

### **\*READ Mark 6:1-6\***

In the fifth grade, I experienced something that I either had not experienced before or I simply hadn't recognized exactly what it was when it took place. That something was rejection. I had been told by some friends that this girl had a crush on me, so I began trying to figure out how I might go talk to her about it. I finally mustered the courage while we were on the bus for a field trip, but she very quickly shot me down and made it abundantly clear that she did not and never would have a crush on me. Needless to say, my little ten year old spirit had a tough time dealing with the rejection.

While I would love to say that was the first and last time I was rejected in some way...that simply isn't true. I can also think back to my middle school years and I remember my 6th and 7th grade years when I tried out for the school soccer team and didn't make it. As you might expect, I again took that pretty hard. After all, rejection isn't a fun thing to experience.

However, at the same time as I look back on those times...I can see exactly why I was rejected in those moments. That girl, who I had been told had a crush on me, was one of the prettier girls in my grade. She was super popular, and honestly she was just straight up out of my league. When it came to trying out for the middle school soccer team, I simply wasn't good enough to make the team and be a contributor. Therefore, when looking back at these rejections I have to admit that they were actually understandable and even somewhat warranted.

Nonetheless in the moment, that rejection hurts, and maybe you have experienced something similar within your own life. Maybe you've felt the pain of asking someone out and them not being interested. Maybe you didn't make the team or you didn't get the part you wanted in a play. It might be that you were passed over for a job or you didn't get the promotion. Any number of moments of rejection can result in feelings of hurt, but these times also provide opportunities for us to think upon why we were rejected. Maybe like me, you simply were unfit for the position in some way. Maybe the guy or the girl was simply out of your league. Maybe you weren't qualified for the job or the promotion. That these types of things happen is simply a part of life.

But how about Jesus? We just read in this text that He Himself suffered rejection from those of His own hometown. Does this mean that He too was insufficient in some way? Was there something about Jesus that was lacking? If you have been a part of our study here in the Gospel of Mark up to this point then you know with certainty that there simply is nothing lacking when it comes to Jesus, who He was, what He could do, and simply what He was all about. Jesus truly was incredible! And yet, we find the incredible Servant being rejected in this text. Let's use our time of study considering these rejections, some reasoning behind them, and what was a result of these mistakes on the part of those involved in these rejections.

## **Mark 6:1-29**

### **A. Rejection at Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6)**

1. If the apparent chronology holds up then it seems as if Jesus is again returning to the place of a previous rejection (**Luke 4:16-30**)...His hometown of Nazareth. Maybe because of His growing popularity within the region, our Lord is invited to once again come back to His hometown synagogue to teach. Regardless of the circumstances, we find Jesus doing what Jesus did. He spoke with great unrivaled wisdom and performed incredible miraculous works. However, the people once again respond in the same way as they did in Luke's account. They failed to take Him seriously and rejected His wisdom and works on the basis of having some personal history and relationship with Him.
2. Let's remember that history tells us that Nazareth was not a massive place by any means. I have heard some estimates that only as many as 400 people resided in this small town. If this is the case, then it definitely seems like a place where everybody knows everybody. It is this seemingly familiarity that led the people of Nazareth to reject the wisdom and works of Jesus. *"Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And aren't his sisters here with us?"* Being trained in carpentry and construction as Jesus was was a noble occupation, but to then follow that up with a description of Jesus being "the son of Mary" could easily be taken as an insult since the cultural

norm was for you to be identified as the son of your father. Nevertheless, the astonishment of the people that *this* Jesus was the wise miracle worker simply didn't sit well with them. They were unwilling to believe in Jesus, and it was that unbelief that is reversed against them as Jesus ***"was amazed at their unbelief."***

3. However, this unbelief didn't happen in a vacuum in the sense that it didn't come without consequences. One of the shocking statements in the Gospels is found in this section where Mark writes, ***"He was not able to do a miracle there..."*** Is Mark saying that Jesus's miraculous powers were lacking? Was He insufficient to get the job done? While some might want to use this text against Jesus, I am convinced that this lack of miraculous working was not a fault of Jesus. Instead, it was a direct result of the lack of belief on the behalf of those in Nazareth.
4. Why do I say this? Consider that the context of this statement is totally centered around the unbelief of this people. ***"They were offended by Him"*** was the result of them considering their familiarity with Him over what He was actually doing. What was Jesus's response to their rejection? ***"A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his household."*** We have now seen Jesus rejected in each of these settings. He has been rejected here in Nazareth by His neighbors and we remember the rejection of His own family and relatives back in **3:20,21,31-35**. What was the result of the unbelief of these groups? Again, ***"He was not able to do a miracle there..."*** However, let's keep reading...***"except that He laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them."*** So which is it? Was Jesus lacking or did the peoples' unbelief hinder their ability to receive the blessings that come with belief? It seems evident to me that the fault was on their part since Jesus was seemingly able to perform these incredible deeds for a few sick people. Their belief and trust in Jesus allowed them to experience His great power, but the same wasn't true for the many more who rejected him. Their rejection was no fault of Jesus, but it was a lack of belief on their end. Yet, this is only the first of three rejections in this context.

#### B. Rejection In The Cities (Mark 6:7-13)

1. We can go back to **3:13-19** and read of Jesus choosing His twelve Apostles who would serve as His right hand men throughout His ministry. It is at this point in the ministry that the Lord is ready to send them out as His representatives to the people of the surrounding areas and cities. We might think that Jesus would use this opportunity to get them prepared for every possible circumstance and build up their confidence for the road ahead...but He instead instructs them to take little with them and even to be ready to have doors slammed in their faces.
2. Instead of telling them to go empty their life savings to have money for the road, Jesus tells His Apostles to travel as lightly as possible. ***"He instructed them to take nothing for the road except a staff—no bread, no traveling bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not put on an extra shirt."*** The message seems to be clear to me...the Lord will provide for your needs! Yet that question might be...how? How will the Lord provide? We need to keep in mind the culture context of this writing. Unlike our current modern times, hospitality was a foundation principle of the near eastern culture. It was not uncommon for you to accommodate strangers in your home for the night and to provide them with their necessities for their journeys. With this mind, we can see how the Lord might provide, and Jesus anticipates such being the case as He states, ***"Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that place."***
3. However, Jesus also anticipates that the message they would sharing from place to place would be one that would garner rejection. He first states, ***"If any place does not welcome you or listen to you, when you leave there, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."*** This practice wasn't anything new to these Jews. It was customary for the Jewish people to shake the dust off of their sandaled feet as they left Gentile territory, but to do so towards your Jewish brethren would have been seen as a big time statement.
4. So why was Jesus preparing them for such drastic action? Why did He anticipate them being rejected? We must consider their message! ***"So they went out and preached that people should repent."*** This was

the point of decision for those who heard this message. Were they willing to repent and acknowledge their need to turn back to God? If they would do so then the same benefits experienced by the few who believed in Nazareth would be experienced by those who crossed paths with the Apostles. ***"They drove out many demons, anointed many sick people with oil and healed them."*** The acceptance of Jesus by some led to them experiencing the blessings He would give through His Apostles. Yes, there were moments of rejection, but the Apostles also experienced moments of acceptance.

### C. Rejection By The Authorities (Mark 6:14-29)

1. The final rejection of this context seems to throw a bit of a random curveball into the flow of this narrative. Mark has spoken of Jesus's own rejection, the soon-to-be experienced rejection of His Apostles, and now there is this random section about the death of John the Baptist. How do we get here? Notice that the news of Jesus and what He has been doing has clearly been spreading far and wide. Jesus Himself has already been traveling around and now His Apostles are doing the same. This seems like a natural result. However, this causes Herod concern because He is not entirely sure exactly who this Jesus is. In fact, that question is a real driving force question for this entire narrative from my perspective. Mark seems to be answering that question with every page written and story recorded.
2. It also seems evident that Jesus and John were very similar in what it was that they were teaching based upon Herod's belief that this was John being risen from the dead and with miraculous powers. But hold on...when did John die?? This section is actually the telling of a previous event that took place that resulted in John's life being taken.
3. Herod was living in an adulterous marriage that involved the wife of his brother Philip. Herod had not only divorced his wife, but he also took the wife of his brother. This royal love triangle had been rebuked by John, ***"If is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."*** In reality, this is the same message of repentance that was being spoken by Jesus's Apostles. Just as they suffered rejection in response to their message, so John was rejected by Herod and His mistress Herodias because of his teaching. Herodias especially took things poorly and hated John so much to the point of wanting him dead. Herod actually seems to have had an affection of sorts for John, and the text tells us that he ***"like to listen to him."***
4. Sadly, Herod got himself into a position that led to Herodias's wishes being granted. During his birthday celebration, Herodias's daughter danced before Herod and his guests in such a way that the king was pleased to the point of offering a immense reward for her efforts. The daughter asks her mother what she should ask for and Herodias responds with, ***"John the Baptist's head."*** Herod was distressed by his rash actions, but he nonetheless follows through in order to not lose face. Let's remember that this was all brought about by John's willingness to speak the truth and suffer rejection to the strongest degree.

### Application Questions

- A. Will we be like those in Nazareth and other cities who miss out on Jesus's blessings because of our own rejection of Him?
  1. It can be very easy for us to shake our heads and scoff at those of Jesus's day who rejected the wisdom, works, and teachings of Jesus, but are we really all that different today when we reject His wisdom works, and teachings? We might think that this is a silly thought considering that we have not sat at the feet of Jesus or witnessed His mighty works with our eyes. While it is true that we have not literally heard Jesus with our ears or witnessed Him with our eyes...we have read about His wisdom and works within the Scriptures that we claim to believe contain the real life events that took place long ago. If this is the case, then our rejection of Jesus no less serious than those of His own day.
  2. We might even be guilty of rejecting Jesus for the same reason they did. We might not consider a Jewish man of Nazareth as being one worthy of our full devotion which would include our need for repentance. When we refuse to change our behavior when it contradicts the will of God...we are no different than those of the cities who refused to welcome Jesus's Apostles and their message of repentance.

3. And what is the result of such rejection? Is it not that we miss out on the same blessings that those of Jesus's own day missed out on? When we reject Jesus, we reject His wisdom that leads to the abundant life that He seeks to provide. When we reject Jesus, we reject the incredible spiritual healing that He gives to us in the forgiveness of our sins. I can't think of anyone who wouldn't love to have a better and guilt free life, and that life can come from Jesus so long as we don't reject Him like those we have read about this morning.

**B. Are we willing to continue on carrying out the mission of Jesus even if we suffer rejection because of His name?**

1. While we have mentioned the seemingly disconnected nature of this text in some ways, especially the inclusion of John's murder, the reality is that this narrative of the ministry of Jesus seems very clearly trying to do what Jesus sought to do for His disciples. He sought to prepare them for the difficulties they were going to face, and the readers of Mark's Gospel account would surely recognize from these three successive stories that have an association with Jesus being rejected ought to inform us that we too can and will be rejected as we seek to live for Him. The question then becomes...what will we do when we do suffer rejection because of the name of Jesus?
2. The temptation set before us in that moment of rejection is to abandon that which initially led to our rejection. If we experience rejection based upon the name of Jesus then the natural temptation is to abandon the name of Jesus. The temptation is to reject that which led to our own rejection. However...if we do such a thing then are we not ourselves now in the same spot as those who reject Jesus from the start?
3. Therefore, our proper response is to continue on in the good work of our Lord even if we suffer rejection at the hands of others. We would do well to remember the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount as He spoke of those who might suffer in His name. ***"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you **because of me.** Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* (Matthew 5:10-12)** We might be able to go so far as to say that it is a staple of God's people to be willing to suffer as we speak up for Him and His causes. Yes, it might lead to an amount of suffering, but as Jesus clearly states...there are great blessings that come when we suffer because of Him. Even within this text of Scripture we find one willing to suffer for His name...that being John the Baptist.

**Conclusion: When Jesus is rejected, the only true source of blessings is rejected.**

John was willing to stand strong and speak out against the wickedness of his day. Though he suffered the loss of his life for it...we have great confidence that he did so to the benefit of that which matters most...his soul. May we be a people who learn from those who rejected our Lord those many years ago. May we embrace the important truth that rejecting Jesus only leads to rejecting the incredible blessings that He came to shower upon us. He is worthy of our acceptance and devotion, and may we remember that such coming from us will result in our receiving life more abundantly from Him. It simply makes sense for us to embrace, not reject, the One who alone is worthy of our full devotion and trust...the Incredible Jesus.