

Mark Chapter 6: v. 1-30 – “Jesus prepares His disciples for rejection”

Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. ² And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing *Him* were astonished, saying, “Where *did* this Man *get* these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! ³ Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him. ⁴ But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” ⁵ Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed *them*. ⁶ And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. ⁷ And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by* two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. ⁸ He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in *their* money belts— ⁹ but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰ Also He said to them, “In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. ¹¹ And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!” ¹² So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. ¹³ And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*. ¹⁴ Now King Herod heard *of Him*, for His name had become well known. And he said, “John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.” ¹⁵ Others said, “It is Elijah.” And others said, “It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.” ¹⁶ But when Herod heard, he said, “This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!” ¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had married her. ¹⁸ Because John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” ¹⁹ Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he *was* a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. ²¹ Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief *men* of Galilee. ²² And when Herodias’ daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, “Ask me whatever you want, and I will give *it* to you.” ²³ He also swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom.” ²⁴ So she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist!” ²⁵ Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” ²⁶ And the king was exceedingly sorry; *yet*, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, ²⁸ brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard *of it*, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb. ³⁰ Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.

Introduction

Last month in Mark’s gospel we learnt that Jesus stilled a storm on lake Galilee, cast demons out of a mad man, healed a woman of an incurable disease, and raised Jairus’s daughter from the dead.

The reaction of the people was not always favourable.

Some feared Jesus because of His mighty power, while others put their faith in Jesus.

The fame of Jesus was spreading.

Jesus was in demand and respected by people wherever He went.

Jesus had been away from His home town, Nazareth for about 1 year and it was time to go home and see His family.

It is quite a mountain trek from the lowlands of Galilee to Nazareth.

I have done it by coach and can remember going up and down mountains to get there.

If you suffer from motion sickness it would be a difficult journey to take by car or coach. However, Jesus probably walked or went by donkey.

I expect that Jesus was excited about going home, just like we might be if we were returning to our home country.

If you are Japanese, once a year in August you probably go back to your home town to visit your parents. I guess it can be a good experience for you.

For foreigners like me going back to our home country can have mixed reactions, but usually it is a positive experience to visit family and friends.

Somebody once said;

“Home is a place where love lets us be ourselves, pride shares our achievements, and understanding covers our faults.”

Whatever Jesus was feeling in his heart as He travelled home to Nazareth, I don't think that He really expected the rejection that he was about to encounter.

We don't expect to be rejected in our home town.

1. Welcome Home Jesus !!! - 6: v. 1-6.

The text tells us that when Jesus returned home, he did what he had been doing every Sabbath day for at least 1 year.

He went into the Nazareth Synagogue and began to teach.

We are told that the local people were amazed that Jesus had been given such wisdom.

The people were surprised that somehow Jesus had been given power to perform such amazing miracles.

We are told that the people were actually offended by Jesus.

They felt that He was acting like a “Rabbi”.

In those days the Rabbis were revered and regarded as scholars who taught the Jewish scriptures.

To the people in Jesus' home town, Jesus was just a carpenter.

In those days a carpenter was sometimes just an odd job person who went around doing little jobs.

It wasn't a job that had any status.

People were really angry that Jesus returned home and taught like a Rabbi with no qualifications.

Jesus responded to the critics with these words.

⁴ But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.”

In v. 5-6 we are told that because of the unbelief of the local people in Nazareth towards Jesus that He was not able to do a mighty work in His home town.

However, Jesus did lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them.

Jesus then decided to go on a preaching and teaching circuit around the villages in the area.

So what can we learn from this little “Welcome Home” that was not very welcoming.?

Although the main focus of this chapter is about rejection, it is important that we discover why Jesus was rejected in His home town.

We discover this by looking closely at v. 2.

² And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing *Him* were astonished, saying, “Where *did* this Man *get* these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!

The local people asked the right questions.

1. Who is this man?
2. What is His wisdom?
3. Where does He get His power?

What the local people were in fact saying was this;

“Is Jesus human or divine.”?

Q. Are the words of Jesus just human philosophy or eternal truth.?

Q. Is the power of Jesus to work miracles, given by God, or does He have some sort of natural ability.?

Until these questions were answered there could be no faith towards Jesus.

Once these people were given answers to these questions, then they had to make a decision about Jesus.

It would either be rejection, or faith in Him.

It was not wrong of the local people to ask these questions.

However, they asked the right questions with the wrong attitude.

It was “prejudice” against Jesus that prevented them from learning the truth about Jesus.

Prejudice against Jesus, overruled the evidence about Jesus.

The people answered their own questions about Jesus without first trying to discover the truth about Jesus.

This happens in our world today all the time.

In v. 3 we are told that the local people rejected the divinity of Jesus because He was the Son of Mary.

So Jesus could not be God’s Son, and Mary’s son at the same time.

This was a denial of the “Virgin Birth”

They rejected the teaching of Jesus because He was only a carpenter and not a trained “Rabbi” skilled in teaching God’s word.

Sadly, the prejudice about Jesus brought in an atmosphere of unbelief.

Application for us

Today we live in a world where most people have a prejudice against Jesus and the Christian faith.

They have made up their mind about the Bible, Jesus and the Gospel, and they don’t want to be confused with hearing the “TRUTH”.

So what can we do personally to reach these people.?

Well, I learnt something from a black American evangelist called Mark Perkins.

The first time I went out with him to go door to door to share the gospel, I discovered something.

I discovered that he engaged with people by asking them to share their prejudice about the Christian faith.

He also invited them to speak about what they do believe concerning creation, life and death etc.

By doing this they were actually challenged to re-consider their own belief system.

You might be surprised by this statement;

It takes much more faith to be an “atheist”.

There is so much evidence in creation for a creator God.

But there is no real evidence in a big bang and then suddenly, there is some sort of life, then the evolution of animals into man.

A famous scientist was being interviewed on a U.K. radio programme and he was promoting the big bang and evolution.

A Christian rang into the radio station during question time and asked the following question.

“Professor, what actually went bang, that created this world?”

There was silence.

The professor couldn’t answer the question.

The reason he couldn’t answer the question was that if he admitted to matter going bang, then somebody must have created that matter.

Therefore, he would have to admit to a creator God.

People who are prejudice against the God of the Bible need to be challenged about what they believe.

The more that people articulate their false beliefs, hopefully the more they will see that they do not have the answers, and they do not have the truth.

People reject Jesus today, partially because they haven’t thought through their own beliefs.

It is always good to listen to what people do believe and to challenge that belief with Christian truth.

This is why Bible memory verses are a good thing.

You can respond immediately to people with quotes from God’s word, the Bible.

We may still be rejected by people when we present the Christian faith, but if we can overcome people’s prejudice and get them to think through their own beliefs, then perhaps they might be more open to consider the gospel message.

Don’t worry if people reject you, they rejected Jesus first.

People’s rejection of you is a rejection of Jesus and His love for them.

2. Jesus prepares His disciples for rejection –v. 7-13.

After the rejection of Jesus in His home town, He prepares His disciples and sends them out two by two.

We are told some specific things about his commission to His disciples.

- a) He gave them power over unclean spirits.
- b) He told them not to take any resources for their journey, except a staff. They were not to take food, money, or even a suitcase.
- c) Jesus told them to stay in one home and do ministry from that home. They were not to move around from house to house.
- d) Jesus said that if they were rejected, or people would not hear them out, then they should shake off the dust under their feet as a testimony against them.
- e) Jesus told His disciples that if people rejected their message, then in the future God would judge them in the same way that God judged Sodom and Gomorrah.

We are told that the disciples went out in obedience to Jesus and preached that the people should repent. They cast out many demons, anointed sick people with oil and they were healed.

So what can we learn about this section on the training of the disciples of Jesus.

First of all, we need to understand that Jesus was training the disciples to carry on His work after He left this earth.

They had an "Apostolic" ministry.

This means that they had to provide the foundation of the Christian Church as we know it today.

The miracles that Jesus performed pointed to His divinity. The confirmed that Jesus was God's Son.

The miracles that the disciples performed were done to authenticate their message was the same as the message from Jesus.

The miracles were also done through delegated power.

Notice v. 7 which says that Jesus gave them power over unclean spirits.

The main focus of the ministry of these disciples was to preach or proclaim that people should **"Repent"**. It would be no use casting out demons and healing the sick for these people to eventually go to hell.

So the gospel message of **"Repentance"** was the main focus for this training mission.

What does the word **"Repent"** mean and how can we follow this example when we are involved in proclaiming the gospel in our own context today?

The word "Repent" in the original Greek means to turn around and go in another direction.

It means changing your mind about something that eventually involves a change of behaviour.

It is more than being convicted about your own personal sin. It involves doing something about it.

In the gospel of Luke, chapter 15, there is a parable that Jesus told.

Luke 15: v. 11-24.

¹¹ Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to *his* father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me*.' So he divided to them *his* livelihood. ¹³ And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. ¹⁴ But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*. ¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰ "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

This is a wonderful example of what it means to "Repent"

The "Lost Son" went his own way in life, pleasing himself and seeking worldly pleasure. His money ran out, his friends deserted him and he had less than his Father's servants.

It was only then that the lost son realised that his way was not a good way.

He had first of all to change his mind about his own life.

In v. 21 **he admitted his sin to God and to his earthly father.**

The result was that the lost son was welcomed back into the family.

Q. Have you come to the point in your life that you have realised that going your own way will never make you happy and never satisfy the deep need that you have in your heart?

Realising will not save you or give you any peace.

You need to come to Jesus and confess your sin.

Only Jesus can save you and receive you into God's family.

Repentance involves giving up your old life and receiving a new life of total obedience to Jesus and God's word, the Bible.

We can't preach repentance until we have repented ourselves?

Q. How are you doing today when it comes to "Repentance".

Once you become a Christian you will still need to repent sometimes. However you will not lose your position in God's family.

3. An Example of serious rejection - v. 14-29.

You are probably wondering why Mark told the story about the beheading of John the Baptist at this point.

It is not a nice story but it does give us a real example of what serious rejection towards Jesus can bring about.

Let us go over the story briefly and make application.

- a) John calls Herod to repentance – v. 18. (However Herod did not repent)
- b) Herodias didn't like the challenge for Herod to repent of this sin and she wanted to kill John – v. 19.
- c) Herod protected John because he recognised that John was a Holy man of God – v.20.
- d) Herod made an oath to give Herodias's daughter any gift that she wanted. – v.22.
- e) Because of pride and through making an oath, Herod was tricked into getting John executed.

Because everybody in the story rejected the message of John the Baptist, which was "Repentance", it cost the life of John the Baptist.

This is connected with the previous two stories of Jesus's rejection and preparing the disciples for "Rejection"

Application

1. We need to clearly understand who Jesus us.
He is clearly fully God and fully human.
A study of Jesus Christ in all the scriptures is a wonderful study.
We must be sure that we understand the doctrine of Jesus Christ. By this I mean all that the Bible teaches about Jesus.
2. Unbelief is essentially a refusal to change.
People reject Jesus because they do not want their lives to change. This can lead to awful disasters as in the case of Herod.
If we are not a Christian today, we too need to realise that refusal to repent will have consequences in our lives too.
3. If we are a Christian we need to be prepared to go out with the gospel message, but we need to realise that we will face rejection. People are not rejecting us, but they are rejecting Jesus, through their refusal to 'Repent'
However even for the sake of one person becoming a Christian, it will be worth it.
The first person who shared their faith with me was an old man of 85. He went to Heaven not knowing that I had become a Christian.
It is always worth calling people to repent.