

Psalm 62:6-7 For God alone my soul in silence waits; truly, my hope is in him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold, so that I shall not be shaken.

Introduction

I never paid much mind to the impact of my voice. I spent a lot of time not wanting to talk in public. I was safer staring out the window of the backseat of the car as a kid, retreating to the back of the classroom and hiding as a student, and sitting in the pew furthest back as a new Christian. I've only considered my voice to be merely a voice to me and my inner circle but lacking weight apart from carrying words into the air. I didn't put much thought into the reality that we come into the world knowing one voice well: the voice of the one who carried us for a little over nine months. It's the first voice we *know*; the second being that of the other parent but in a muffled way. I recall with clarity the screeches of my babies quieting across the OR as soon as I spoke: *it's okay little one, mama's here*.

I put even less thought into the impact the voices of my children would have on me. I recall vividly standing amid a large group of moms at a birthday party for Jack when a child's yelp and cry sounded from across the park where dads and kids were splashing in a shallow creek. We all went quiet listening. And then I took off. No other mom ran, just me because it was my kid and none of theirs. I knew that voice because it was the voice of my child, and he needed me.

While I learned something about the power of my voice by becoming a mother, this knowledge isn't relegated to motherhood. The voices of siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews, grandparents and grandchildren, friends, lovers turn our heads and bring warmth to our insides; it's their voices we miss terribly when they walk this timeline no more. We also love and miss the sound of the barks, meows, oinks, baaas, maaas, neighs, and moos (etc.) of the animalkind we care for.

Mark 1:16-18

And while passing by alongside the sea of Galilee [Jesus] saw Simon and Andrew-- the brother of Simon—while throwing nets into the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Come (!) behind me, and I will make you to become fishermen of people." And immediately they dropped the nets and followed him. (Mk 1: 16-18, *translation mine*).

Mark wastes no time getting us from the announcement of the divine son Jesus the Christ (1:1), into the waters of the Jordan (1:9-11), dropped into the wilderness temptation (1:12-13), and to the calling of the disciples (1:16-20) by way of briefly articulating the good news (ευαγγελιον).¹ The thrust of chapter one is the announcement that the ευαγγελιον has come into the world; it's this good news that John the forerunner of the Christ

¹ RT France *The Gospel of Mark* NIGTC Grand Rapids, MI: 2002. 88. "The narrative moves on rapidly from scene to scene, carrying the reader on by its own momentum rather than by any formal structural markers."

proclaimed waist deep in water, and Jesus, the Christ, fulfills² as the divine herald.³ For Mark, the content of the εὐαγγέλιον: “...the time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God is has come near; repent⁴ and believe in the good news” (Mk 1:15).⁵

Mark isn't mindlessly rattling off details about the beginning of Jesus's ministry; Mark is writing to disciples who are presently facing persecution and is eager to show them what it means to be a good disciple. Thus, the calling of disciples accentuates none of this is their doing but God's. Mark's people heard the voice of God call them and responded rightly⁶ by following just like Jesus's disciples did. Therefore, they like these men, are with Christ amid the suffering and persecution. Mark establishes that faith and following are inextricably linked; *hold steady, little church*, Mark maternally comforts, *keep the faith; God hears your cries and comes; God is with you*.

God has heard the cries of God's people; the good news is on the move.⁷ And where does it go? To the downtrodden and exhausted. Jesus goes neither to the religious teachers and elders nor to those who are wealthy and lead, but to the simple men, throwing simple nets, to catch fish.⁸ Jesus goes not to the temple but to the sea. Jesus goes not to the powerful rulers but to the powerless ruled—from these he calls his disciples; to these the kingdom of God comes near. It's here among this imperfect, rag-tag, group of laborers smelling of sweat and fish and sea where the kingdom and kingship of God is secured.⁹

² France 90, “For now the reader is expected to know it already, or must simply take it on trust. There is no place here to spell it out, since John himself is no longer in focus, and to delay over the details of his story at this point would distract attention from his successor, who now takes, and will retain, his place in centre stage. The role of the forerunner is over; the time of fulfilment has come.”

³ France 90-1, “There is an important element of continuity between John and Jesus. The same participle κηρυσσων which described John's ministry (v.4) now describes that of his successor, and at least one of the elements in that proclamation is the same...[the overlap being the ‘forerunner motif’] but also the messianic herald of Is 40:9 52:7; 61:1 whose role is to announce εὐαγγέλιον...and who is himself the Spirit-endowed Messiah.”

⁴ Μετανοείτε (first principle part: μετανοέω) in v.15 it is an imperative 2nd person plural verb: a command to repent. The verb can also be translated as: you change your mind/purpose. It can also carry the idea of changing the inner person in regards to the will of God. It's as if you were going in one direction and you are caused to change your direction.

⁵ France 90, “Verses 14-15...play a crucial role in Mark's story, as the reference point for all subsequent mentions of the proclamation initiated by Jesus and entrusted by him to his followers. Here is the essential content of the εὐαγγέλιον to which the people of Galilee are summoned to respond.”

⁶ France 93, “With the beginning of Jesus' ministry, therefore, a new era of fulfilment has begun, and it calls for response from God's people”

⁷ France 90, “Down there, people had had to make a special journey to John, but now Jesus is going to where people are, in the inhabited areas of his own province.”

⁸ France 94, “...the Messiah himself refuses to assert his authority by an impressive show of divine...pomp and pageantry. The kingdom of God comes not with fanfare but through the gradual gathering of a group of socially insignificant people in an unnoticed corner of provincial Galilee.”

⁹ France 94, “They [the disciples called] may, and often will, fail him and disappoint him, but their role is crucial to the achievement of his mission, for it is through this flawed and vulnerable group of people that God's kingship will be established.”

Jesus doesn't ask them to follow; he commands it.¹⁰ It's a command commanding the action in its entirety (now): *Come behind me! (Now!)* Unlike other rabbis who were sought by future students, Jesus calls his disciples to follow him.¹¹ These disciples will ask not: *can I sit at your feet, rabbi?* Rather they will have to self-reckon: *Will I come behind Jesus? Will I follow Jesus?* The crux of the predicament being the necessity of an overhauling and upending of their lives as they know it. Simon (Peter) and Andrew, as well as James and John (vv19-20) are called into apprenticeship that demands leaving everything they knew as *is* to become *was* in order to embrace *what will be*.¹²

This is the core of what it means to “repent” (μετανοιετε) proclaimed in the good news. It's not about some verbal “sorry” or about professing how wretched you are. Instead, it's about being called to reconsider things, to change your mind/purpose in the world, to align with the will of God and not the will of humanity—these two things rarely aligning (if ever). Jesus tells Peter and Andrew they'll no longer fish fish to eat but fish people out of harm's way. If they follow their lifestyle *will* change.¹³ If James and John follow, they'll leave behind their father and his way of life.¹⁴ These fishermen are the epitome of what it means to repent and believe: they heard the voice of love—who spoke the cosmos into existence—and they turned, dropped their nets, and walked with God. To repent and believe is not about verbal self-flagellation because of God's wrath in some desperate attempt to make God love you. It's about being made aware God's love comes *to* you lovingly calling you into God's presence like a mother seeking and calling her beloved child to her bosom. *It's okay little one, mama's here.*

Conclusion

Simon, Andrew, James and John heard love call them into love's presence and couldn't do anything else but drop their nets and follow love. They didn't follow an abstract concept of elusive warm feelings, but a tangible, fleshy, active, living and breathing love walking in the world. They won't follow perfectly, but perfection isn't the point; Love walking in the world is. It's this living, breathing, active love they'll proclaim after Jesus leaves and sits down at the right hand of God. It's this living, breathing, active love that'll cost them not only their livelihood, but also their life breath as they proclaim a love that upended and overhauled their society and their status-quo. Following this active, living, breathing love and asking the self-reckoning question that day on the shore, changed not just their lives but the lives of many others.

¹⁰ δευτε οπισω μου: come (!) after me. Δευτε is an aorist active imperative 2nd person plural verb indicating the action being commanded is being commanded as a whole.

¹¹ France 96, “Rabbis didn't call their followers; rather the pupil adopted the teacher. Jesus' preemptory summons, with its expectation of radical renunciation even of family ties, goes far beyond anything they would be familiar with in normal society. It marks him as a prophet rather than a rabbi.”

¹² France 96, “Simon and Andrew are being called to follow Jesus as their leader, in a relationship which went beyond merely formal learning to a fulltime “apprenticeship’.”

¹³ France 97

¹⁴ France 97

This love, this active, living, breathing love set the world in motion, keeps it in motion, and comes near and calls us today. The same love that walked along the wet sand of the sea of Galilee, walks on the frozen ground of this Ute land at the base of the National Monument calling us. We are the sought, the Beloved. And, we, like the disciples, must ask the same question: *will I come behind Jesus? Will I follow after Jesus?*

To follow will upend your life; to follow love, God, Jesus, will overhaul everything you know to be true about the world. If you drop your nets, you'll walk away from that which is rendered "what was" to embrace "what will be." The encounter with God in the event of faith—working out through "repentance" and "believing"—is death to the old age and old person and new birth into the new age as a new person (not as "sinless and good" but as "new and filled with divine love of God's spirit"). The kingdoms of humanity rage against the way of love of the kingdom of God. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to behave as if God's eternality eclipses the mortality of our human institutions.¹⁵ He asks them to follow love so that through them and by them something new comes forth from death. "For the external structures of this world are slipping away," (7:31b).¹⁶ *It's okay little ones*, Paul comforts, *God's near*. The new age is populated with new creations perpetuating love and life and light into the world and letting that which is of the old age slip away so that something new can be built in its place, letting the divine phoenix of life break from the ashes of death.

¹⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* TNIGTC 585, "...Paul's point is not the transiency of creation as such....but the fact that its outward pattern, in social and mercantile institutions, for example, has no permanence.' To combine Barrett's emphasis on social, political and commercial institutions with the notion of outward appearance with Hering's 'disappearing across the stage' we translate the sentence as **For the external structures of this world are slipping away.**"

¹⁶ Thiselton 585, "The crumbling of the present world order is indicated by παραγει γαρ το σχημα τοθ κοσμου τουτου...Paul's eschatological frame indicates a dynamic cosmic process. Hence we translate, **For the external structures of this world are slipping away.**"