

The Gospel of Mark

(Mid-Week Bible Study)

Week 8: Rejected, Yet Faithful -- Mark 6:1–29

Picture the synagogue at Nazareth. Jesus has come home. The roads He walked as a boy, the carpenter shop His earthly father once kept, the streets He played in, the neighbors who watched Him grow up are all gathered for the Sabbath service. He stands up to teach. By every measure, the moment should be a high one. The hometown hero returning, the rumored miracles confirmed, the pride of a synagogue that had quietly hoped this is what their boy would become.

It does not go that way. The people listen. They cannot deny that He teaches with wisdom and that mighty works have been done by His hands. But there is something they cannot get past. “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” (6:3). They had known Him too long. They had carried Him as a baby. They had bargained with His mother for furniture in the carpenter shop. They had watched Him grow up in a small village. And now He stood among them with the authority of God Himself. And they could not receive it.

Mark 6 is a chapter about what happens to faithful witness when it is rejected. Jesus is rejected by His own hometown. The Twelve are sent out into towns that may or may not receive them. And John the Baptist, the great prophetic forerunner, will die for telling Herod the truth. Each scene shows that the work of God in the world is not a popularity contest. The seed of the Word still has to be sown. The mission still has to go out. The truth still has to be spoken. Even when it is rejected. Even when it is mocked. Even when it costs everything.

This week we will sit with the strange combination of grief and resolve we find in this chapter. Jesus marvels at the unbelief of His own people. Then He goes on teaching. The Twelve are warned that some towns will not receive them. Then they are sent out anyway. John the Baptist is murdered in a palace dungeon. The work of God continues. Mark wants us to see that the gospel does not advance by being welcomed. It advances by being faithful, whether welcomed or not. The question that walks home with us is whether we are willing to be the kind of disciples who remain faithful when faithfulness is no longer rewarded.

Group Discussion: Mark 6 places three scenes side by side: Jesus rejected at Nazareth, the Twelve sent out into uncertain reception, and John the Baptist executed for telling the truth to Herod. What is Mark teaching us by arranging these stories together, and how does this chapter shape what we should expect, and how we should live, when faithful witness to Christ is unwelcome in the world around us?

Personal Reflection: Nazareth had known Jesus too long. The very familiarity that should have prepared them to recognize Him became the reason they could not. Where in your own walk has familiarity with Jesus (familiarity with Scripture, with the church, with the doctrines of the faith) quietly become an obstacle to seeing Him fresh, hearing Him clearly, and obeying Him with the heart of a first-time disciple?

Read Mark 6:1–29

Study Questions

1. At Nazareth, Jesus is met with the response, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?” (6:3), and He observes that “a prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household” (6:4). What is Jesus teaching about the pattern of how God’s messengers are received, and how does this reveal what is actually going on in the heart of a person who refuses to see God where they think they already know everything to be known?
2. In what areas of your own life has long familiarity with the things of God (with the Bible, with worship, with hearing sermons, with talk about Christ) quietly become a barrier to actually being changed by Him, and what would it take this week to come to the Word again with the heart of a first-time hearer?
3. Mark says Jesus “could do no mighty work there” except a few healings, and “he marveled because of their unbelief” (6:5–6). Without slipping into the error that human unbelief somehow limits God absolutely, what is Mark teaching about the real role of human faith in receiving what Christ offers, and about the genuine responsibility of every hearer to respond rather than resist?
4. Where in your own walk do you sense that Jesus might still “marvel” at your unbelief, not in matters of basic doctrine but in particular promises or commands of Christ you have intellectually agreed with but functionally never trusted, and what does that reveal about the work He wants to do in you next?
5. When Jesus sends out the Twelve, He tells them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money, only sandals and a single tunic (6:7–9). They are sent in pairs, with authority over unclean spirits and a message of repentance (6:7, 12). What is Jesus teaching the Twelve and the church about dependence on God, partnership in ministry, the simplicity of mission, and the substance of the message we are sent to proclaim?
6. Where in your own attempts to follow Christ or to share His message are you tempted to over-equip yourself (more knowledge, more programs, more comfort, more security) instead of stepping out with the simplicity, dependence, and trust Jesus called the Twelve into, and what specific simplification might Christ be inviting you to this season?
7. Jesus tells the Twelve, “If any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them” (6:11). What is Christ teaching about faithful witness in the face of rejection, about the responsibility of

hearers to respond, and about the proper response of the messenger when the message is refused (compare Acts 13:51; Acts 18:5–6)?

8. Most Christians today face rejection of the gospel in much subtler forms than first-century rejection of a traveling missionary, but the heart-question is the same. How do you tend to respond when family, friends, coworkers, or neighbors push back on the message of Christ, and where does Christ want to refine the way you handle being rejected for His sake?
9. Mark 6:14–29 is the only extended flashback in the Gospel. John the Baptist is murdered in a palace dungeon for telling Herod plainly, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife” (6:18). What is Mark teaching about the cost of faithful witness, the consistent pattern of God’s servants suffering at the hands of unrepentant power, the assurance of the kingdom in the face of apparent defeat, and the Christian’s call to faithful endurance even unto death (compare 2 Timothy 4:6–8; Revelation 2:10; Hebrews 11:35–40)?
10. John the Baptist did not back down even when telling the truth cost him his life. As you close this chapter, where is Christ calling you to a costly but loving honesty (with a family member, a coworker, a friend, a member of the church, or even with yourself), and what would it look like, with God’s help, to speak the truth in love this week regardless of the cost to your comfort or reputation?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Isaiah 53:3, the Servant despised and rejected by men; Matthew 10:16–33, Jesus’ extended instructions to those He sends out into a world that will reject them; Acts 4:13–22, the early apostles speaking boldly despite official threats; 2 Timothy 4:6–8, Paul finishing his course faithfully even at the end; Hebrews 11:35–40, the great cloud of witnesses who suffered for faith without seeing the full reward in this life.