

Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” ¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Repent. Believe. Follow.

These action verbs all seem like simple enough words to understand. We hear them often, especially during these gospel lessons when Jesus is calling His disciples to join Him in His ministry. We should all have a deep understanding of what these words mean, especially when Jesus says them. So let's look at each one individually.

Repent: To repent doesn't just mean to feel remorse for something you have done. To repent means much more than merely asking for forgiveness for a sin you may have committed or something you left undone. Repentance really comes down to these familiar words from Psalm 51: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." This verse reflects a profound desire for transformation and renewal, a recognition of the need for repentance. Repentance involves a turning away from sin and a genuine desire for a change of heart.

Prior to the baptism of Jesus, when John the Baptist preached “repent”, he meant that people needed to be remorseful for their sins. They needed to adhere to the laws more closely to prevent sin. John knew that He was to prepare the way for the Lord, but he did not know the true nature of Jesus until he baptized him. At the time of Jesus’ baptism, John revealed that he knew Jesus was a holy man; but he did not know He was the Messiah. But when the sign occurred and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus during His baptism, John knew Jesus was the Messiah.

Once this occurred, the meaning of repentance changed. To truly repent the way Jesus means it is to change not only your actions and attitudes but more importantly, your belief system in order to believe in Him as your true savior. Jesus knew that the Law would not save the people. He knew that nobody would be able to uphold the

law - that had been proven over and over again. Jesus knew that He was the way, the truth and the light. In order to be saved, you don't need to merely follow the law better and feel remorse for times when you don't. Instead, you merely need to believe and in turn, believing changes your actions and attitudes.

So that leads to the next action verb: **Believe**. If true repentance means to believe, then what does it actually mean to believe? You can go to church every Sunday, have a cross around your neck at all times, even have a sign in your house that says, "In this house, we believe", But do all of those things mean anything or are they just show?

The word believe means to accept something as true, genuine, or real. An article I read on Real Christianity states "If we are to qualify to benefit from the death of

Jesus Christ by being justified and forgiven we have to believe in Him. More accurately, we must believe **on** Him. That does not mean simply to believe that He exists, or even to believe that He is the Son of God. It is not enough in itself, even to believe that He is the Saviour, or that He died on the cross to take the penalty for sin. All of those things are true and it is right for us to believe them all. However, in a certain sense, even those facts can be just head knowledge. It is perfectly possible for us to believe all those things as mere facts and still not be saved. What is needed is for us to believe **on** Jesus Christ in the sense that a man believes in a rope bridge when he steps on it to begin to walk across a deep ravine. It is one thing to have head knowledge that the rope bridge exists and even what it is made of. It is quite another thing to put your trust in it and step onto it and begin walking.”

This is the type of faith that Jesus demands from us – a faith that requires us to invest everything we possess in Him and to depend on Him alone, excluding all others and everything else. Essentially, to believe or have faith means to trust. Therefore, believing in Jesus Christ implies placing our trust in Him and relying solely on Him for salvation. It means acknowledging that the exclusive path to heaven is through Him. We cannot earn salvation. It is not based on our own merits. Instead, we are called to entrust everything we have to Jesus Christ, relying solely on Him for our salvation. Even for individuals who genuinely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, occasional doubts may naturally arise. The crucial factor is whether, despite such uncertainties, one continues to place trust in Him and relies exclusively on Him for salvation.

And this leads to our last action verb: **Follow**. To follow can mean many things in our language. It can mean to walk behind someone, to do something as a result of what someone else did, or to have similar beliefs and actions as someone else. When Jesus said “follow me” he actually meant it. He intends for us to be participants, not spectators. We are his hands and feet doing his work, not just giving lip service. In other words, not just showing up at Sunday church. Not just wearing a cross around your neck. And certainly not just by saying that you believe.

You see, following Jesus means we actually have to DO something. I think it’s important that we look at what it actually means to follow Jesus, and how we can put it into practice in our lives.

In **1 Corinthians 12:27** Paul tells us that we are the body of Christ. Think about that for minute. If you are a

Christian you are Jesus' hands and feet. You represent him to the people around you.

That is actually a huge responsibility!

As followers of Jesus, we represent Him to those around us. What we do, what we say, and how we treat others tells people something about God. Good or bad. It's like the old favorite camp song, "They will know we are Christians by our love." Because really, all of this comes down to love for others. Since we don't get to listen to the song, please listen to the words:

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord; We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord; And we pray that all unity will one day be restored. And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love. We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand; And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land. We will work with each

other, we will work side by side; And we'll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride. All praise to the Father, from whom all things come; And all praise to Christ Jesus, His only Son. And all praise to the Spirit who makes us one.

This means that we should love how Jesus loved. We should go where Jesus went. We should do what Jesus did. We should teach what Jesus taught. We should hang out with who Jesus hung out with. We should be following in Jesus' footsteps.

We should be motivated by our heart towards people. People aren't projects to be won over, or changed to your liking - they are children of God to be loved. And that's what we should do. Following Jesus means we embody the love He had for people. ALL people.

Our call is to follow Jesus and He actually expects us to be His hands and feet. He expects us to get in the game. The question for us is, how will we respond?

Repent. Believe. Follow. It takes all three action verbs to live the way God intended us to live. These three action verbs together form the noun FAITH, which is the foundation of everything. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, Your directions for us are simple. We need to repent. We need to believe. And we need to follow Jesus. Such straight forward actions that are so very hard to do. Help us, Father, to do what needs to get done in this world. Help us to truly change our beliefs, actions and attitudes. Help us to believe with all of our heart, mind and soul. And help us to follow your Son by loving others the way He does. Life is not about us as we may think. Life is about loving others and about spreading your word

so that the Kingdom of Heaven is available to everyone.
For that, we desperately need help, because we fail every
day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.