

**"Immediately"**  
**A Sermon for the Monroe Community Church, UCC**  
**Monroe, Maine**  
**Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**  
**Sunday, January 21, 2018**  
**Scripture: Mark 1:14-20**

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the good news."

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea -- for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Mark 1:14-20

Will you pray with me. Beckoning God, you call to us so often, and yet too often we don't act as if we hear you. Give us listening ears, discerning minds, and open hearts as we explore your word yet again this morning. Amen.

"Immediately," Simon and Andrew followed Jesus when he called out to them. Then Jesus, "immediately" called out to James and John to follow him. "Immediately" things happen in the Gospel of Mark. "Forty-two times this book uses the Greek hurry-up adverb, *euthos*, translated several different ways into English."<sup>1</sup> It's "immediately," but it's also "at once," and "without delay."

Each of the four Gospels in the New Testament gives details of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. They each take a different slant on the telling of those details. In a quick nutshell review, the Gospel of Matthew focuses on linking Jesus to his spiritual forefathers and mothers "from the beginning," affirming his Jewish heritage. The Gospel of Luke focuses on Jesus' social justice concerns throughout his ministry. The Gospel of John focuses on the theology of Jesus, his role as Son of God, as the "way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) of God.

But the Gospel of Mark doesn't detail Jesus' spiritual lineage, or his marching about for social justice causes, or his theological philosophy.... Mark focuses on Jesus the action man, moving fast from place to place.... calling people to follow him, preaching about the Kingdom of God, and healing all who are sick in any way.... proclaiming "immediately" all around the countryside!

Reading the Gospel of Mark is kind of like watching "Doc Martin" or "Last Tango in Halifax" on Acorn TV -- the overall story moves quickly from situation to situation and back again, all the while the viewer comes to see the connections between the individual vignettes. The Gospel of Mark is like that.... Jesus moves fast from situation to situation.... and as we read of each one, the connection between them begins to take shape.... the Kingdom of God has come and Jesus calls out to all to come to attention immediately!

Here's my question for you this morning, "What have you done 'immediately' in your life? What has caused you to get up at once and get moving without delay?"

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<sup>1</sup>*The Student Bible, New International Version*, notes by Philip Yancey and Tim Stafford, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002, p. 1046.

Perhaps it was when your mother told you to get up and get ready to go to school. Or not.... and you laid there in bed until you really had to immediately get up and get going.

Perhaps it was when you dawdled and dawdled about getting that school assignment done, and then you had to immediately get it done or you weren't going to get a grade and move forward in school. Perhaps it was when you kept putting off decisions about what you were going to do after high school, and then you immediately had to either look for a job or fill out that college application or figure out where you were going to live when your parents said, "O.K., you're on your own now."

Perhaps it was when you got the call that someone near and dear to you had been in an accident or fallen ill, and you needed to immediately head to the hospital to be with them.

Perhaps it was when you forgot your anniversary or your beloved's birthday, and you had to immediately get to the store to buy a card, and maybe a box of chocolates to go with it.

Perhaps it was when you couldn't ignore the call any longer to be in cahoots with Jesus, and you immediately went to the next worship service you could find, only to discover to your amazement that you had "come home" and didn't know you'd been away.

That last one really got *me* -- although *my* immediately took more than a few years to rattle me enough that I had to drop everything I'd been doing for my whole adult life as a very secular and unchurched babyboomer.... and head to seminary in 1995.

What have you done immediately in your life? Mark, and the other three Gospels in their detailings of the story, too, tell us that four fishermen heard this guy Jesus call to them and they dropped everything -- their nets, their livelihoods, their families, their personal hopes and dreams -- and followed him.... immediately....

Don't you think they might have wanted to check in with "the Mrs.," or their parents, or a good friend to say, "I just heard this guy Jesus and I think he's for real... and even though I don't have a clue what he's talking about, I'm going to follow him. See you!" All those kinds of details are left out of the story.... and yet, we're drawn into the story again and again two thousand years later.

In Mark, Jesus immediately calls others to follow him immediately, he heals and those he speaks to or touches are immediately affected, he teaches and others -- a few -- immediately get his message: The Kingdom of God has arrived! Come and get it! Don't give it a second thought or you might return to the security of where you've been all your life -- no matter if it was good or bad, nourishing or draining.

This *new* kingdom is not of this world, Jesus proclaims.... it is not of political or religious or social wrangling.

This kingdom is not full of winners and losers, but of forgivers and those forgiven.

This kingdom is not made up of super human strongmen, but of healers and those in need of healing.

This new kingdom is not pitting wrong doers against right doers.

*This* kingdom is of God and of the one who came to minister and heal to all who would call him the Christ in their lives.

"Come and get it," Jesus calls out. Have you gotten it? Have you thought lately of that now worn out, and some would say tacky, quip, "What would Jesus do?" as you've thought about your life and your relationships.... about how you respond to the chaotic news of each day? Do you get angry about it all more often than you think quietly and compassionately about it? I have to confess in the past year or two I've felt angry more often than not about a lot of things, in the news, in our communities, even in the realm of "church business" ....

How often do you hear in the back of your mind, and in your heart, Jesus' call, "Follow me.... and come immediately, won't you? Don't delay. Don't think about it too long. Don't labor over all the reasons why you can't come right now. Just come... and get it.... the Kingdom of God awaits you immediately!

Let the people say, "Amen."