

Sent Forth in His Name

Mark 6:6b-13, 30

Halifax: 25 August 2019

Introduction

As most of you know, I am currently preaching through Mark's Gospel.

- Presently, we are looking at a portion in Mark where Mark presents to us the majesty of Christ.
- He showed us how Jesus calmed a storm with a mere word at the end of chapter 4, then how He cast out a legion of demons, healed a woman, and raised a dead girl in chapter 5. These all left people marvelling with amazement.

Last week we came to chapter 6 and here we saw that it was Jesus who was amazed.

- He went to Nazareth where He had grown up and lived until He was about thirty.
- On this visit, He again preached in the synagogue, only, unlike the first time He preached to them, now He had the twelve with Him and was known all over Galilee as one who expelled demons and healed people.
- They also knew His character, how He had lived and worked among them.
- No doubt, He engaged in much prayer and hope that they would respond to His preaching this time, but they did not...
 - We are told that He marvelled at their unbelief. He was stunned to see it.
 - No doubt He loved these people. How it pained Him to see such hardness.
 - His majesty was known to these people, but they utterly refused to acknowledge Him as He called them to repent and announced the coming of His kingdom.

So what did Jesus do in response to this shocking hardness in His own people?

- We are told in Mark 6:6-30.
- It is another of Mark's usages of the literary device called sandwiching...
 - where he begins to tell us about something—then interrupts the account to insert another account—and then returns to complete the first account.

Listen as I read this passage to you, beginning in Mark 6:6b.

Mark 6:6b-30: Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. 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 For 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 of 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.

May the LORD add His blessing to the reading and the preaching of His holy word.

So you see the sandwiching technique here.

- Mark tells us of Jesus sending out the twelve to preach and of their going (Mk 6:7-13), and he tells us how this activity got the attention of Herod Antipas (tetrarch of Galilee) in Mark 6:14-16...
 - But then he digresses... he breaks off his account of the twelve going out on this mission and he gives us the history of what Herod did to John the Baptist.
 - Then, in verse 30, he resumes the narrative about the twelve and wraps up his account about this, their first mission.
- He does this with purpose, to show us the character of Herod and kind of opposition that was hanging over the heads of Jesus and the twelve as they ministered in Galilee.
 - It drives home with forcefulness how the majesty of Christ, when it is asserted, collides not only with hardened villagers, but also with the civil authority in Galilee.
- My plan today is to look at Jesus' sending out of the twelve and of their ministry, then, next week (Lord willing), to look at the opposition of Herod Antipas.
 - So our focus today will be on verses 6b-13 and verse 30, and next week we will plan to look at verses 14-29.

So let's return to the question I put to you earlier.

- How did Jesus respond to the rejection He experienced at Nazareth?

I. Being rejected at Nazareth, Jesus expanded His ministry efforts all the more.

- We are told in verse 6b & 7: **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...**
- A. This is a marvellous response!
- You might expect Him to do the opposite.

1. Think of the circumstances that might have caused Him to say, “This is not working!”
 - a. He had not been well received.
 - 1) He had been preaching in Capernaum and the surrounding region.
 - He had called them to repent because the kingdom of God was at hand.
 - He had done many signs and wonders to demonstrate His majesty and authority, but not many had bowed the knee to His majesty.
 - Even His disciples were in many ways still trying to figure out who He really was.
 - 2) Recently He had gone to the Gentile region across the Sea of Galilee,
 - but after demonstrating His authority there by casting out the legion of demons, the locals had asked Him to leave.
 - 3) Then He had gone to Nazareth, but once again He had been rejected by His own little village of less than 500.
 - b. As I sought to show you last week,
 - Rejection for Him was not easier but it was actually harder than it is for us!
 - His love for His neighbours at Nazareth and for all people is much much greater than your love for anyone.
 - He was much more human than any of us are—yet without sin—and He experienced a depth of sorrow that we only know in a small measure.
 - Ours are small selfish constricted hearts—His was a great heart, a heart of real compassion.
 - I grow weary of how Jesus is sometime presented as one who was aloof and detached from sorrow.
 - The only difference with Him is that He never responded to sorrow in a proud or selfish way like we do.
2. What might He have done in response to this rejection?
 - a. What would others have done?
 - What would Abraham or Moses or David or Elijah or almost anyone else have done in similar circumstances?
 - What might even a business man have done if he had a truly wonderful product and had sought to establish markets in a city, then in a remote place, then in his hometown, and had found that people were happy to take free samples, but that nobody was willing to invest in his products?
 - b. He might have given up in discouragement.
 - He might have gotten angry like Moses did when he struck the rock twice.
 - He might have gone off to sulk like Elijah did.
 - He might have tried harder to force Himself on the people at Nazareth, to talk sense into them and do a bit of whining at them.
 - c. Or He might have concluded that He needed to change His method, like Abraham did when he went to Egypt or when he took Hagar.
 - Perhaps the call to repent was too offensive. Perhaps He could soften His message.

- Maybe He could hire some musicians to attract people with popular music or drama as He went about—like the Greeks did.
 - Or perhaps He could do something sensational like making people float or changing rocks into watermelons.
- But no...He did none of that...
3. He continues to do what He has been doing, only more so.
 - a. These did not receive Him, so now He is going to cast His net even wider.
 - Rather than slugging in His work, He is going to go to more and more villages... to villages that He has not visited yet.
 - b. And He is going to do as He had planned and send out the twelve—
 - Back in Mark 3:14, we are told of His plan: **Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons...**
 - Up until now, He had certainly fulfilled the first part of this plan and had them go with Him, but He had not sent them out to preach...
 - but now... despite being by and large rejected and despite their lack of a clear understanding of His mission, He is going to send them out to preach and heal and cast out demons.
 - Now instead of one preacher, there would be six additional pairs of preachers—twelve more in all.
 - He is going to multiply His efforts to reach people, not by compromise, but by increasing His reach.

B. What a wonderful Saviour He is!

1. How glad we ought to be that He did not give up.
 - He had come to establish His Father's kingdom in this sinful rebellious world.
 - He loved the Father and He loved the world and there was nothing that would stop Him from pressing on with His labours.
 - It was love that drove Him forward despite all opposition.
2. What would have become of us if He had been like us and given up in frustration—turning into Himself and giving up the whole affair?
 - We would have been left to perish in our sins without remedy.
3. How glad we ought to be that to this day, He continues to send out His church into the world,
 - He continues to call ministers of the gospel and stir up His saints to go out in His name....
 - And He continues to pray for us before the throne of His Father in heaven.
 - And He continues to call a remnant of His people back to His methods and away from all of theirs that water down and confuse their presentation of the gospel.
 - He will not stop until all of the sheep have been brought into the fold.

II. Now let's look at this mission itself.

A. First, let's look at the purpose of this mission.

1. It is important to understand that this was a short term mission.

- The rules that Jesus establishes here are not standing rules for other missions.
 - In particular these are not the rules for the mission that Jesus has given to His church today—
 - the great gospel ministry that began after He was crucified, resurrected, and raised to sit God’s right hand and reign.
 - This was a pre-gospel mission that anticipates that mission, but it is a different in many ways—
 - I say this because there have been some in history who have taken the rules for this short term mission and foolishly sought to impose them on the missionaries of the gospel—to make them standing rules.
 - Sometimes, they have taken a proud stance about their supposed humility and looked down on those who have not followed these rules.
 - But they have erred in applying rules for one mission to an entirely different mission that has different rules...
 - And there are others who see the difference in these rules and the ones that Jesus gave later and suppose that Jesus was confused or that the gospel writers have contradicted what they have written—but they have not—there are different rules for different missions.
2. So what then is the purpose of this particular short term mission?
- The purpose is to call God’s people to repent because the kingdom of God is about to be established—
 - not that it had not already been established in one sense with David—
 - God had His people Israel...and they were a kingdom of priests to Him,
 - but they were waiting for the salvation that He had promised through the Son of David.
 - Many of them thought the kingdom that was promised would just be more of what they had in the glory days of David—a kingdom on earth with a palace and a great temple...
 - They did not understand that it would be a spiritual kingdom wherein righteousness was established before God’s throne in heaven through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ as the lamb slain for sinners.
 - But they did not need to understand that yet.
 - The gospel was not yet revealed because Jesus had not yet done His saving work.
 - What, then did they need to do to respond rightly to God at this time?
 - What they needed to do to respond to God at this time was see His authority revealed in the person of Jesus Christ...
 - to see His authority in casting out demons and in healing the sick...
 - and to prepare for the coming kingdom, as they were commanded to do by John the Baptist, then by Jesus and now by His disciples also.
 - They should have set themselves to watch and see what God would do by Jesus—
 - to humble themselves by turning from their sins, and by turning their eyes to this One, who had come among them with authority from heaven, to see what He would do to save them.

3. This mission was very much like John's mission, only it had moved forward by a great step.
 - It was the same in that it was a call to God's people to repent and believe the good news that the kingdom was at hand.
 - It was different in that now Jesus was present, showing His authority.
 - Now, by Him, the authority of the kingdom was being displayed before their eyes by the casting out of demons and the healing of the sick.
 - Look at the whole of v. 7 and you can see that Jesus had now even conveyed this power to the twelve: **And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.**
 - He hereby gave them authority do what He had been doing—in His name—to show that the kingdom of God was at hand as they called the people to repent and look with expectation to see what God would do through their Master.
 - That is what the twelve were doing themselves... they were waiting to see what their Master would do to establish the kingdom—what God would do through Him.
 - That is how the twelve, even though they as yet had no understanding of what their Master would do, were able to preach.
 - They could preach the message that Christ wanted to be preached at this time, repent and look to see what God will do through Jesus.

B. Let's take a look at the rules that Jesus gave them for this mission.

1. First, He gave them rules to pack lightly.
 - They were to go to the nearby villages as those who expected to receive the hospitality that was customary in Israel for those who were passing through.
 - Verses 8-10 lay out the rules: **He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts—but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. Also He said to them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place."**
 - The objective of these rules was to enable them to move through these villages quickly.
 - They would enter, preach that the kingdom of God had come, and demonstrate the authority of their Master in each little village with exorcisms and healings.
 - There was no reason to spend a lot of time—they were to help Jesus with His goal of going to all the villages.
 - That is reason they weren't to take changes of clothes, extra shoes, baggage, even a second garment to sleep in.
 - They would not be staying anywhere very long and so would be given food and a place to sleep as each pair went to a different village.
 - Then they would come back to Jesus and report to Him as we saw that they did in verse 30 where it says:
 - **Verse 30: Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.**

- You can see how ridiculous it was for some to impose these rules as permanent requirements for missionaries...
 - Some even commanded missionaries to actually get rid of all their possessions and go about as beggars for the rest of their lives.
 - Jesus disciples still had their houses and even their fishing boats as is evident later on in the gospel narrative.
 - NOTE: Perhaps I should mention, as a side note because some have been troubled by this, that in Mark, Jesus gives them permission to take a staff while in Matthew and Luke a staff is not allowed...
 - Calvin is probably right when he pointed out that both might be true because a staff could refer to a walking stick, as it does in Mark, or to a rod that would be used as a weapon. Jesus probably permitted the walking stick but forbade the weapon since they would not be camping out and would be carrying no money.
 - If not that, it is certainly something like that.
 - It is only those who do not want to believe who stumble over such matters. Anyone who is aware of how different reports of the same incident are given, even when both reports are accurate, would have no problem with such differences.
2. The second rule Jesus gives them is about what to do when they are rejected.
- Verse 11 says: **“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!”**
 - a. Interestingly, this shows that Jesus and His disciples, from their own experience so far, anticipate that there will be those that reject them,
 - even though they preach that God’s people ought to repent and demonstrate with signs and wonders that His kingdom is at hand.
 - Who among God’s people could object to that, right?
 - But they knew already from Capernaum and Nazareth how their Master and His message were all too often rebuffed!
 - b. You see in this rule about rejection that they are not to go on trying to persuade those who reject them and their message.
 - The purpose of this mission is to keep moving on.
 - Much like Jesus does throughout His ministry.
 - We never see Him chasing after people who reject Him—He simply moves on—with sorrow—and preaches to others.
 - It is right for us to plead with men to repent, but that doesn’t mean that we go on begging them—it means that we put forward a powerful plea so that they know the seriousness of their rejection.
 - c. You see that this is exactly what Jesus calls for here!
 - 1) He tells them that when they are rejected, they are to do what Jews customarily did when they were leaving Gentile territory and entering Israel: **shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them!**

- Everyone in Israel (where this mission was carried out) knew what that meant!
- You were disassociating yourself from them, declaring by this action that you did not even want the defilement of their dust clinging to you!
- As Lane says: “By this action, they disassociated themselves from the pollution of these lands and their ultimate judgment. They consign the village that rejects the gospel of the kingdom to judgment.”

2) There is nothing so offensive to God as the rejection His word.

- Jesus says: **“Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!”**
- Better to be a thief, or a murderer, or an adulterer, or a sodomite, than to have the kingdom of God graciously brought to your doorstep and reject it.
 - Those things are all vile and wicked to be sure, but how much worse is it to have the Lord graciously come with a message of deliverance and to spurn Him!
 - It is one thing to sin, it is quite another to be so hardened in sin that you do not even want to be delivered from it by the gracious hand of God!
 - This is not nearly as offensive in our eyes as it ought to be because it is so common... but clearly it is offensive to God!
- We are all sinners and if we were not so very crooked and hardened,
 - we would be all our life eagerly waiting for a message of deliverance from God so that as soon as the gospel came, we would eagerly embrace it.
 - And we would not be content with any false gospels, false religions—no, only the gospel would be able to satisfy us.
 - But for that be the case with us, God must not only bring the gospel to us—He must also renew us by His Spirit so that we are convinced of our sin and enabled to see our need of grace and to even want to be delivered by Him.
 - Faith is truly the gift of God—it is the product not of our will, but of the working of God’s Spirit.
- So the twelve were to leave with each village that rejected their message a clear testimony of the gravity of what they had done...
 - And to show them that unless repentance was forthcoming, they would be condemned on the day of judgment.

C. We see that the disciples of Jesus faithfully fulfilled this mission that Jesus gave them.

1. Verse 12 and 13 tell us: 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,** and in verse 30, we have already seen how they reported back to Jesus, **“both what they had done and what they had taught.”**
2. How privileged these places were to hear the call of God upon their lives...

- such a gracious call that God was on the move to establish His kingdom of righteousness among them and that they should repent before His gracious majesty.
- But I say, if they were privileged—how much more are we?
 - We now have the full message of the gospel—we have actually been told what God did to atone for the sins of His people!
 - That He punished Jesus in our place and accepted Him as an atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins!
 - For us to spurn God’s call to repent and believe now is worse than to spurn the pre-gospel message preached by the twelve in our text!

TRANS> So what can we learn from this passage—what can we take away here...

III. There is so much for us to take away with this passage.

- A. First of all, we should thank our Lord for being relentless in pursuing people for His kingdom.
- How glad we should be that instead of giving up, getting angry and bitter, or changing His message when people were not responding to Him,
 - He multiplied His efforts and sent His word to even more people.
 - He did this, not out of bitterness, but out of love to gather people into His Father’s kingdom.
 - When the Jews did not respond to the gospel in the first century, He sent His ministers to the Gentiles and to this day He continues to send us out to preach the gospel in all the world.
 - If this were not so, we would still be in our sins.
- B. Let us also learn from our Lord’s example.
- When we experience failure in reaching the lost, it is not the time to give up.
 - It is the time to extend our reach to even more people.
 - If missionaries are not finding success, it means we need more missionaries, not less.
 - Each of you needs to do your part in the great work that He has given us to do as a body.
 - If the people around you that you have been talking to about Jesus are not interested, don’t continue to pester them—move on until you find someone who is interested, who is willing to hear God’s word.
 - Certainly we need to go to restore those lost sheep in the church who have wandered from the fold, but if they refuse, we must move on to find those outside who want to hear.
- C. And let us be sure that we faithfully convey the message that Jesus has given to us (His church) today.
- We are to go now proclaiming the good news that Jesus who came to establish God’s kingdom of righteousness for sinful people of this world was accepted.
 - He is the Son of God and He came here in our flesh, and when He did, all our sins were laid on Him so that He was punished for them all.

- He went to the cross and bore our guilt and our shame and our punishment and He was crucified for us.
- But the Father accepted Him and raised Him up and declared Him to be Lord and Christ, the Saviour of the world—the Head of His kingdom of righteousness that was now accepted by God.
 - And our message is to call all to come to Him by believing in Him and promising that those who do will be saved.
 - Trust in Him to wash away your guilt and to change your rebellious heart and He will... You will be forgiven and accepted on the basis of His righteousness and He will begin the work in you of transforming your heart and life.
- So repent, turn from your own way and come to God through faith in Jesus Christ and you will be saved.
 - That is the message we are called to preach today.
 - Not the message that sin doesn't matter that is often heard today, but that there is forgiveness of sin through Christ crucified.
 - Not the message that you can save yourself by following Jesus's example, as is also often heard, but a message that you must cast yourself on Him for mercy that He might do the saving.

D. And we must follow the rules that He has given us today for spreading this message.

- We are not to turn the church into entertainment, a concert, a comedy hour, a multi-media presentation, a dramatic performance.
 - We are called to preach the Bible in plain language, to pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit to work, to live godly lives that adorn the gospel, and to sing praise to God for His authority and grace (not singing for entertainment, but in praise to Him).
- And we are to establish churches with qualified ministers who are carefully taught and who are approved, with faithful ruling elders to join with the ministers in governing the church according to Christ's directives, receiving those who repent and confess Christ; and seeking to restore those who reject Him and failing that, to remove them and declare them to be bound in their sins.
 - Indeed, in faithfulness to the honour and glory of God and the ministry of Christ, we need to declare to those who reject God's call that they are under the wrath and curse of God.
 - We are to tell them that if they refuse to hear and believe the gospel, the day of judgment will be worse for them than for Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - We are not to adjust that message to make it more pleasing in hopes of gaining a more favourable response.
 - As stewards of the mysteries of God, we must be faithful to speak the message our Master has given us without alteration or embellishment.
 - We are not at liberty to change either the method or the message that He has appointed.
 - It is not through our wisdom, but through the foolishness of God's message preached that people will be saved.
 - We may gather many people by other methods, but we will not gather many to Christ.

E. And I say finally that you must be sure that you yourself have repented and received God's message of salvation.

- That right now you are among those who not only profess to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and to walk with Him, but that you actually do believe and that you actually are walking with Him and obeying Him.
- Jesus has made it clear that this is more weighty than life and death in this world.
 - This is about eternal life or eternal condemnation.
 - See that you are not one who hardens your heart, but one who gladly comes to Jesus to be saved by Him.
 - How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?
 - Jesus Himself calls you, through the message that the church preaches, to repent and believe and He promises that if you do, you will be saved.

What a gracious Saviour He is, sending out His word of salvation by His servants in all the earth.

- Be sure that you respond to Him appropriately.