

CURIOUS, CONVINCED OR COMMITTED

Mark 3:7-19

Introduction:

The other day, when I was in Walmart – a whole section of candy and chocolates – Christmas candy displays. Reminder – we're approaching Christmas. That can be exciting. For a child – the toy displays, the anticipation of gifts... Christmas concerts and programs.

But the thing I think of, particularly when I am in a store – the crowds. Shopping in malls packed with people, so you can hardly walk. I don't even want to go there.

Crowds – do you like being surrounded by people? A couple of years ago – we went to a football game in Edmonton – 42,000 people, all trying to leave at the same time when the game was over. That was just a small crowd.

- A record crowd of 170,000 watched the Kentucky Derby in 2015.
- Over 115,000 fans watched Michigan play Notre Dame in 2013.
- 3.5 million attended the largest ever rock concert in 1994.
- 5 million people came out to celebrate 2016 Chicago Cubs WS win

In our text today, we see crowd of people following Jesus. As it is with most crowds there are all kinds of people there – the curious, excited to see what is happening; the convinced, who believe in what is happening; then there are the committed – those who want to be a part of making things happen.

This morning we are going to look at Mark 3:7-19 and consider the different categories of people involved.

The Crowds of the Curious

Look at v. 7 – a great crowd. It is hard to even grasp the size of the crowds. Look at the geography. Go through vv. 7-8. Consider how many people there may have been. Reminder of the incident later on, when Jesus used a boy's lunch to feed the crowd – 5000 men plus women and children.

Word travelled quickly, even without smartphones and facebook. People heard what was happening and they came out to see. They were curious. They wanted to be in on what was taking place. They heard about the miracles, and they wanted to see for themselves.

This was not just a one-time thing. We notice as we look through this next section of the book of Mark, that he keeps mentioning it:

- 3:20 – crowds, so they could not even eat
- 4:1 – a great crowd beside the sea
- 4:36 – leaving the crowd
- 5:21, 24 – a great crowd

This was a time of tremendous popularity for Jesus. Everywhere he went, the crowds followed. People pressed in around him so that he could not even get away from them. For the most part, they were the curious, the inquisitive people, trying to figure out just who this Jesus was and what he was doing.

In fact, the crowds became so great and pressed in on him and his disciples that they were in danger of being trampled. Jesus asked his disciples to prepare a boat in case they needed it.

The Crush of the Convinced

But there were others who were part of this crowd as well. These were what some would call the convinced. They had heard and seen the miracles, and they came, looking for the touch of Jesus.

Look at v. 10 – there were many who came looking for the healing that Jesus had to offer. They were determined even to touch him – remember the woman later on – if only I can touch the fringe of his garment.

There were many like that. They were the convinced. They were sure that if only they could get close enough, Jesus could help them with their illness, or their disease, or their deformities.

Even the demons—the evil spirits—knew about him. They recognized him – v. 11 – discuss briefly. Why did he instruct them to no make him known? Hard to know, but some suggest because they were lying spirits. They would not advance the cause of Jesus, but only hinder it.

So, within the crowds of the curious were the convinced, those who were certain that Jesus could help them. He could improve their life. If they just followed and could even touch him their life would be changed for the better.

But I want to spend the rest of our time in vv. 13-19 as we look at...

The Calling of the Committed

This is the third category of people—the third stage, we might say in becoming a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. Most people begin as curious, then move from the curious to the convinced. But in this next section we see Jesus calling out those who would become the faithful committed followers—people who would change the world.

We are going to look at these verses in three parts: the preparation, the plan and the people.

The Preparation v. 13

Read v. 13 – Luke tells us something that Mark doesn't mention here, but I think it is important. He says, *"In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:"* (Lu 6:12-13 ESV)

Jesus was faced with a momentous decision in choosing those who would become his special agents, his spokesmen. And he prepared for it by seeking out a place of privacy and spending the night in prayer.

What an amazing example that is for us. If Jesus, who was God in the flesh, who said, "I and my Father are one," felt the need to spend the night in communion with his heavenly Father before making such a momentous decision, how much more do we need to be in prayer when facing the decisions of life.

After spending the night in prayer he called to him "those whom he desired." Luke just says, "his disciples." Then from them he chose twelve whom he appointed and called apostles. That leads us to the next point...

The Plan v. 14-15

Two verses – tell us what the Lord had in mind – what he wanted them to do. Three things:

1. To be with him – discipleship
The Lord called these men to follow Him in a relationship of personal fellowship. He wanted to teach them His ways; He wanted them to learn from Him; He wanted to train them by personal example. All of that required closeness and fellowship. Being with Jesus should be the highest priority in our lives. If we would be like Him, then we need to spend time with Him. If we would serve Him as He desires, then we need to spend time with Him.
2. To go out and preach – proclamation of the message
Jesus chose these twelve men to proclaim his message to the nation of Israel. The message they were to preach was the gospel of the kingdom, the message Jesus had come to proclaim – see Mark 1:14-15.
It was the good news of Jesus Christ who came to save sinners. The disciples were to take this message to the people and call them to come to Jesus. What a great and high calling they received!
Now, not everyone is called to preach in that same way. But everyone of us is called to be a witness—to tell what we know and have experienced. We are to share the good news of God's saving grace with others.
3. To cast out demons – demonstration of God's power
The preaching ministry of these men was to be accompanied by miracles. They were given the power to heal the sick and to cast out devils. These were "sign gifts". They were given this power to validate their ministry to the people they preached to. I do not believe that we have these same sign gifts today. We do not need the sign gifts to validate our message. Why? The sign gifts were designed to speak to the Jewish people to let them know that their Messiah had come, 1 Cor. 14:22. Today, our message is validated by the lives Jesus changes by His grace.

There is plenty more that could be said about the ministry Jesus had for these committed ones, but just want to finish up by looking at the people he chose.

The People vv. 16-19

Twelve men – they are named here. Some of the names are very familiar, some not so much. But they were all important in the ministry and the plan Jesus had to take the gospel to the world.

Just a couple of notes about this group. It was a diverse group – fishermen, a tax collector, a freedom-fighter, even a traitor, and others we don't know much about.

One of the interesting things is that there were three men to whom Jesus gave new or additional names. Simon he called Peter, James and John he gave the surname Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder. These three men became the “inner circle” of Jesus.

The important thing about this list of men is that as we look at them and their lives, it gives us hope. They were not perfect men. In fact, one message I read had this to say:

“These men lacked spiritual understanding. They lacked humility. They lacked faith. They lacked commitment. They lacked power. These men were always getting into trouble; missing the point or Christ's teachings; lashing out at people who were different; saying the wrong thing; walking away from their commitment to Jesus; among other failures and problems.”

But despite their weaknesses, the Lord used these men to turn the world upside down for His glory. If He can use them, surely He can use us too! That gives me hope today!

Conclusion

So, where are you at today? We have seen the followers of Jesus at three levels today: the curious, the convinced and the committed. There is nothing wrong with being curious, but if our relationship with Jesus never goes beyond that, I'm not sure it has any eternal value.

Are you committed to the calling and ministry of Jesus today?