

Gospel of Mark

Chapter 6, Part I

Verses 1-6

- 1 He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him.
- 2 And on the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands!"
- 3 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?" And they took offense at him.
- 4 And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house."
- 5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them.
- 6 And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.

Notes

Verse 1 – It is important for the rest of the chapter to note that he's returning, but this time with disciples. The disciples have been learning from Jesus, and are preparing for their public ministry.

Verse 2 – Jesus is teaching like he normally has. However, the people from his home town receive the message a bit more skeptically than he's used to.

Verse 2 – "Where did this man get all this?" and "What is the wisdom given to him?" are not statements of astonishment at Jesus' wisdom. They want to know where he's studied and learned how to say these things. They do not believe that Jesus is the source of the authority, unlike the people of previous chapters.

Verse 3 – Again, they identify Jesus as a common laborer – a carpenter. Thus, he wouldn't have been expected to have the same training as a scribe or a Pharisee. They identify his family as common members of the community, and they equate Jesus with them. At best, they wouldn't expect that Jesus could possibly produce the wisdom and works on his own. At worst, the question his parentage, as Joseph is not mentioned... perhaps he got some of that wisdom from "his real dad."

Verses 5-6 – The last passage equated faith and healing. Jesus tells people that their faith has healed them. In this passage, their lack of faith has led to little healing.

Coming to a better understanding of the text:

What connections here do we see between faith and the work of God?

Are you surprised that the text says "he could do no mighty work there?"

Verses 7-13

- 7 And he called to him the twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.
- 8 He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts;
- 9 but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.
- 10 And he said to them, "Where you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place.
- 11 And if any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them."
- 12 So they went out and preached that men should repent.

13 And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.

Notes:

Verse 7 – It was typical for disciples of a teacher to work in pairs. There is no special symbolism attached to people being sent out two by two.

Verse 7 – Jesus' private instruction of the disciples, and their witness of his power over demonic spirits had prepared them for their ministry. In essence, Jesus had delegated the power and the mission to his disciples so they could do his work of the Kingdom of God.

Verse 8 – The items that they were to (or not to) carry shows their complete reliance on God. There is no room for self-sufficiency in this model. They must trust in God to provide for them.

Verse 10 – The command to stay in one house was a command not to reject one household's hospitality when/if they were offered even more comfortable accommodations from a more affluent home.

Verse 11 – This is a visual statement of God's judgment on those who have rejected the disciples. This is a practice which dates back to the Old Testament essentially making a statement that the disciples do not want to be associated with even the dust of the town that rejected them.

Coming to a better understanding of the text:

What links do we see here between discipleship and mission?

What applications might there be for our discipleship and the continuing mission of Jesus Christ?

Verses 14-16

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him."

15 But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old."

16 But when Herod heard of it he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

Notes:

Verses 14-29 – This represents a break in the story where there is allusion made to the transfiguration and passion, though it is done through a "scene change" focusing on Herod and a flashback to the death of John the Baptist.

Verse 14 – King Herod, having a guilty conscience and some bit of superstition is afraid that Jesus is John the Baptist, returned from the dead and more powerful than he had been previously. In Herod's mind, the return from the dead had bestowed the power on John.

Verses 14-15 – The common theories appeared to be that the people believed that Jesus was either John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the other great prophets.

Coming to a better understanding of the text:

The people think that Jesus is perhaps one of which three characters? In what other passages do we see this reflected?

Verses 17-29

17 For Herod had sent and seized John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; because he had married her.

18 For John said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

19 And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not.

- 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. When he heard him, he was much perplexed; and yet he heard him gladly.
- 21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee.
- 22 For when Herodias' daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will grant it."
- 23 And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom."
- 24 And she went out, and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the baptizer."
- 25 And she came in immediately 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; but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her.
- 27 And immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard and gave orders to bring his head. He went and beheaded him in the prison,
- 28 and 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 his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Notes:

Verses 17-18 – Herodias was married to Phillip (Herod's husband), however she had left him in order to marry Herod. It was lawful to marry your brother's wife if 1) the brother had died and 2) they had no children together. Herodias and Herod failed on both conditions, and thus John the Baptist spoke out (either privately or publicly) against the action.

Verses 19-20 – Herodias wanted John the Baptist killed on account of the matter, and it appears that Herod imprisoned him as a compromise (citing that he was keeping him under "protective custody" from other political forces at the time. In earnest, Herod knew John the Baptist to be a man of God, and even if he was not inclined to listen to John, he also was not about to have him killed, for fear of judgment.

Verse 22 – It is highly irregular for a princess to perform as such, especially as there are entertainers who market such skills. It is speculated that the fact it was a princess dancing may have added enticement to what was already insinuated to be a very enticing display.

Verse 22 – "Up to half of my kingdom" – this is not to be taken literally. The statement was often used to show gratitude or signify that the recipient may ask for an extravagant gift.

Verse 25 – The immediacy of the response shows that Herodias may have had this in mind from the beginning, or at least she was always ready for the opportunity to kill John the Baptist.

Verse 26 – To go back on his promise, especially when he had given such a broad oath would have made him lose considerable face in front of his guests.

Coming to a better understanding of the text:

How does this passage of a righteous person in a wicked ruler's court foreshadow the trial and passion of Jesus?