

The Pressures That Come With Faithful Ministry

Mark 3:7-21

Introduction: 1) The great football coach of the Green Bay Packers was Vince Lombardi (1913-1970). He led the Packers to victories in the first 2 Super Bowls. Lombardi was a great coach but also a man of great wit and insight. For example:

- “Confidence is contagious. So is lack of confidence.”
- “Football is like life. It requires perseverance, self-denial, hard work, sacrifice, dedication and respect for authority.”
- “If you accept losing, you can’t win.”
- “It’s not whether you get knocked down, it’s whether you get up.”
- “Once you learn to quit, it becomes a habit.”
- “The good Lord gave you ability that can stand most anything. It’s your mind you have to convince.”
- “It is essential to understand that battles are primarily won in the hearts of men.”

And the last 3 I will highlight in light of our text:

- 1) “Men respond to leadership in a most remarkable way and once you have won their heart, they will follow you anywhere.”
- 2) “People who work together will win.”
- 3) “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.”

2) Leadership, team and fatigue run throughout Mark 3:7-21. Wrapping these 3 cords together are the twin themes of pressure and faithful ministry. These twins always go together.

3) It is absolutely essential that we know the playing field, have realistic expectations, and a God given strategy if we are to do well in ministry. Jesus, Himself, knew this, and we discover in this

text how He dealt with the pressures that come with faithful ministry. Whether it is opposition from the Pharisees (2:1-3:6), the press of the crowd (3:7-12), the failure of a former follower, or the rejection of family, Jesus provides a model for us to follow! He will accept the pressure that goes with faithful ministry all the way to the cross. There is much here for us to learn.

I. Expect to be pressured by those who want something from you. 3:7-12

- Verses 7-8 note the growing popularity of Jesus! The Pharisees and the Herodians may have put out a contract on Him to take Him out, but the people were wildly enthusiastic about Him and His ministry!
- Note from where they came.

Galilee – Jews and some Gentiles from Northern Israel

Judea and Jerusalem – Jews from the South and the capital city

Idumea – southeast of Judea – a mix of Jews and Gentiles

Across the Jordan – east, the area of the Decapolis (ten cities)

Tyre and Sidon – Northwest above Galilee; mostly Gentiles

- Already there is a multi-ethnic movement in the ministry of Jesus, something He would affirm in the strongest language in Matthew 28:18-20 and The Great Commission.

1) They will impose upon you. 3:7-10

- Mark will note repeatedly the large crowds that are flocking to Jesus like geese headed south for the winter (3:7, 8, 9, 20; 4:1 (2X)). Wave after wave they follow and keep coming. The pressure had to be immense. The temptations were great.
- Jesus has withdrawn hoping for some quiet time with His disciples, but this is not going to happen. Pictures of Jesus sitting under a tree in beautiful green grass with white fluffy

sheep in the background and children in His lap is a myth! Mayhem and bedlam more often characterizes the reality of His public ministry.

- So great is the press of the crowd He asked the disciples to prepare a “get away boat” so they might not get crushed!
- He was healing the sick (v.10) and casting out demons (v. 11) and the people wanted in on this.
- As is often the case in ministry, they did not care about Him, only what they could get from Him.
 - 1) Where they concerned about His privacy? No.
 - 2) Did they care about His need for time alone? No.
 - 3) Did they care about His need for food and rest? (v. 20) No.

Application: This will often, too often, be the experience of those who work hard for the Lord.

It is really unavoidable. You cannot stop it, but you can control it to some degree. But, make sure you understand and accept the reality: people you serve will impose on you and not give it a second thought. It is simply the nature of the work.

2) **They will seek to hinder you.** **3:11-12**

- Jesus continues to confront and conquer the demonic as a proof that the Kingdom of God has arrived in Him (1:23-28; 32, 39)!
- Upon seeing Him they 1) fall down before Him and 2) cry out, acknowledging that He is the Son of God (v. 11).
- Jesus again demands their silence (v. 12). A demonic declaration of His deity will not help but hurt His mission. 1) It is the wrong source. 2) It is the wrong time.
- Jesus will be fully revealed not by demonic confession but by the cross of Calvary.

- In a futile attempt to control Jesus by identifying Him and limiting His power, the demons are silenced by His sovereign authority. He will carry forward and complete His mission on God's terms, on His terms, not theirs. What they want from Him they cannot have and will not receive.

Application: The same must be true for us! We must do the will of God (v. 35), God's way and in God's time. We must not allow ourselves to be manipulated by ungodly agendas regardless of the praise we may receive, the positions we are offered, the prosperity we may be promised.

II. Expect to be pressured by those who want to be with you. 3:13-19

- Mountain – mountains are interestingly important in the life of Jesus: 1) Climatic Temptation (Matt 4:8-11); 2) Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7); 3) Call of the Twelve (Mark 3:13); 4) Transfiguration (Mark 9:2); 5) Olivet Discourse (Matt 24-25); 6) Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20).
- Luke 6:12 informs us He prayed all night before calling the twelve. Clearly Jesus saw this as a crucial decision in His ministry and building of His kingdom. It would be a decision He would make with great care.

1) Call out the ones you want to spend time with. 3:13-18

- Jesus called out to twelve specific individuals and they came. As His disciples (v. 7) they would follow Him, be with Him and learn from Him. Our modern equivalent would be “an apprentice.” As His apostles (v. 14) they would be sent by Him with His authority and proclaim Him in the gospel.
- They are appointed with His authority to carry out His mission. They would have the authority also to cast out demons. In word and action they are to carry on His work of building the kingdom of God.

- He appoints them (v. 14, 16).

He wants them with Him (3 years).

He sends them out to preach.

He gives them authority over the demons.

- And, He calls twelve, as He establishes a new, holy nation, a new community, called the church (1 Peter 2:9).

- This is what they would do.

Now the question, “who were they?”

- 4 lists.
- Basic observations.
- Brief description of each.

The Twelve Apostles

Matthew 10	Mark 3	Luke 6	Acts 1
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew
Thomas	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas
Matthew	Matthew (Levi)	Matthew	Matthew
James (of Alphaeus)	James (of Alphaeus)	James (of Alphaeus)	James (of Alphaeus)
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Judas (of James)	Judas (of James)
Simon (the Canaanite)	Simon (the Canaanite)	Simon (Zealotes)	Simon (Zealotes)
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	_____

Some Basic Observations

- 1) Matthew and Mark list Thaddaeus while Luke, in his two lists, names Judas (of James). Some Bible scholars think Judas may have been his original name and that it was changed later to Thaddaeus (meaning perhaps “warm-hearted”) in order to avoid the stigma attached to the name Judas Iscariot. This is reasonable.
- 2) “Simon The Canaanite” is the transliteration into English of a Greek word which probably represents an Aramaic word meaning “Zealous.” The Zealots in Judaism were a group who advocated revolutionary tactics to overthrow the power of Rome. Bringing he and Matthew together is something only the gospel could do!
- 3) It is interesting that all four lists begin with Simon Peter and end with Judas Iscariot (except, of course, the Acts 1 list, for Judas had already killed himself and is omitted). Also, the names appear to be in groups of four. Peter, Andrew, James, and John are always in the first group-though not always in that order-and Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew are in the second group in all four lists.
- 4) In all four lists, Peter’s name heads the first group, Philip leads the second, and James (of Alphaeus) heads the third.

**The Twelve Apostles:
A Brief Summation**

Facts

Scriptures

First Group

<p>Peter: given name Simon, changed to Cephas (Aramaic), or Peter (Greek); son of Jonah (“bar Jonah”), brother of Andrew; fisherman, home in Capernaum; present at transfiguration and Gethsemane; denied Christ; first apostle to (1) preach the gospel, (2) perform a miracle, (3) speak before the Sanhedrin, (4) preach to Gentiles, (5) raise the dead; traditionally martyred at Rome in A.D. 67 being crucified upside down.</p>	<p>Too extensive to list, but note Gal. 2:7-9; 1, 2 Peter.</p>
<p>Andrew: introduced his brother Peter to Jesus; also a fisherman; traditionally martyred in Greece; brought word to Jesus of Greeks who wanted to see Him.</p>	<p>Matt. 4:18; 10:2; Mark 1:16, 29; 3:18; 13:3; Luke 6:14; John 1:40, 44; 6:8; 12:22; Acts 1:13</p>
<p>James: brother of John; son of Zebedee and Salome; fisherman, with father and brother partners with Peter; present at transfiguration and in Gethsemane; called by Jesus a “Son of Thunder”; martyred by Herod Agrippa 1 (c. A.D. 44).</p>	<p>Matt. 4:21; 10:2; 17:1; Mark 1:19, 29; 3:17; 5:37; 9:2; 10:35, 41; 13:3; 14:33; Luke 5:10; 6:14; 8:51; 9:28, 54; Acts 1:13; 12:2</p>
<p>John: brother of James; son of Zebedee and Salome; fisherman, partner with Peter; present at transfiguration and in Gethsemane; called by Jesus “Son of Thunder”; “the disciple whom Jesus loved”; companion of Peter; cared for Mary, the Lord’s mother; leader in Jerusalem church; later moved to Ephesus; exiled to isle of Patmos; traditionally not martyred.</p>	<p>Matt. 4:21; 10:2; 17:1; Mark 1:19, 29; 3:17; 5:37; 9:2, 38; 10:35, 41; 13:3; 14:33; Luke 5:10; 6:14; 8:51; 9:28, 49, 54; 22:8; Acts 1:13; 3:1, 3, 4, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14; 12:2; Gal. 2:9; Rev. 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8 Cf. 1, 2, 3 John, Gospel of John</p>

FactsScriptures

Second Group

Philip: told Nathanael of Jesus; brought word to Jesus of Greeks who wanted to see Him; traditions unclear as to his life and death.	Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; John 1:43-46, 48; 6:5, 7; 12:21-22; 14:8-9; Acts 1:13
Bartholomew: probably Nathanael of John's Gospel; from Cana; name Bartholomew is Aramaic for "Son of Tolmai" Jesus saw him under the fig tree; traditionally martyred in Armenia.	Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; John 1:45-49; 21:2; Acts 1:13
Thomas (called Didymus meaning twin): probably from Galilee; asked Jesus how to know the way; doubted Jesus' resurrection; traditionally preached in India.	Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24, 26-28; 21:2; Acts 1:13
Matthew: tax collector; son of Alphaeus; also known as Levi; held a great feast for Jesus in his house; tradition unclear as to his ministry and death.	Matt. 9:9, 10:3; Mark 2:14; 3:18; Luke 5:27, 29; 6:15; Acts 1:13

FactsScriptures

Third Group

James: son of Alphaeus and Mary; known as "the small" or "the Younger"; brother of Joseph; tradition unclear due to confusion with other Jameses.	Matt. 10:3; 27:56; Mark 3:18; 15:40; 16:1; Luke 6:15; 24:10; Acts 1:13
Judas (not Iscariot): son of James; also called Thaddaeus; perhaps a Zealot; traditionally preached in Armenia and martyred in Persia with Simon the Zealot.	Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:16; John 14:22; Acts 1:13
Simon the Zealot: traditionally martyred in Persia with Judas (Thaddaeus).	Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13
Judas Iscariot: possibly from Judea; betrayer of Christ; called by Jesus a "devil" and "son of perdition"; treasurer for the apostolic band; committed suicide.	Matt. 10:4; 26:14, 25, 47; 27:3, 5; Mark 3:19; 14:10, 43; Luke 6:16; 22:3, 47, 48; John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 26, 29; 18:2, 3, 5; Acts 1:16, 18, 25

2) **Recognize that some will disappoint you.** **3:19**

- The Bible is brutally honest. It notes successes and failures. It points out the good and the bad. It has integrity in its reporting.
- One of the bad is Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Jesus. In every list he is listed last. In every list his betrayal is noted.
- His name means “man from Karioth.” Some believe he was the only disciple from Judea; all the others from Galilee.
- Judas was chosen by our Lord to be with Him (v. 14). He did not worm his way in. He would run and serve well for a while. He gave evidence of loyalty and trustworthiness. Why after all, he served as the treasurer of this happy band of men (John 12:4-6), though he was dishonest and a thief in his assignment.
- All of this is to remind us that if you live long enough and serve long enough you will be disappointed by people you love and thought loved you. You would let them guard your back believing they would take a bullet for you, only to discover the knife in your back is held by them, the bullet in the back of your head came from the gun they fired.

III. **Expect to be pressured by those who misunderstood you.** **3:20-21**

- It is one thing to be misunderstood, let down and betrayed by a friend. It is hard to put into words what it feels like when it is your family.
- Ill: Missionary couple who have served as career missionaries in Southeast Asia. Neither parents are supportive. Neither has ever visited in more than a decade. [Chris and Rebecca]
- Jesus has returned home (probably, in Capernaum; the home of Peter and Andrew). Some things haven't changed (v.20). Some things sadly have (v. 21).

1) **They may try to control you.** **3:20-21**

- Once more the crowds descend upon Jesus and they do so with a selfish vengeance.
- Mark notes they are here “again.” It seems to never end.
- So great is the “packed house” He cannot find time or space to eat. The people are completely socially unaware. They care for no one but themselves. They will monopolize Jesus if they can. They misunderstood His true mission and agenda is to get to the cross and deal with their real need!
- Ill. Socially unaware people with their “Christian rock stars” is probably something similar on a smaller scale! They will smother them if they are given the chance.

2) **They may try to stop you.** **3:21**

- First mention of Jesus’ family in Mark. It is not good.
- Hearing He is so swamped in His ministry and mission and apparently unwilling to do anything about it, even care for His own physical needs, they decide to 1) seize Him, 2) convinced (actually “saying”) He is out of His mind.”
- The word “seize” means to lay hold and is used elsewhere of an “arrest.”
- The charge “He is out of his mind” is shocking and disturbing. It reveals negatively that they don’t understand Him or His mission. It reveals positively that they care and are concerned for Him.
- However, as Wessel well notes, “In a culture in which honor and shame were critically important, there may also have been an attempt to prevent shame on the family caused by Jesus’ ...behavior” (*EBC*, 745).
- He was a religious fanatic who was hurting the family name and also was a danger to Himself. He had to be stopped. He needs a strait-jacket and padded cell. Give that man

some drugs that will calm Him down. Oh, if they only knew what a disaster it would have been if they had been able to stop Him.

Conclusion:

What do we learn from this text? What words of wisdom can we glean that we might have a faithful ministry that allows us to start well, run well, and finish well?

- 1) Know who you are and why you are here (v. 10-12).
- 2) Make time to get away. Take control of your schedule and calendar. If you don't others will (v. 13).
- 3) Surround yourself with others you can train, delegate to, and send out to do the work of ministry (vs. 13-19).
- 4) Recognize no matter how hard you try and how much you invest, some are going to disappoint you (v. 19).
- 5) Remember the ministry is a 24/7 calling that requires your constant attention and management (v. 20).
- 6) Understand those closest to you may misunderstand you and even oppose you (v. 21).
- 7) Never ever forget that all that matters in life and ministry is that you please God and do His will (v. 35)! Don't lose sight of the goal. Jesus didn't! The cross was never out of view. It was His divine destiny. Praise God he did not let the pressures of ministry distract Him or deter Him. He stayed focused. He stayed on point. He was faithful in His mission and ministry all the way to Calvary!