

Mark 6:1-29 ~ Scripture Verses

A Prophet Without Honor

¹ Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples.

² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! ³ Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

⁴ Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.” ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. ⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.

⁸ These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.

¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.”

¹² They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

John the Baptist Beheaded

¹⁴ King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” ¹⁵ Others said, “He is Elijah.” And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.”

¹⁶ But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!”

¹⁷ For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, whom he had married. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” ¹⁹ So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, ²⁰ because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

²¹ Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.

²² When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his

dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, “Ask me for anything you want, and I’ll give it to you.”²³ And he promised her with an oath, “Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.”

²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?”

“The head of John the Baptist,” she answered.

²⁵ At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

²⁶ The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, ²⁸ and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. ²⁹ On hearing of this, John’s disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

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Mark 6:1-29 ~ Discussion Questions

1. Is it easier to talk about your faith with a family member, a close friend, or a stranger? How have your family or old friends responded to your new faith? Is the saying, “familiarity breeds contempt” true? Why or why not? Does this affect you?
2. What did Jesus do in Nazareth? What prevented him from doing any miracles?
3. At what was Jesus amazed? (6:6) In what ways do you prevent Jesus from working miraculously in your life? In what *specific areas* of your life would you like to have more faith? How can you increase your faith?
4. Why do you suppose that Jesus sent the disciples out two by two? What does this mean to you today?
5. How did Jesus want his men to travel? Why did he tell them to pack lightly? What did Jesus say to do if they were not welcomed?
6. When you are given a difficult task (at school, on the job, in the military, etc.), do you try to avoid it, regard it as a challenge, seek help from a partner, or just plunge right in?
7. How can you apply Jesus’ advice to your personal Christian witness? Do you find it uncomfortable to talk about your faith? How should we react to people who reject our testimony?
8. What does this passage teach us about our responsibility to pastors, missionaries, and volunteer workers?
9. *King* Herod? Huh? Was there more than one ruler named Herod?
10. Why had Herod Antipas arrested John the Baptist and put him in prison? (6:17-18)
11. What caused Herod to offer his daughter, Salome, anything she wanted? Would he have given her half of his kingdom? (6:22-23) Would Herod have had to give her what she, on behalf of her mother, asked for?
12. John unsuccessfully attempted to keep Herod accountable. How can we keep other Christians accountable? Successfully? With no lingering hard feelings?

Mark 6:1-29 ~ Leader's Guide

1. Is it easier to talk about your faith with a family member, a close friend, or a stranger? How have your family or old friends responded to your new faith? Is the saying, "familiarity breeds contempt" true? Why or why not? Does this affect you?

The saying, "Familiarity Breeds Contempt" comes from one of Aesop's fables:

When first the Fox saw the Lion he was terribly frightened, and ran away and hid himself in the wood. Next time however he came near the King of Beasts he stopped at a safe distance and watched him pass by. The third time they came near one another the Fox went straight up to the Lion and passed the time of day with him, asking him how his family were, and when he should have the pleasure of seeing him again; then turning his tail, he parted from the Lion without much ceremony. "Familiarity Breeds Contempt."

The lesson is that the fear, fascination, or awe of something is reduced through getting to know it better. Mark 6:4 reads, 'Jesus said to them, "Only in his home-town, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."' The problem of a prophet being without honor in his home town is that people who know you well are not so inclined to recognize the exceptional in you. One fellow on a UK blog said, 'I can really relate to this – when I play guitar to somebody for the first time, they are usually impressed, but when I play to somebody who hears me play all the time, like my uncle or brother, it's nothing exceptional. In the same way, I have a friend who's quite famous, and people will come up to him and say, "Oh! You have that show on BCC, don't you!" But to me, he's just Craig.

'Having learnt this lesson, it's hard for me to comprehend how people can get married. Or as a matter of fact, I can see how and why people would want to get married, but what's harder to understand is how they can stay happily married. I guess the ridiculously high divorce rate suggests that in general, they don't stay happily married. And I'm not surprised.'

2. What did Jesus do in Nazareth? What prevented him from doing any miracles?

In Nazareth, it wasn't that Jesus lost his power to perform miracles, but rather that he chose not to do any in such a climate of unbelief.

3. At what was Jesus amazed? (6:6) In what ways do you prevent Jesus from working miraculously in your life? In what *specific areas* of your life would you like to have more faith? How can you increase your faith?

In many Bible stories, we often find that people were *amazed* at something Jesus did or taught, but in all of scripture, there are only two instances that say that Jesus was amazed: first in Luke 7:9 where Jesus was amazed at the faith or belief of the Centurion and second in Mark 6:6 where he was amazed at a lack of faith.

These verses show us that the main way of preventing miracles is simply a lack of faith. You don't have to be a total non-believer and pooh-pooh church and religion; just a small nagging doubt can be enough to stand in the way of healing.

Ask yourself why is it that some Christians see more miracles than others? Or that Christians tend to see more miracles than non-believers? Could it just possibly be faith and belief? Of course.

4. Why do you suppose that Jesus sent the disciples out two by two? What does this mean to you today?

The purpose in going in pairs was probably two-fold. First, it would bolster the disciples credibility by having the testimony of more than one witness to Jesus' acts and good news and second it the two would provide mutual support to each other during their training period.

In giving your testimony, especially for the first or second time, it's probably best if two people are together. When Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses go out in the community, it is almost always in pairs. It's more effective and if one person gets discouraged or even sick, a companion is there to help.

5. How did Jesus want his men to travel? Why did he tell them to pack lightly? What did Jesus say to do if they were not welcomed?

They were to depend entirely on the hospitality of those to whom they testified. He said they were not to move from house to house, possibly seeking better lodging, but use only one home as headquarters while working in a community. An extra tunic was used as a covering to protect from the cold night air; by not taking one the implication is that the disciples were to trust in God to provide lodging each night.

Shaking the dust off one's feet is a sign of repudiation (or rejection) and a solemn warning for their rejection of God's message; it was also a gesture showing separation from everything associated with the place. Shaking the dust off was actually a symbolic act practiced by the Pharisees when they left a ceremonially unclean Gentile area.

6. When you are given a difficult task (at school, on the job, in the military, etc.), do you try to avoid it, regard it as a challenge, seek help from a partner, or just plunge right in?

7. How can you apply Jesus' advice to your personal Christian witness? Do you find it uncomfortable to talk about your faith? How should we react to people who reject our testimony?

Let's face it, most of us find it difficult to talk about personal issues with

others, much less our faith. After all, we're not pastors, we haven't gone to Bible college, and we have no idea how to respond to difficult questions and just plain disbelief. What did Jesus say? First of all, you're not always going to be accepted with open arms; just look at what happened to Jesus himself when he returned to Nazareth. He was not welcomed and as far as we know, he healed some sick people and simply turned around and left.

What did Jesus tell his disciples to do if they were not welcomed? The same! Turn around and leave and not only leave, but "shake the dust off your feet...as a testimony against them."

You can plant the seed (the message of good news, best told as your own personal testimony—i.e., what God did in *your* life), you can water and fertilize a seed already planted by someone else, but you can't make it grow. Neither can God, by the way; he gave us free will to accept or reject his grace and gifts.

When you have shared the good news with someone and leave, what should you do then? Pray, certainly, for others to come and fertilize the seed you have planted. But you can and should do more. Look at Paul: he wrote letters of encouragement and correction; he sent other workers (Timothy, Barnabas, Titus, etc.), and in several instances he went back himself.

8. What does this passage teach us about our responsibility to pastors, missionaries, and volunteer workers?

9. King Herod? Huh? Who are all these rulers named Herod?

Herod the Great, appointed by the Roman Senate was king of Judea, Galilee, Iturea, and Traconitis from 37 to 4 BC and, according to Matthew 2:1-19 and Luke 1:5, was king at the time of the birth of Jesus. Three of his six sons were also named Herod (Herod Philip I, Philip II, and Herod Antipas) and, when Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons (Herod Philip II, Archelaus, and Herod Antipas). These sons were called tetarchs, meaning the ruler of a fourth part of a region. Matthew and Luke both correctly refer to Herod Antipas as a tetarch, but Mark (6:14) and Matthew (14:9) also call him a king, perhaps because that was his popular title among the people or perhaps it was used sarcastically. Herod Antipas was tetarch of Galilee and Perea.

The third generation of Herods included Herod Agrippa I and Herod of Chalcis and the fourth generation included Herod Agrippa II.

None of the Herods were Christian and, in general, all of them were quite evil. For example, Herod the Great had all male babies to the age of two killed. Herod Antipas put John the Baptist to death. Herod Agrippa I killed James and put Peter in prison.

10. Why had Herod Antipas arrested John the Baptist and put him in prison? (6:17-18)

John had told Herod Antipas that it was not lawful for him to marry his brother's wife, Herodias, who had first married Herod Philip I.

Josephus says that John was imprisoned at Machaerus, a fortress in Perea on the eastern side of the Dead Sea.

11. What caused Herod to offer his daughter, Salome, anything she wanted? Would he have given her half of his kingdom? (6:22-23) Would Herod have had to give her what she, on behalf of her mother, asked for?

He and his guests were pleased with her dancing. "Up to one-half of my kingdom" was a proverbial reference to generosity, not to be taken literally. But generosity suited the occasion and would win approval of the guests.

Herod could easily have said, "oh, you foolish girl; you don't know what you're asking for." But for whatever reason—probably to look good to his guests since he had already made an outrageous promise—he gave her the head of John.

12. John unsuccessfully attempted to keep Herod accountable. How can we keep other Christians accountable? Successfully? With no lingering hard feelings?

Christians have an obligation to keep other Christians accountable. It can be informal—a comment when you observe something wrong done—but generally a formal structure works out better. One men's group I attended had a list of accountability questions. When the group was small (4 guys) we went around and everyone answered all the questions and we discussed knotty issues. With a larger group it worked better to break into small groups of 2 or 3 men and each group could go over the questions. An important part of the process is praying after all or some of the issues are out in the open.