

Putting Off Until Tomorrow What Must be Done Today

Mark 1:14-20

The Gospel of Mark #4

Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteous, and these things will be given to you as well.

I hate to be the one to break the news to you, friend, but if you are an individual that defines tomorrow not as the day that comes after today, but instead as that mythical land where 99% of all your productivity, motivation, and achievement is stored, then the odds are great that you are highly skilled and highly experienced at putting the “pro” in procrastinate. When your grandmother told you that you wouldn’t amount to anything because you procrastinate and you responded with these words: “just wait and see,” then you officially joined the Future Leaders of Tomorrow Work Force at that moment. When you learned how to do 30 minutes’ worth of work in 8 hours and 8 hours’ worth of work in 30 minutes in your first job as the janitor of a KOA campground, then you officially joined the Future Leaders of Tomorrow Union at that precise moment. When you waited until the last possible second to do your homework in college because you reasoned that at that last possible second you were older and therefore wiser, then you became a Front Office Executive in the Future Leaders of Tomorrow’s Union at that moment. And friend, when you bought the book on Procrastination and told yourself that you would start reading it tomorrow, you knew it was time to retire from the Procrastinators Union at that exact moment.

The truth is we are so accustomed to putting off until tomorrow what must be done today that we tend to think of procrastination as a highly technical form of skilled labor and a spiritual gift from God Almighty. If we didn’t, we wouldn’t say “I’ll do it tomorrow.” The truth is we like to put off until tomorrow what must be done today because we are comfortable living with the notion that there is a better day ahead, there is a better effort on the horizon, and there is a better result that awaits. But that day will not be today. Well, friend, if you search the Scriptures, you will not find one single verse that allows us to find grace for today on tomorrow’s bread. For tomorrow may never come. However, if you search the Scriptures, you will find that yesterday is history and tomorrow is a mystery. And that is specifically why we call the present, well, the present.

People of God, I want to tell you this morning that putting off until tomorrow what must be done today is not a highly technical form of skilled labor, nor is it a spiritual gift from God Almighty. As a matter of fact, you’ll be surprised to learn from the Word of God this morning that the first time Jesus went on the offensive against the Devil, he did so by engaging the Great Deceiver in area where the Evil One had been virtually undefeated prior to the Son of God’s First Coming. And that’s the area of procrastination of spiritual decisions: the area of putting off until tomorrow the spiritual decisions that must be made today. Immediately! Without delay! Think about that for a moment. When our Lord Jesus Christ was fresh out of spiritual bootcamp in the wilderness, he engaged in an offensive against the Kingdom of Darkness by calling his disciples to follow him immediately, to follow Him today. And to follow Him without delay. Therefore, my objective this morning is to tell you why you cannot spiritually afford to put off until tomorrow what absolutely must be done today. To do that, please turn with me to Mark 1:14-20.

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” ¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James’s son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Reasons you can’t afford to put off until tomorrow what must be done today:

1. You’ll miss today’s Galilee by hoping for tomorrow’s Jerusalem.

- **Home of Not One Well Known Restaurant** – (1) When you travel to a big city, one of the first questions you ask is “what’s the best restaurant for local cuisine?” In New Orleans, you make a beeline to Brennan’s for Creole Jambalaya. In Chicago, you go to Pizanos for Deep Dish Pizza. In Philadelphia, you go to Jim’s on South Street for a Philly Cheesesteak. (2) When you go to a small city, your inquiry changes a bit. You ask if there’s anything to eat in the town period. Because it’s home to not one well known restaurant.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** For the People of the Book, Jerusalem was the epicenter of spirituality. Galilee, on the other hand, was the epicenter for farming, fishing, and living out in the sticks. It is, therefore, Jesus made Galilee the epicenter for his ministry intentionally. His miracles and his message started in the region most overlooked.
- **Textual Emphasis (v14):** *¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.*
- **The Jerusalem and Galilee Spiritual Dichotomy:** (1) Jerusalem - People journeyed to Jerusalem for all seven festivals. “We’ll start our journey for Jerusalem tomorrow,” they said “to experience the Lord’s Presence. People journeyed to Jerusalem to go to the temple, make sacrifices, and, perhaps, get a blessing from the high priest. “We’ll start the journey for Jerusalem tomorrow,” they said, “to do these things.” (2) Galilee, on the other hand, was the region of the Nazareth. What good can come from Nazareth? It was the region of the unsophisticated like Elijah. It was the region of the unscrupulous like Mary of Magdala (Mary Magdalene), and it was region of the unclean and unkempt fisherman like

Peter and Andrew, James and John. (3) But Galilee became the Son of God chose to make his mark during everyday life. It was the region of the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, and the turning of water to wine.

- **App:** We often think strides in our spirituality will come tomorrow as we journey to Jerusalem. When the truth is our growth in Jesus begins right now, during everyday life. In Galilee.

2. You'll miss today's "on earth as it is in heaven" by hoping for tomorrow's by and by.

- **If I Could Build a Kingdom on Earth** – (1) I would make it my mission to make it a huge kingdom that keeps getting bigger and bigger. I would do this by sending out my army to take new territory. (2) When I gained control over the new territory, I would force them to be like me as much as possible. I might even build a statue of me and institute the particulars of religion, education and the arts that conform to my way of thinking. (3) In short, I would do everything I could to make my new territories just like me so that I could feel right at home. (4) The Kingdom of God is a lot like that. Jesus has erected his statue in our hearts and says now go about building it "on earth as it is in heaven"
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The Kingdom of God isn't another way of saying "heaven." It isn't just the place when yearn to go when the role is called up yonder. It isn't just the sweet by and by. The Kingdom of God is both now and not yet.
- **Textual Emphasis (15):** ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"
- **The Now and Not Yet Realities of God's Kingdom:** (1) In the text itself – "the time has come" (now); the KofG has come near" (not yet). (2) Think about it like this: (a) When Jesus said pray like this: "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," he did so on the assumption that those who heard him hoped to go to a place where God resided in the fullness of glory. But what they didn't realize is that God is up to something very particular on this earth. Any time the people of God implement the message of Jesus – when they don't lose their saltiness, when they reconcile with each other, turn the cheek; when they forgive, when they store up treasures in heaven, and when they seek the kingdom – then the rule of heaven begins to root in our world right this very instant. Not tomorrow. But today.
- **App:** The Kingdom of God isn't just a place that awaits. It's something that starts right now in your life. Today is the day for a mustard seed of faith; today is the day for the faith of a child. Today is the day for "on earth as it is in heaven" to be answered in the present by the Lord God Almighty.

3. You'll miss today's opportunity by hoping for tomorrow's possibility.

- **The Zebco 33 Classic:** (1) When I was a kid, my grandfather bought me a Zebco 33 Classic fishing reel. "Derrick," he said. "Oil it often and never let it rust." (2) It was my prize, my most treasured possession of my childhood. And I followed his commands to the letter. (3) When my son could barely walk, I bought him a Zebco 33 Classic fishing reel. "Miller," I said. "Oil it often and never let it rust." (4) It was his most prized possession, and he followed my commands to the letter. (5) Peter and Andrew's father bought them a fishing net and told them "Fold it after each use and never leave them outside unattended." And they followed his father's directions to the letter. (6) But then came Jesus. And he told them to leave their nets exactly where they were to take up something far more precious than a Zebco 33 Classic.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** For fisherman like Simon Peter and Andrew to leave their nets and follow Jesus, it meant that they had to trust the Lord's hands right at that precise moment, without delay, to make them prosper more than they trusted their well-worn hands that were accustomed to providing for themselves.
- **Textual Emphasis:** ¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake. . . ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him
- **The Reason for the Nets Emphasis:** (1) Nets for fisherman in Galilee were currency. They were gold, silver, and bouyon. And whoever had the best nets had the best opportunities to secure their future. (2) If you didn't catch much, not only could you not eat, but you couldn't pay your taxes and the Romans would put you in a debtor's prison if you did. . . particularly in Galilee. Thus, the reason people hated Matthew so much. (3) So, the commercial fishing cycle followed the same hollow and dangerous script every day. Cast your nets today. If you don't catch enough today, then mend your nets through the night in hopes of a better outcome tomorrow. (4) The last thing you would do is leave your net in a boat unless wanted to be considered a fool. Or unless Jesus called you to do just that. So, Simon Peter and Andrew considered being thought of as a fool to follow Jesus immediately was a good place to be.
- **App:** You see, the best opportunity you have today isn't to mend your nets for the prospect of a better tomorrow. It's to exchange them. And that's something that requires a tremendous amount of faith. Faith that you can't afford not to have.

4. You'll miss today's calling by hoping for tomorrow's security

- **One Day I'm Going to Get that House:** (1) Have you ever heard the phrase: "be careful what you wish for because you might get it? Well, it's true. (2) I remember saying it right after we moved to Vero Beach. And I got it. (3) But I also got a 35-year-old wooden roof, Chinese plumbing that disintegrates, an air conditioning unit that works part time and takes the summer's off, and the armadillo refuge that came with it. (4) The home we bought because we thought it provided security turned out to be a yoke with no security at all, only more expenses.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Leaving your nets to follow Jesus would have been difficult for any fisherman in Galilee. But leaving your father's boat with your father in it in order to follow him would have been far more costly, not just for inheritance purposes, but also social standing.

- **Textual Emphasis (19-20):** ¹⁹*he saw James's son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat...* ²⁰*Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*
- **Honor and Shame in Jewish Culture:** (1) Our culture doesn't operate the same way the ancient Jewish culture of the 1st century did. Not even remotely. (2) They operated based on honor and shame. You do everything to bring honor on your family and nothing to bring shame. If you brought honor to the family's good name. You earned esteem from those around you where you lived. If you didn't you brought shame and you were treated as such. (3) That's implied here with reference to Zebedee's boat and James and John choosing to leave him in it. (4) We know from an inscription in Capernaum that Zebedee was one of the most influential figures in Galilee. He was wealthy, prosperous and generous. On a column in the synagogue in Galilee the inscription reads "this column was purchased by Zebedee." That's who he was. (5) And James and John leaving him there would have brought shame. (6) No one would have done that. Unless Jesus called them.
- **App:** The calling of James and John is a picture of the work of Jesus. Jesus took our shame upon himself so that we can become the righteousness of God in him. And James and John considered at that moment the opportunity to participate in the story of the Gospel – including the shame – far more lucrative than name recognition, social standing, or inheritance. For their calling trumped their security. Ours does to. Glory be to God.