



# SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

## HOW NOT TO BE SECULAR - WEEK 2

### “THE GOSPEL, THE KINGDOM, THE CALL”



PRAYERS	DISCUSSION
<p><u>CONNECTION:</u></p> <p><b>Cross &amp; Culture</b> February 6th at 6 PM with guest speakers David Taylor &amp; Sandra Bowden. This event will examine and celebrate the vital role that the visual arts play in worship, culture, and Christian life. Tickets are \$15 (\$10 for students). <a href="http://allsaintsaustin.org/cc">allsaintsaustin.org/cc</a>.</p> <p><b>50+ Spring Gathering</b> February 14th at the home of Greg &amp; Mary Jane Grooms (2104 Nueces St.). Please bring a beverage if you are able. Bring a friend too! RSVP to <a href="mailto:vlogwinuk@gmail.com">vlogwinuk@gmail.com</a></p> <p><b>All About All Saints</b> Interested in learning more about All Saints and the PCA? Come to this 4-week class beginning February 15th at 9:15 AM at St. Gabriel's. Sign up by emailing Rebekah at <a href="mailto:rice@allsaintsaustin.org">rice@allsaintsaustin.org</a></p> <p><u>REQUESTS:</u></p> <p><b>Following Jesus</b> What do you find difficult in your attempt to follow Jesus right now? What is hard for you to relinquish control over to God?</p>	<p><b>INTRO</b> <i>(Question:)</i> What does the word “gospel” mean in contemporary culture? How is it commonly used? <i>(Transition:)</i> Often people use this word to refer to no more than good feelings and good advice, but, as we will discuss, the gospel of Jesus is much more.</p> <p>We are currently in a four-week series entitled “How Not To Be Secular.” We are discussing this topic because we acknowledge that our world has transitioned from a place in which belief in God was assumed to an age in which atheism or agnosticism is almost inescapable. Doubt is the default, but even those who do not believe in God are skeptical about their unbelief, and feel pressured with the memory of God. Most still long for transcendence and greatly fear death. They aren't totally committed to secularism, and wonder, “What if I am wrong?” But we are all, even Christians, impacted by the pervasiveness of doubt. As we read our text be thinking about this question: “What is so good about the good news?”</p> <p><b>READ</b> the text from <b>Mark</b> aloud.</p> <p><b>DISCUSS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark is writing probably from Rome and to an audience mostly comprised of those from a Gentile background. What connotations do you think the word “gospel” had for a general Greco-Roman audience? <i>(There are two interesting non-biblical uses of the Greek word “euangelion”—the word for “gospel” in the New Testament—before the coming of Christ. One is from the battle of Marathon in 490 BC between the Greeks and Persians. After the Greeks won, they sent heralds to proclaim this good news to the surrounding cities. The second is from an inscription on the Priene Calendar ca. 9 BC, which describes the birthday of Caesar Augustus as “the beginning of the gospel”. It would appear that the first century audience would understand Mark’s statements against such backgrounds of battle victory announcements and praises of royalty.)</i> How does this change your understanding of the word “gospel,” or, how does this differ from common understandings today?</li> <li>• Look at the passage from <b>Isaiah</b>. In the Greek versions of the Old Testament (referred to as the Septuagint) v. 9 includes two uses of the verb “euangelizo”, which is related, obviously, to the Greek word for “gospel” in our text in Mark. It means “to announce good news”. How does this passage in Isaiah help us understand the Jewish understanding of this concept?</li> <li>• How is “good news” different from “good advice”? How does the “gospel” set Christianity apart from all other world religions?</li> <li>• What do you think about the notion of faith as something that is private and personal? How does this discussion about the “gospel” speak to this popular conception?</li> <li>• What is the connection in the Mark passage between the “kingdom of God” and the call to be “fishers of men”? How does being “fishers of men” relate to the “kingdom of God”?</li> <li>• How would you define what it means to “follow” Jesus? What makes it so difficult?</li> <li>• What did the disciples give up in this text? <i>(Look at vv. 18 and 20.)</i> Which is more difficult for you to relinquish control over: your family or your vocation?</li> <li>• In what ways might it become more difficult to follow Jesus in an increasingly secular culture? What unique opportunities might this also provide?</li> </ul> <p><b>CONCLUDE</b> This is a week without much in the way of simple answers. But we can affirm that central to our faith is good news that is public and comprehensive. Christ is the king who has defeated our great enemies. Our response is to follow him with the totality of our lives. This is increasingly difficult in our “secular age” which considers religion a personal opinion that should be resigned to our private lives.</p>

# MARK I:1, 14-20

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)

[1] The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God... [14] Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, [15] and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

[16] Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. [17] And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." [18] And immediately they left their nets and followed him. [19] And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. [20] And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

# ISAIAH 40:I-II

ESV

[1] Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

[2] Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that her warfare is ended,  
that her iniquity is pardoned,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

[3] A voice cries:  
"In the wilderness prepare the way of  
the LORD;  
make straight in the desert a highway  
for our God.

[4] Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made  
low;

the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

[5] And the glory of the LORD shall be  
revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

[6] A voice says, "Cry!"  
And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass,  
and all its beauty is like the flower of  
the field.

[7] The grass withers, the flower fades when  
the breath of the LORD blows on it;  
surely the people are grass.

[8] The grass withers, the flower fades,  
but the word of our God will stand  
forever.

[9] Go on up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good news;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;

lift it up, fear not;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
"Behold your God!"

[10] Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
behold, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.

[11] He will tend his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms;  
he will carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead those that are with  
young.