

# THE GOSPEL OF MARK: WEEK 2

Galilee: "The First Disciples" Mark 1:14-45

**"Immediately":** im-me-di-ate-ly/i'mēdēətlē adverb: "at once; instantly;" "without any intervening time or space;" "straight away;" OR "in direct or very close relation to" – as in "similar," "close proximity to," "next," "beside."

**Commentary:** The Greek word εὐθέως - (*eutheós*) means "at once"/"directly" – or "immediately." The root word εὐθέως – or the Hebrew *הַיָּשֵׁר* (**shah:** "brief time/moment") – is used 83 times in the Bible (the English usage depends on the translation); it appears a disproportionately 35 times in the Gospel of Mark (42 times if you include synonyms). So, if you're already feeling rushed as you read through the remaining 32 verses of chapter 1 of Mark; you're supposed to! (In the ESV translation, "immediately" is used **9** times!) Not only is the Gospel of Mark the shortest of the four Gospels; it's the most breathless....

And this is the point! Our reading last week ended with Jesus being baptized and proclaimed ready to take up His purpose and mission; this week's reading starts like a time-clock that will count down, inexorably, toward the purpose behind the mission: Jesus' death – the death that brings about our salvation. There's no time to waste with narrative, extra words; just as Sgt. Joe Friday on *Dragnet* would say, the author of Mark is only interested in "just the facts, Ma'am; just the facts."

For Mark, the clock is ticking! Time is of the essence. In fact, the time is NOW! Our reading this week starts with this proclamation: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." (Mark 1:15) Jesus begins His mission – and ministry – by echoing Isaiah's prophecy that was the cry of John the Baptist, and literally saying "The time is near!" that's because it is: Jesus came to usher in the long-promised Kingdom of God – and now was the time to do it.

In fact, Jesus uses a specific term for 'time' – the word He used was "Kairos" (Ancient Greek: καιρός) meaning, "the right, critical, or opportune moment." The ancient Greeks had two words for time: "Chronos" (χρόνος) refers to chronological or sequential time, and "Kairos" signifies a proper or opportune time for action. For Jesus, the "right, critical, proper or opportune moment" had arrived; God – in Him – had come to earth – to us; it was time to take action, to respond; to repent and believe in the good news of God's love, grace and mercy – in God's coming kingdom. Jesus' use of "Kairos" was intentional: "Kairos" conjures up memories of divinely arranged moments set to happen at an appointed time. Those hearing His words would know that not only is this the moment of God's promised arrival – a promise fulfilled, but that He was the One in whom it was fulfilled.

But what was it that was coming? What could it be that was so urgent? And, what could be so compelling that with one, chance, encounter with Jesus, grown men would immediately – and literally – drop everything;

family included. With a simple statement, Jesus declares His purpose – the following 32 verses show that He immediately set fulfilling that purpose.

With quick brevity the Gospel author begins to dash off a frenzied weekend (a close reading reveals that only 2 days pass during this first, dizzying, account of Jesus' urgent mission) of teaching, healing, and staking a claim for the kingdom of God. Claiming a divine authority, Jesus doesn't delay, there's no holding back or reluctance – just a

promptitude of service as He immediately performs the work He was given to do – to bring about the kingdom.

But what is this kingdom of God? Just as Mark's Jesus is decisive, so are His actions. Jesus' choices of who to heal – along with where and when – reveal the diverse, equitable, inclusive, and liberating nature of God's kingdom where Women, widows, orphans, lepers, demon-possessed people – all have a place prepared for them. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that? Why wait? Choose now! Do it immediately.

## **Frequent positions of the word "Immediately" in Mark:**

1. It is used at the beginning of a section or paragraph to show that Mark is moving from one story to a closely related one, or from one stage in a larger story to the next. Some scholars have seen the phrase "and immediately" as a link between pairs of stories in Mark. In such cases, its work can be done by opening a new paragraph.
2. Or, quite often, Mark uses "(and) immediately" at the beginning of the second sentence in a story, or the second part of a sentence in which two simple statements are linked by the word "and". In such cases, the first statement sets the scene, and the second marks the start of the action proper.

*How soon is "immediately" in Mark?* By: Paul Ellingworth  
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