

Series: Bon Voyage

September 18, 2016

Title: One Way Ticket

[Slide 1]

Text: Mark 1:14-20

Now is the Time

Life Journey:

It is often said that Life is a journey. It's a journey marked by things like birthdays, rites of passage, times of peace and times of crisis. And it's a journey where you never know what's around the next corner.

There's no map for this journey. While we may move around from time to time, the real journey is through Time – the time that God gives us during our earthly lives.

This journey is not for the faint of heart! Nor is it a journey that we were ever meant to take alone. Remember what God said about the very first person made in His image? "It is *not good* for the man to be alone."

God sent His Son Jesus into our world to be a fellow traveler with us. He blazed the path all the way through Death itself into God's New Creation. And He offers to lead us on that same journey through His Holy Spirit. No wonder, then, that He described Himself as the "Way":

[Slide 2]

John 14:6 NIV

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Think of it: Jesus is the *Path*. When we follow Him, we know we are on course, traveling from death to Life.

[Slide 3]

I want to invite you to share this journey with others this fall. For the next 6 weeks we will be looking at what we most need for our Life Journey. And we

will be offering you the opportunity to be part of a small group – a LIFE Group – so that you can travel together.

Seizing the Time:

If you've planned a trip and had to shop for a plane ticket or booking on a cruise, you know that it's all about *timing*. The same seat on a plane can cost hundreds of dollars more on a different day of the week. In the cruise industry they actually have a specific time of the year in which they aggressively market upcoming cruises. They call it the Wave Season.

So when is Wave Season? Well, it starts just before Christmas and runs through March. If you book during that time you can cash in on things like two-for-one deals, free perks, free airfare, big discounts, even cash credits for onboard services. Anything to get you to sign up for that cruise.

It's all about timing.

Now is the Time:

Jesus said the same thing about the new faith journey that He proclaimed:

[Slide 4]

Mark 1:14-15 NIV

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

From an earthly perspective Jesus could not have chosen a worse time to make this announcement! His cousin John had called the Jewish people to go out into the desert area around the Jordan River to be baptized as the New People of God – a New Israel with God alone as King. That's why he was called "John the Baptist." But when John had condemned King Herod's adulterous marriage, Herod had him arrested.

Now Jesus walks onto the public stage in Galilee – the province governed by the same King Herod. Talk about walking into the lion's den! And Jesus dares to declare that God's Kingdom is already here. It's time to get on

board! Right there at the Bottom of the "U" God has broken in. Just when things look hopeless, God's King has appeared.

It's time.

The Call

Simon and Andrew:

So what's it look like when the King of Creation shows up in His world? Mark paints the picture for us:

[Slide 5]

Mark 1:16-17 NIV

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.

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Just another ordinary day on the shores of a lake in northern Israel. Two brothers stood by the shore casing their net into the water, like people had done for hundreds, if not thousands of years. No marching bands, no press corps, no Secret Service detail. Just a single individual walking down the beach and stopping by to talk to them.

"You're good at fishing for fish, right? How about coming with me to fish for people?"

Mark tells us that they seized the time:

[Slide 6]

Mark 1:18 NIV

At once they left their nets and followed him.

James and John:

The same scene plays itself out a little further down the shore with two more fishermen:

[Slide 7]

Mark 1:19-20 NIV

When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Once again, two men with a secure and substantial living, abandoned all to sign on to a whole new journey.

Fishing for people:

So what did it mean to “fish for people”? Well, think of what it’s like to be a fish and suddenly discover that you’ve been caught! You’re swimming around looking for food. You see a tasty treat and snap it up. And all of a sudden you’re being dragged out of the water and dumped on shore or into a boat. No warning. No time to prepare. Before you know you have a problem, it’s already too late!

In the OT this image of fishing described God breaking into the world to judge and establish His rule. No warning. No press conferences. No negotiations. All of a sudden, He appeared. As the prophet Amos put it:

[Slide 8]

Amos 4:2 NIV

The Sovereign LORD has sworn by his holiness:

“The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks.”

Now Jesus is saying that this moment of crisis has already appeared. He is offering the New Exodus journey out of the slavery of this world into the freedom and forgiveness that only God can give. There’s no time to “think about it.” There’s no time to waste. It’s time to move. The journey has already begun!

One Way Ticket

“Book it!”

So there you sit in front of your computer. It's early January: snow on the ground, bare trees, grey sky. It's going to be a long winter. And in front of you is the cruise of your dreams – on sale no less. It's Wave Season.

You start the booking process and discover that this cruise is selling out fast! In fact, there are only a handful of cabins left in your price range. What do you do next? Just turn off the computer and give it a few days? Do you hope that a whole bunch of people who have already signed up decide to back out?

You get a cup of coffee, come back to the computer, and there's just one slot left.

Only one thing to do: Book it!

That's exactly what those first followers of Jesus did. Mark tells us that "at once" they left their nets and fishing. "At once" they left family and workmates, business and tools. This is what it meant to do what Jesus had said when He proclaimed that God's Kingdom Rule had come. This is what it meant to "repent and believe."

One Way Ticket:

[Slide 9]

It's one thing to seize the moment for a 7 day cruise. You know all along that at the end of the 7 days you'll be coming back home. But imagine what it must feel like to book a one way ticket, knowing that you will never come back to where you started. Imagine what it would be like to take a journey in which you yourself changed forever – so much so that you could never be the person you were before.

That's the journey that Jesus offered Peter, Andrew, James and John. "Follow me, and I will make you into someone brand new!" And that's the journey that Jesus offers you and me. He doesn't offer a temporary escape from reality. He doesn't offer a spiritual or religious vacation. He challenges us to sign on to nothing short of a One Way Exodus from death to life, from darkness to light.

The very first words of the prayer that He gave us dare us to say:

"Our Father!"

Those two little words say that we have changed *families*. We have exchanged our old mutant spiritual DNA for God's DNA. But this only happens if and when we make the personal decision to follow Jesus. And it's a One Way Journey.

First Step of the Journey:

A journey begins when we make the commitment to take that first step. It means so much more than believing God exists or having a vague feeling that we've somehow known Him or sensed His presence. Those things are good, but not life-changing.

The journey only begins when we hear Him call us and we get out of our boat and walk away from our old life. It only begins when we seize that moment and ask God to forgive us for our sins and failures so that we can become His child.

You may have already made this decision to follow Jesus. You may have been thinking about it, but aren't sure what to do next. You may not have realized that to be a Christian meant being spiritually born all over again. In our LIFE Groups we will talk about what it means to be part of God's family – and be able to truly say that He is Our Father.

So I hope you will seize this moment and join us in this most important journey.

Bon Voyage!

LIFE Group Notes for Session One:

Getting Started:

- Greet group members and thank them for coming.
- Open with prayer.

Ice Breaker:

- Take a moment to reflect on how your personal faith journey began.
- Who were the most important people in helping you get started on that journey?
- What is the biggest challenge that you face in that journey today?

Lesson:

- The Lord's Prayer begins with the words "Our Father."
- These words take us all the way back to the great faith journey Israel took when God liberated them from slavery in Egypt. God's message to Pharaoh was: "Out of Egypt I have called my son." God was adopting the Israelite slaves as His own royal family.
- So, when Jesus tells us to say "Our Father," He is calling us to take that same journey – out of darkness and slavery to sin into God's light and forgiveness.
- But like any journey – there has to be a moment in time when the journey actually *begins*. Israel had to dare to believe that by observing Passover they would be spared the final devastating plague that God brought upon Pharaoh and his land. They had to be willing to pick up their things and leave Egypt on a moment's notice.
- It isn't enough to believe God exists or to believe that He's there for us. We are called to step out of our old life and take the journey of following Jesus.

Seizing the Moment:

- Take a moment to think about how this decision to become part of God's family applies to you.
 - Is this something that you did at some time in the past?
 - If not, are you ready to take that journey now?
- The journey is based upon Jesus' own journey when He died for our sins and rose from the dead on the third day.

- But our own personal faith journey only begins when we accept God's gift of forgiveness and ask Him to make us His child. When that happens, like Jesus we can say: "Our Father!"
- Jesus comes to live in us through His Spirit, and He leads us on this most important life journey -- all the way to God's Presence when this life is over.

Prayer time:

- If this is something that anyone in the group would like to do, pray with them right now to accept Jesus as Savior.
- For some, this will be a time to "reset" the journey and get back on track.
- Some will be facing a major life challenge at this point in their journey.
- Have group members pray for each other and agree to pray throughout the coming week.
- Thank them, once again, for being a part of your LIFE Group.

And thank you for leading them!