

The Gospel According to Mark

Lesson 5

Mark 6:1- Mark 6:56

From the home of Jairus in Capernaum where He raised the little girl from the dead, Jesus traveled to His childhood town approximately twenty miles away. A journey of this distance required at least ten hours of travel in that day.

Jesus in His hometown of Nazareth

Mark 6: ¹And He went out from there, and He came into His home town; and His disciples followed Him. ²And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? ³"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. ⁴And Jesus said to them, **"A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household."**

The people in Nazareth knew Jesus well. They watched Him grow up and interacted with Him in His carpenter business. We must take notice that the town's people mention the family of Jesus by name and yet it is obvious that Joseph is left out. Most likely, Joseph had died and Mary continued to live in Nazareth with her sons and daughters.

The English translators perform an injustice when they use the word "offense" in this passage. Every other time they translate it in the gospel of Mark, they use the word "stumble." The proper translation should be that they "stumbled" over Him. The people of Nazareth stumbled in their belief, rejecting the idea that He could truly be the Messiah. He was the carpenter who had carved the yokes for their oxen and built their tables and stools; how can He be the Messiah? He was an ordinary man. Where and when did all this power come upon Him? We can assume from this passage that Jesus did nothing out of the ordinary as He was growing up in Nazareth. The assumption can be made that when He left Nazareth just thirty months before to go to the Jordan River to be baptized, the people of His hometown just thought He was a normal person. They literally had no idea that He was God in the flesh. Now, this same Jesus was performing miracles that only God could do. How could the same Jesus who grew up among them be God?

To answer them, He used the proverb **"A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household."** The saddest part of this proverb is the realization that His family rejected His Messiahship. The rejection of the town's people is understandable; the rejection by His family is disheartening.

Their Unbelief

Mark 6: 5 And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them. **6** And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

It is easy to stumble over verse five and fail to understand that it belongs in context with verse six. The clue to the proper interpretation springs forth in the word "unbelief." Jesus healed only those who believed that He could heal them. He healed only those who put their faith and trust in Him. Jairus came to ask Him to heal his daughter. The woman came to touch His garment. The demon-possessed man fell before Him. They all believed that He was God and could heal them. Belief is the cornerstone of faith. Unbelievers do not place their faith in something they do not believe in. Jairus will be in heaven along with the woman healed of the issue of blood; so will the demon-possessed people who were freed from their captivity. Only in His hometown, Nazareth, did the people stay away from Jesus because they did not believe that He was God.

The twelve sent out in pairs

Mark 6: 7 And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs; and He was giving them authority over the unclean spirits; **8** and He instructed them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, except a mere staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belt; **9** but to wear sandals; and *He added*, "Do not put on two tunics." **10** And He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. **11**"And any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake off the dust from the soles of your feet for a testimony against them."

Finally, after more than two years of ministry, Jesus sent His newly delegated apostles on their first missionary journey. They were not to go out with any overtures of wealth. In that day, a man who owned two of anything could be considered wealthy. The common people owned one change of clothing and they wore it every day. Jesus' apostles were to go out in faith, relying on the believers to provide for their needs. No money was to be carried along; every need was to be provided by believers along the way. Notice that the Lord instructed them not to be concerned with those who rejected their message; the apostles were to reject helping them. Enough had transpired in the area to convince those who would trust Him as the Messiah. These apostles had the power to do everything Jesus did in His earthly ministry. This verse is a clear indication that not everyone will be saved.

The twelve cast out demons and heal the sick

Mark 6: 12 And they went out and preached that *men* should repent. **13** And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

As the apostles went out into six different directions in Galilee, the message they preached was the same as that of John the Baptist. Finally, the apostles were seen

casting out demons. In addition, they were healing many of the sick. Only here do we find the use of oil for the healing of the physically sick. In James 5:12-14, oil is used to anoint those who are confessing their repentance for the sins of the tongue.

Herod wonders if John the Baptist has risen from the dead

Mark 6: ¹⁴And King Herod heard *of it*, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him." ¹⁵But others were saying, "He is Elijah." And others were saying, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets *of old*." ¹⁶But when Herod heard *of it*, he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!" ¹⁷For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. ¹⁸For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*; ²⁰for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

John the Baptist had been dead for about six months at this time. John had rebuked Herod for His sinful relationship with Herodias, his brother's wife. It is difficult to determine whom Herod feared the most - John or Herodias. When Herod could get away from Herodias, he would amuse himself in the dungeon with John. Herod was fearful of John's power even though John never performed a single miracle. Mark records the death of John the Baptist in the following passage.

Mark records the day of John the Baptist's death

Mark 6: ²¹And a strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; ²²and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you." ²³And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom." ²⁴And she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." ²⁵And immediately she came in haste before the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me right away the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. ²⁷And immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded *him* to bring *back* his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison, ²⁸and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.

It was Herodias who wanted John the Baptist dead, not Herod. To accomplish the task, she devised a plan that stooped to the lowest degradation of the well-to-do person in that day. On Herod's birthday she convinced her daughter to dance in a lustful and licentious way before all the guests at his party. In that day, professional dancers performed these kinds of dances. The royalty and well-to-do would never have been found in such degrading dress or engaged in such lewd

behavior. Herodius stooped low to degrade her daughter to tempt Herod to grant her wish, and he did by having John the Baptist beheaded.

John's disciples bury him; the apostles report the death to Jesus

Mark 6: 29 And when his disciples heard *about this*, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

The body of John was buried by his own disciples. These disciples would later follow Jesus.

Mark 6: 30 And the apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. **31** And He said to them, "**Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while.**" (~~For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.~~) **32** And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves.

After the record of John's death, Mark addressed the report of the apostles as they returned from their missionary journey into Galilee without Jesus. After hearing their report, Jesus sent them to a lonely place to pray. Jesus had them board a boat and head for the other side of the Sea of Galilee to get away from the crowds.

The lonely place became crowded

Mark 6: 33 And *the people* saw them going, and many recognized *them*, and they ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them.

34 And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.

Why did Jesus want to go to a lonely place to pray? We can only assume that it was to give thanks to God for the blessings of their mission endeavors. The people on the seashore did not understand the need to thank God for His blessings in a place of solitude. The people ran around the seashore, to see where it was going. The boat finally put ashore and Jesus continued to minister to them.

Five thousand are fed

Mark 6: 35 And when it was already quite late, His disciples came up to Him and began saying, "The place is desolate and it is already quite late; **36** send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." **37** But He answered and said to them, "**You give them something to eat!**" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something* to eat?" **38** And He said to them, "**How many loaves do you have? Go look!**" And when they found out, they said, "Five and two fish." **39** And He commanded them all to recline by groups on the green grass. **40** And they reclined in companies of hundreds and of fifties. **41** And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven,

He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all.

42And they all ate and were satisfied. **43**And they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. **44**And there were five thousand men who ate the loaves.

Here we have the first reference to the size of the crowd that followed Jesus. It consisted of more than five thousand men. In addition, women and children were present.

We must remember that the apostles had come to tell Jesus about the success of their missionary journey. Seeking a place to pray, they boarded their boats and sailed to a secluded area. The crowd followed them around the edge of the lake and waited for their arrival. Throughout the day Jesus ministered to them, and as the day came to a close, the people were hungry, but there was no place to purchase food for the multitude of people there by the seashore.

Verse 39 gives a clue to the time of year. The people were reclining on the green grass, most likely the grass found only in the spring in Galilee. Two and a half years have passed since His baptism in the Jordan. It will be a year until His death on the cross.

To the mountain to pray

Mark 6: **45**And immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of *Him* to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the multitude away. **46**And after bidding them farewell, He departed to the mountain to pray.

Returning to the boat, Jesus convinced His disciples to sail away from the multitude with Bethsaida as their destination. Jesus lagged behind to send the crowd away; then He went to the mountain to pray.

Jesus walks on the water

Mark 6: **47**And when it was evening, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He was alone on the land. **48**And seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. **49**But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; **50**for they all saw Him and were frightened. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "**Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.**" **51**And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished, **52**for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves*, but their heart was hardened.

Somehow Jesus had convinced the five thousand men to take their families home. The disciples were in the middle of the sea and Jesus was alone on the shore. As Jesus watched the boat, He knew they were struggling to row it across the sea. We

need to understand that Jesus began feeding the multitude before sunset. It is now between 3 AM and 6 AM, the fourth watch of the night. Had they not faced the fierce wind on the sea, they would have arrived at Bethsaida long before. In the midst of the storm, Jesus walked beside the boat and would have passed them by had they not called out to Him. They had never seen anyone walking on the water and they were fearful when they saw Him. Upon hearing their cries for help, Jesus entered their boat and calmed the winds.

By this time the disciples were so used to the miracles of the Lord that their hearts had become hardened to the events of the feeding of the five thousand. They had taken Jesus for granted. Their complacency needed to be shaken. His walking on the water astonished them and renewed their awareness of His power as God.

The landing at Gennesaret and the surrounding cities

Mark 6: 53 And when they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. **54** And when they had come out of the boat, immediately *the people* recognized Him, **55** and ran about that whole country and began to carry about on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was. **56** And wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and entreating Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

It is 12½ miles from the top of the Sea of Galilee to the bottom. At its widest point at the top of the sea, it is 7½ miles wide. At its narrowest point at the bottom of the sea, it is 4 miles wide. From Bethsaida, near to where Jesus fed the multitude, to Gennesaret was little more than 4 miles by water.



We call this body of water the Sea of Galilee, but in earlier days, it was called the Sea of Chinnereth. Later, with the changes of the language, Chinnereth became Gennesareth and we called this lake the Sea of Gennesareth. It was named after the beautiful area called Gennesaret. By Jesus' day the sea was named for the entire region of Galilee.

A very vivid picture is portrayed in this passage. The people are running around in excitement. They are bringing their friends and loved ones to see the Lord. The thrill causes exuberance. It is the height of His Galilean ministry. It is also near the close of His ministry in Galilee. An envoy of religious zealots has been dispatched from Jerusalem and they will relentlessly pursue the Lord until His death.