

Called to Action

Preparing my sermon for this Sunday, I found it very interesting that the appointed Gospel lesson this week is Mark 1:14-20. Mark, although second in line in our Bibles, is, by almost all Bible scholars, the oldest of the four gospels. One of its characteristics is that the author is more interested in Jesus' actions than in his teachings or words, like Matthew or Luke. The action is so important, that the word "immediately" (euthys in Greek) appears in Mark 41 times of the 59 times that is found in all the rest of the New Testament. So, almost 70 percent of the time that euthys is used in the bible, it is used in the gospel of Mark. And, if we account for the fact that Mark is much shorter than the other gospels and Acts, euthys is 15 times more likely to be found in Mark than the other gospels or Acts. He uses it to put together the events that develop the gospel story of Jesus and the response of his followers. It is a gospel of action, an action according the call of the gospel is what God expects from us.

I am naturally more inclined to be a "theory" guy than an "action" one. I like to read, to meditate, to write, to think in my "ivory tower", and when it comes to action, I need an extra motivation or push. And even though my type of person could be useful for God's kingdom, God wants us to be people of action, that go into the world to share the good news of Jesus and His kingdom and make disciples of all nation. So, what is the right motivation? I think that the passage gives a clear clue: It is Jesus' call.

After he began his ministry, Mark points out that Jesus went out on his way "preaching, teaching and healing," a perfect picture of a balanced life. He also makes clear that Jesus set time apart to be with his Father and study Scriptures (1:35), say, his spiritual life, or his academic life. He was a man of action, and to action he calls us. After his initial preaching (1:14-15), he got in touch with people around him and saw a couple of brothers (Simon and Andrew; James and John) and called them to follow him. And guess what? Immediately (euthys) they left their nets and followed him (1:16-19).

When Jesus calls, he wants us to be ready to put aside our personal preferences and follow him. We can serve him wherever we are: in our current workplaces, in our homes, in our communities. We can be his ambassadors wherever we are as long as we hear his calling and are willing obey. We need to have balanced lives, in which we dedicate time to think, meditate, pray and grow intellectually but also, lives that are ready to go into action and serve the Lord in whatever he calls us to do. The closer we are to Jesus and his message of salvation, the more active we become in his kingdom.

The gospel shows Jesus as a man of action, ready to die for our sins. Are you ready to follow in his footsteps?

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