willing to give up everything – everything and follow me.” Are you willing to give it all to Him and follow? That is true discipleship.