

“Opportunities”

Mark 1:16-18

Idea: The grace of God provides new opportunities to follow, trust, and grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Intro: Henry Ford is a legendary name in American industrialism. He founded one of the leading automobile companies, Ford Motor Company, and was one of the world’s richest men in his time. But Ford’s success, fame, and wealth did not come without some bumps along the road.

It all started at the age of sixteen when Henry Ford left his family’s farm in Dearborn, Michigan, to work in the machine shops of Detroit. In 1888, he married Clara Bryant, and they had a son, Edsel, in 1893. That same year, Ford was made chief engineer at Edison. Charged with keeping the city’s electricity flowing, Ford was on call 24 hours a day, with no regular working hours, and when not working could tinker away at his real goal of building a gasoline-powered vehicle. He completed his first functioning gasoline engine at the end of 1893, his first horseless carriage, called the Quadricycle, by 1896.

In the summer of 1898, Ford was awarded his first patent, in the name of his investor and Detroit’s mayor, William C. Maybury, for a carburetor he built the previous year. By the middle of the following summer Ford had produced his third car. A much more advanced model than his two previous efforts, it had a water tank and brakes, among other new features. Maybury’s support, combined with Ford’s bold ideas and charisma, helped assemble a group of investors who contributed some \$150,000 to establish the Detroit Automobile Company in early August 1899. Ten days later, Ford left Edison, where he had worked for the previous eight years. He turned down a considerable salary offer of \$1,900

per year and the title of general superintendent to become mechanical superintendent of the new auto company, with a salary of \$150 per month.

The Detroit Automobile Company was one of some 60 aspiring automakers in America at the time, and it struggled to keep up with the stiff competition provided by the likes of Packard of Ohio and Olds Motor Works of Lansing, Michigan. The company began to collapse in the middle of its second year of operation and ceased doing business in November 1900. Maybury and others retained their faith in Ford, however, and in late 1901 they backed him as chief engineer of the Henry Ford Company. This effort failed as well, and Ford put all of his hopes into a make-or-break third effort. The Ford Motor Company, founded in mid-June 1903, rolled out its first car—a Model A—that July and continued to grow steadily over the next several years. The release of the now-legendary Model T or “Tin Lizzie” in 1908 catapulted Ford Motor Company into the leading ranks of American automakers and turned its founder, a farm boy from Dearborn, into one of the world’s richest men.

Henry Ford faced a number of failures before he experienced the success he sought. The difference between Ford and other aspiring inventors of his day was his perspective on failure.

“Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.”
– Henry Ford

His story teaches a powerful life lesson: Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. Each failure that you experience is a new opportunity to learn, to grow, and to try again for success. It is an opportunity to better you and others around you. Each new day and each new year is an opportunity to learn, grow, and begin again. As we prepare to move into 2018, I want to talk to you about “Opportunities.”

Life Truth: The grace of God provides new opportunities to follow, trust, and grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

In the verses we're looking at today, we see the grace of God being extended toward Simon and Andrew as Jesus gave them an opportunity to follow, trust, and grow in their relationship with Him.

Read Mark 1:16-18.

Inquiry: Mark's gospel was the first gospel written, and it is much shorter than the other three gospels. But like the other authors, Mark wrote with a specific audience and objective in mind. He wrote to engage the Romans, and his emphasis was on activity. Mark describes Jesus as He busily moves from place to place and meets the physical and spiritual needs of all kinds of people. One of Mark's favorite words is "immediately." He uses it forty-one times. Mark didn't record many of the Lord's sermons because his emphasis is on what Jesus did rather than what Jesus said. He reveals Jesus as God's Servant, sent to minister to suffering people and to die for the sins of the world.

Early on in this gospel, we see the activity of Jesus as He invites Simon and Andrew as well as James and John into His service. In His grace Jesus provides them with an opportunity to follow Him. These men had met Jesus several months before and had come to trust Him (John 1:35-49). This was not their initial call to faith and salvation; it was an initial call to discipleship. From this call upon their lives, we learn at least three things about opportunities.

1. Opportunities abound where you are. (vs. 16)

Mark indicates that Simon and Andrew were fishermen. The point being that Jesus was giving them an opportunity to follow, trust, and grow in Him right where they were.

Luke's gospel gives us a little more detail about this event. Read Luke 5:1-7. The men had fished all night

and caught nothing. Jesus, however, instructed them to go out to the deep and lower their nets for a catch. Everything about this command was wrong. For example, it was the wrong time of the day. The nets were being washed. And Jesus was a carpenter not a fisherman. But the men obeyed Jesus and went fishing. Luke tells us that they caught so many fish that they had to get the Zebedee boys to come help them get the nets in the boat.

Appl: Just like Simon and Andrew, opportunities abound right where you are. Jesus is calling you to follow, trust, and grow in Him right where you are. He wants to make a difference in you and use you to make a difference in others around you. He wants to so transform your life that the people in your office, your school, and your neighborhood set up and take notice. Opportunities to serve the Lord abound right in front of you. You don't have to go far. Open your eyes and see.

2. Opportunities abound to bless others. (vs. 17)

Jesus' call to these men was to take advantage of the opportunities they had to be a blessing to others. They were to become fishers of men. They would be those who catch lost men and women and make them into disciples of Christ.

The theme of Mark's gospel is *Jesus Christ the Servant* as Mark 10:45 expresses: *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Jesus came to serve and bless others. Therefore, the opportunities Jesus puts before you to follow, trust, and grow in Him are not meant just for your benefit. He desires to use and bless you in such a way that those around you are blessed too.

3. Opportunities abound but require decisive action.

(vs. 18)

Jesus presented Simon and Andrew, as well as James and John, with a great opportunity. He had extended an invitation to follow Him, to trust Him, and to grow in Him. Their destiny lay before them, but the men had to choose to chase after it. Mark and Luke both tell us they left everything and followed the Lord.

Appl: Today, the same invitation is extended to each of us. Jesus calls and invites you to follow Him. He presents to you a new opportunity to follow, to trust, and to grow in Him. But the opportunity requires decisive action. You must choose to follow. You must choose to obey. You must choose to walk with Him. And in many ways your choice to follow God into a new opportunity is simply a choice to exercise greater discipline.

Discipline is largely the one thing that separates you from where you are and where you want to be. You want a stronger relationship with the Lord. You want a healthier marriage. You want your finances to be under control. You want God to use you in greater ways and for your life to have a sense of purpose. As 2017 closes out and 2018 comes in, are you thinking through how and where you need to be more disciplined?

I'm not advocating you try harder in your own power in 2018. I'm calling for you to follow the example of Simon and Andrew and lay everything down as you chase after Jesus (1:18). I believe in many ways this next year can be the greatest year in your life and in our church. Opportunities abound right where you are to bless others, but they require decisive action. Let me share some of those opportunities with you.

- Strengthen your walk with the Lord

There might be multiple areas that need improvement, but it all begins with spiritual discipline. How has your walk with the Lord been this year? Have you been reading His Word and praying? Have you been faithful to worship, fellowship, and serve with His church? When your relationship with Jesus is right, every other area of your life begins to align around Christ. This discipline brings greater discipline in the rest of your life. You will experience an increase in moral discipline, relational discipline, fiscal discipline, occupational discipline, physical discipline, mental discipline, and evangelistic discipline. In other words, when your relationship with the Lord is intimate and growing, you will notice a difference in your relationships, finances, health, work, and evangelism.

As a church we are chronologically reading through the Bible in 2018. This one spiritual discipline can revolutionize your life. Join us as we read the Bible together.

- Strengthen your marriage
The Bible uses marriage as a picture of the believer's relationship with Christ. Therefore, we want our marriages to reflect the beauty and intimacy of that relationship. Whether your dating or married, you need to be apart of "The Mingling of Souls" class that begins on January 10th. You will learn from the Song of Solomon how to be one in marriage.
- Strengthen your finances
The typical American is broke and in debt. Unfortunately, it is also true of the typical Christian in America. Some of you want to participate in mission projects. You want to go

overseas. You want to give more; you really do. The thought of launching into a renovation project saddens you because it'll be hard for you to participate due to your debt. It is time for you to get your finances under control. It is time for you to develop discipline in this area of your life.

We're offering Financial Peace University again. It will begin on January 10th. In this class you will learn how to practice fiscal discipline and how to be a good steward of what the Lord has entrusted to you.

- Engage the nations in Barcelona
The Great Commission calls us to engage the nations with the gospel, and this call is for all of us. In 2018 we're offering four opportunities to go to Barcelona. There will be four different camps in the month of July.
 - ESL Camp (June 28 – July 7th)
 - Science & Summer Fun Camp (July 5th – July 14th)
 - Music & Art Camp (July 12 – July 21st)
 - Basketball Camp (July 19 – July 28th)

- Strengthen your serve
The church is a body, and the body is only as strong as its weakest member. In order for us to be all that God would have us be, everyone must do his or her part. Everyone must serve in some capacity. You want a sense of purpose in your life. You will feel it when you use your gifts and talents to bless others. Here are some areas where you can serve:
 - Homeless Ministry
 - Food Pantry
 - Hospitality Team

- Worship Team
- Children's Ministry
- Small Group Leadership
- Prison Ministry Team

Conclusion: The grace of God provides new opportunities to follow, trust, and grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ. If you want to grow and improve, it won't happen on its own. It will only take place as you intentionally decide each day to walk with Jesus, obey His Word, and delight in Him. Opportunities abound before you. May 2018 be the greatest year of your life as you exercise greater spiritual discipline. Will you reach out and take hold of an opportunity?

This morning we have a unique opportunity to celebrate and remember what the Lord Jesus has done for us through His death, burial, and resurrection. We would have no opportunities to follow and trust Jesus if it were not for His sacrifice. As we prepare ourselves to receive the Lord's Supper, we must remember that this is a meal reserved exclusively for those in relationship with Christ and have been baptized. It is also a meal that should be received carefully. Therefore, if you are not a Christian or a Christian who is holding onto a certain sin, then I encourage you to not partake of the elements. The good news of the gospel is that grace and forgiveness are available. Let's take a few minutes to prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper.

Invitation

We are a covenant body of Christ that takes both our relationship with Jesus and community with one another seriously. We celebrate all that Jesus has done in us, and we celebrate the covenant we share with one another. We don't believe we are here by chance. Instead, by grace, God has brought us together so that we might express the life of Christ before a watching world. If you agree with me say, "Amen."

Observe the Lord's Supper