

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 01: 12-20

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord! It's time to read the Bible again. Today, we will continue to read from Mark chapter 1, from verse 12 to verse 20.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth of Galilee, living an ordinary or even slightly humble life as a carpenter until He was 30 years old. When the time came, He went to the Jordan River near the Dead Sea and was baptized by John the Baptist. When He came up from the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and He was anointed by the Holy Spirit to begin His ministry. God the Father specifically spoke from heaven, saying, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22, NKJV) This person, who appeared humble and ordinary from the outside, was the beloved Son of God. For the past 30 years, His life, words, and actions were so perfect. God did not let Him be born in a palace or in a wealthy environment, but in a poor carpenter's home, and He also had to rely on His hands to work and make a living. In such an environment, He maintained purity like God and peace with people. He obtained the Father's pleasure.

Verse 12: "Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness."

The Chinese Union Version translates this word as "就," while in English it is translated as "immediately," and in Greek it is "εὐθὺς" (euthys). This word appears frequently in the Gospel of Mark, a total of 42 times, indicating that Jesus Christ's ministry did not have a moment of idleness. As soon as He was baptized, the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. It seems that as soon as the Father finished speaking, the Holy Spirit eagerly urged, drove, and compelled Jesus into the wilderness.

Jesus' temptation in the wilderness after His baptism is recorded in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. Both passages mention that the Holy Spirit "led" Jesus into the wilderness, indicating that going to the wilderness was the will of God the Father and was guided by the Holy Spirit. The accounts in Matthew and Luke both focus on Jesus being hungry after fasting for 40 days, and at this time, the devil came to tempt Him. The devil's three important temptations: The first starts with the physical needs of man, asking Jesus to turn stones into bread to meet the body's needs; next, it addresses the needs of the soul, to enjoy the glory of all the kingdoms and satisfy the soul; or it addresses the needs of the spirit, to exalt the spirit through miracles. These three aspects of the devil's temptations are also the temptations that every Christian will experience in their lifetime of following the Lord. However, Mark does not record these things; instead, he only uses one verse to tell us what happened in the wilderness.

Verse 13: "And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him."

Mark emphasizes the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness enduring temptation from Satan. As we've mentioned, the Gospel of Mark essentially recounts Peter's experiences. Peter was a very practical apostle; he was straightforward and outspoken. In the Gospels, he was often used by Jesus as an example to teach the disciples. Some were positive, but most were negative. He deeply knew that following the Lord was a process of frequently experiencing temptations. If one could overcome some small temptations every day, they will be able to stand firm for the Lord in crucial moments and provide a good testimony.

Therefore, Mark, who followed Peter, focuses on the 40 days in the wilderness, where Jesus was tempted by Satan every day. Satan is the chief culprit in corrupting God's creation. Originally, God created all things and saw them as good, but when Satan came, he began to do destructive work, causing disharmony among the creatures. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, His daily victory over Satan's temptations brought a beautiful result: He was able to be with the wild beasts.

Because of man's fall, all things created by God also suffered, so Romans 8:19 says, "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God." At that time, they will also be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Isaiah 11:6-10 shows us that when Jesus comes again to establish His millennial kingdom, all created things will live together in harmony and beauty. During that time, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He was able to live in harmony with the wild beasts. Not only that, but angels also came to minister to Him. Angels are all ministering spirits, and they supply people's needs according to God's will. In fact, every saint who has received grace and salvation today is the same. Each one of us is a precious child of the Father, and in our lives, God arranges angels to serve us. However, most of us have veils over our faces and cannot see the spiritual reality. Let us pray to God to open our eyes to see beyond the material world, to perceive the spiritual reality, especially in times of peril when God often commands His angelic hosts to encamp around us, to protect and supply us, so that we may pass through the valley of the shadow of death without fear of harm, for His rod and His staff, they comfort us.

Verse 14-15: "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'"

Jesus, having triumphed over the temptations of the devil after His baptism, could have started His ministry immediately. However, He waited for another year, until John the Baptist was imprisoned, before beginning His public ministry. Jesus came to earth for only 33 and a half years, with more than 90% of that time spent in Nazareth living the life of a carpenter. It wasn't until He was 30 years old that He could start His ministry, but because His forerunner, John the Baptist, had not yet

exited the stage, Jesus chose to minister quietly and privately, demonstrating remarkable patience and humility.

In the sovereignty of God, John made a special note in the Gospel of John of the period when Jesus began His ministry privately, documenting the people He encountered and the things He did during that time, which spans from John 1 to John 4. Jesus' private ministry continued until John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod the tetrarch for criticizing Herod's marriage to his brother's wife. It was only then that Jesus began His public ministry.

His ministry started in Galilee, which Isaiah 9:1-2 prophesied about, describing Galilee as a region inhabited by Gentiles, located in the northern part of Israel. After the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel, Gentiles were brought to live in Galilee by the Assyrian king, making it a place despised by the Jews. However, Isaiah prophesied in advance that because of Jesus Christ, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined." (Isaiah 9:2, NKJV) Jesus began His ministry in the land of Galilee, and the content of Jesus' gospel was also very simple: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

The kingdom of God is the realm where God reigns, where His will is obeyed. The kingdom of God, in today's context, is an abstract concept. When God's people come together, exalt God, glorify God, allow God's will to be carried out among them without hindrance, and allow God's authority to operate freely, this group has the reality of the kingdom of God.

However, for the kingdom of God to be manifested on earth, it is necessary to wait until Christ comes again to establish a righteous and just kingdom. Only then will there be an actual manifestation of the kingdom of God. Before that, the mission of the church is to preach the gospel of the kingdom and call people to repent; that is, to call people's minds to be transformed. Previously, they turned their backs on God, but now they have turned around. Their minds have changed, and they are willing to believe in the gospel.

The gospel is fundamentally Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection, which encompassed all things, resolved all our negative circumstances. And this resurrection is a surpassing resurrection, bringing a brand new beginning in our lives, which was the message Jesus Himself preached at that time. Now, 2000 years later, we are still preaching the same message. This message of the gospel is to be continually proclaimed until Christ comes again to establish the kingdom of God.

Verse 16: "And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen."

After John had been put in prison, Jesus began His public ministry. He started from the Sea of Galilee and encountered Simon and Andrew. This passage doesn't record the first meeting between Jesus and them. In fact, a year earlier, when Jesus came to be baptized by John, they had already met. At that time, Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Andrew followed Jesus upon John's recommendation and stayed with Him overnight.

Later, in John 1:40-42, Andrew eagerly "first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, 'You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas' (which is translated, A Stone)." This prefigured Peter's transformation, eventually becoming a living stone to build the spiritual temple. However, it seems that this initial encounter didn't bring about significant changes in their lives, as these brothers returned to fishing on the Sea of Galilee. They were fishermen by trade, casting nets into the sea. This time, Jesus began His public ministry, specifically coming to the Sea of Galilee to find them.

This encounter is detailed in Luke 5:1-11: At that time, Peter had fished all night without catching anything. In the morning, Jesus got into Peter's boat, pushed it out from shore, and taught the people from the boat. The sermon was specifically for Peter, and only he understood it clearly. Later, Jesus instructed Peter, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Peter was an experienced

fisherman. He had been busy at the right time and in the right place, fishing all night, but caught nothing. Now that it was already daylight, how could he possibly catch any fish? Peter was too embarrassed to refuse, so he reluctantly let down the nets, and as a result, they caught a large number of fish, so much that their nets were about to break.

As a fisherman, Peter should have been happy to catch so many fish in one net, but instead, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'" At this point, Peter had a revelation. He realized that unbelief was the greatest sin. These details are all recorded in the Gospel of Luke, but the Gospel of Mark does not record these details. It only records the most important sentence, which is that Peter was casting a net into the sea when Jesus came to call him; what he was doing at that moment defined Peter's lifelong ministry.

Verses 17-18: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' They immediately left their nets and followed Him."

At this moment, Jesus called them and promised that they would become fishers of men just as they were fishers of fish. A year earlier, Jesus had planted a seed in their hearts during their encounter, and now the time had come. Jesus called them while they were fishing, and they immediately left their nets to follow Him. Later, Peter indeed became a fisher of men. Jesus gave Peter the ministry of casting nets, and on the day of Pentecost, Peter's sermon led to the salvation of 3,000 men among the Jews. In another instance, Peter healed a lame man at the Beautiful Gate and preached to the Jews, resulting in the salvation of 5,000 men. Thus, the Jerusalem church was established. Peter later cast his net among the Gentiles in Cornelius's house, and as a result, Cornelius and his entire household were saved, opening the door to the Gentile gospel.

Verse 19: "When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets."

As Jesus continued walking, He encountered another pair of brothers, James and John. They were in their boat mending nets. James and John's mother, Salome, was the sister of Jesus' mother, Mary, so Jesus and James and John were cousins, and they should have been quite familiar with each other. Their father, Zebedee, was wealthy and influential, and he was engaged in the fishing industry. He owned many boats and hired many workers. Some scholars believe that Zebedee was the head of the fishermen's union in Galilee at that time and had dealings with the priests in Jerusalem. When Jesus came to call James and John, they were in the boat mending nets. If the nets were torn, they couldn't fish and had to mend them.

Mending nets is a delicate task, requiring good eyesight to find the holes, skillful hands to repair them, and most importantly, attentiveness and patience to stitch one stitch at a time and mend one hole at a time. James and John, this pair of brothers, had the nickname "Sons of Thunder," indicating their quick temper, and it was not an easy thing for them to stop and mend nets. Jesus came to call them while they were mending nets. Mark specifically records this incident because it defined John's lifelong ministry of mending nets.

Because John was the youngest among the twelve disciples of Jesus and the one Jesus loved the most, when Jesus was crucified, He entrusted His mother Mary to John. This is recorded in John 19:26-27, where it says, "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." After that, John continued to serve Mary.

Because of this special entrustment, John was not as free, and during the period of the Acts of the Apostles, there is no record of John's involvement in the vibrant spread of the Gospel and the establishment of the church, because he was serving Mary. Through this particular service, God allowed John to learn love and tolerance from Mary, making him an apostle of love. God also granted John longevity, until A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was burnt and the temple destroyed, and after the apostles had been martyred one by one, God raised up John to fulfill his ministry of mending nets. At that time, the church was in decline, and John arose to do the

work of repair. He wrote the Gospel of John, which supplemented the Gospels from the perspective of life. Later, he wrote the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, completing them with love, which became the most important gift for building the church. Then, in wisdom and glory, he wrote the book of Revelation, further complementing the entire Bible. John received the ministry of mending nets.

Verse 20: "And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him."

Actually, James and John had already believed in Jesus a year earlier, but Jesus could not openly minister at that time. Therefore, the two brothers returned to their father's company to work in the workplace, doing work that was contrary to their natural dispositions. Both of them had an impatient character, yet they had to settle down and do the work of mending nets. This also tells us that for every saint who is still in the workplace, you should faithfully fulfill your duties. The work God has arranged for you is all preparation for your future service to God, because work in the workplace is the best opportunity for us to exercise our character.

On the one hand, we faithfully take on our job responsibilities; on the other hand, we also learn to serve in the church, pursue the truth, and let our lives grow until one day when God calls you. Then, like John and James, you can leave everything in the boat and follow Jesus. Dear brothers and sisters, God prepared a ministry of casting nets for Peter, and a ministry of mending nets for John. What ministry has God prepared for you? This is something that each of us must earnestly seek before God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for saving us, not only allowing us to receive salvation but also placing us in the church to learn and serve You together with all the saints. Help me learn to serve faithfully in the church, develop my gifts, and also prepare my character through my work in the workplace. I await Your calling and ask for Your blessings in my daily life. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ.