

Ben Leney

Salvation's Plan / Mark 6:6–13

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| Mark 6:1 (NKJV)

| ¹ Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him.

This is his hometown. It was thought to have had under 500 residents (Eerdman's Dictionary of the Bible), a small town even though it's called a city in Matthew 2.23, and this is the final time Jesus visits it and the only time in the whole gospel of Mark.

| *The New Bible Dictionary, Third Edition (Nazareth)*

Nazareth is situated in a high valley among the most S limestone hills of the Lebanon range; it runs approximately from SSW to NNE. To the S there is a sharp drop down to the plain of Esdraelon. The base of the valley is 370 m above sea level. Steep hills rise up on the N and E sides, while on the W side they reach up to 500 m and command an impressive view. Major roads from Jerusalem and Egypt debouched into the Esdraelon plain in the S; caravans from Gilead crossed the Jordan fords and passed below; the main road from Ptolemais to the Decapolis and the N, along which the Rom. legions travelled, passed a few kms above Nazareth. Such a location may have given rise to the name, which is possibly derived from the Aramaic *nāṣeraṭ*, 'watch-tower'. Another suggested derivation is from the Heb. *nēṣer*, 'shoot', advocated in Eusebius' Onomasticon and by Jerome (Epist. 46, Ad Marcellam). The mild climate in the valley causes wild flowers and fruit to flourish. To judge by the rock-tombs, the early town was higher up the W hill than the present Nazareth.

| Mark 3:21 (NKJV)

| ²¹ But when His own people heard *about this*, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

| Mark 6:2 (NKJV)

| ² And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing *Him* were astonished, saying, "Where *did* this Man *get* these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!

"They are not driven so much by a desire to know what is behind Jesus' miracles as by an itch to confirm their private prejudice that he cannot be all that remarkable." 11 Garland, D.E. (1996) *Mark*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House (The NIV Application Commentary), p. 231.

| Mark 1:15 (NKJV)

| ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Unbelief is rampant here, and a strong theme of this pericope, and it comes up later as well. Faith and unbelief are both important in Mark.

In Matthew 10, which is a parallel passage but much more detailed, Jesus says you will get rejected, and he gives encouragements and warnings about going out on mission. We follow the Master - if he is going to be rejected, then we may suffer rejection too.

1. Unbelief obscures the obvious.

The definition of 'mighty work' is the concept of God's power - what he brings into the world to reveal his purposes.

| Mark 6:3 (NKJV)

| ³ Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him.

| Matthew 13:55 (NKJV)

| ⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?

A *tekton* (traditionally translated "carpenter") is someone who could work with wood, metal, or stone. He could be a builder, a mason, or a carpenter. In Jesus' Palestinian context, it probably denoted a woodworking handyman. He would have the skill to do almost anything—from crafting plows and yokes, to making pieces of furniture, cupboards, stools, and benches, to erecting small buildings, particularly making the beams, window lattices, doors, and bolts. Jesus must have been technically skilled and physically strong. 11 Garland, D.E. (1996) *Mark*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House (The NIV Application Commentary), p. 231.

2. Unbelief elevates the irrelevant.

They're not willing to recognise who Jesus is. Instead they focus on what they know about him. They will not go beyond the known.

James referred to becomes a member of the church, martyred probably AD 62, and wrote the book of James - Judas is actually possibly Jude. We don't know much about Joses and Simon. Jesus must have had two sisters as it's plural, possibly more because of

| Matthew 13:56 (NKJV)

| ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?"

σκανδαλίζω (skandalizō). vb. to cause to stumble, to give offence, to fall away. Refers to the experience of being offended or tripped up that could cause falling away from the right path... When used of those opposed to Jesus, such as the Pharisees (Matt 13:57; 15:12), it can mean that those who "stumble" do not come to faith. When used with regard to those who follow Jesus, such as the disciples (Matt 26:31, 33), it can mean to leave off following Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:23 (NKJV)

²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

Mark 6:4 (NKJV)

⁴ But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house."

3. Unbelief assaults the messenger.

Unbelief blinds people to miracles, to clear teaching - completely different from the scribes with no reference to authority; he forgives sins in a word, he speaks to demons and they flee, with a word he heals lepers, he's demonstrated the healing of the withered hand on the Sabbath - he turns the ceremonial and religious laws upside down, he's done all of this, and they say 'You're illegitimate, you're a nobody, from a nowhere town like us, you're not important.' If the message can't be attacked, attack the messenger. This is what's known as an *ad hominem* attack and it's a sure sign of unbelief and cynicism.

They are not driven so much by a desire to know what is behind Jesus' miracles as by an itch to confirm their private prejudice that he cannot be all that remarkable.¹¹ Garland, D.E. (1996) *Mark*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House (The NIV Application Commentary), p. 231.

We'll see this clearly in Mark 12, the parable of the wicked vinedressers:

We have to bear in mind this could happen to us too. If we're genuinely preaching the gospel, sharing the truth about the gospel, some people will be offended at us. It does not mean we go around trying to offend people. But if we never experience persecution, we have to ask ourselves, 'Am I being obedient to the great Commission?'

Mark 6:4 (NKJV)

⁴ But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house."

It's also interesting that Jesus says 'in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.' His brothers and sisters are perhaps married to other Nazareth residents - it's stronger than Matthew. Mark doesn't flinch from the family

opposition to Jesus. It's one of the strong signs that the Mark gospel is authentic because of the honesty - it hardly seems to be confirming Jesus' status if his family are against him, but they left it in.

| Mark 6:5-6 (NKJV)

| ⁵ Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed *them*. ⁶ And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

4. Unbelief spurns the supernatural.

The disaster of unbelief is it shuts people off from God. They might have had health, life, mobility, sight - and they chose not to. There would have been sick people who needed a touch from God and they chose not to receive it. One of the consequences of unbelief.

This word 'marvelled' is the only place in Mark that it's used about Jesus. Normally, *thaumazo*, it's what the crowds do when they're astonished at his miracles, and he's similarly completely blown away by their unbelief.

There's only one other point where this word is used about Jesus, in a different gospel. It's the centurion

Matt 8:10 "10 When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

Elsewhere, I'll show you one of many examples:

He goes out teaching. He's not spent extra time in Nazareth, he leaves it promptly, which is what Jesus says you should do. He's perplexed by their unbelief, but he's not paralysed by it. He doesn't vent or declaim or curse, but goes elsewhere. The word 'teaching' implies he was probably healing as well - performing miracles in other places. It's only Nazareth where there is unbelief.

Luke 10:13 "13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes."

What Jesus is saying is that the stubbornness of the Jews in these village is equal to or worse than the sexual sin and idolatry of Tyre, and we see other cities of bad reputation in a moment.

| Mark 6:7 (NKJV)

| ⁷ And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by two*, and gave them power over unclean spirits.

'The verb εδίδου is notable for it is third-person singular, which suggests a translation "he gave to each one individually authority over unclean spirits."
'Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary*

This suggestion in the Greek, is that Jesus individually imparted authority to each of the disciples. We can take that for ourselves too, that Jesus individually equips us with the same authority he had. When we believe, and we're filled with the Spirit. If you've got any message for the devil, write it on the soles of your shoes, as he's under your feet.

"Prayer is repeating the victor's name (Jesus) into the ears of Satan and insisting on his retreat." - S.D. Gordon

'The particular instructions apply literally only to this brief mission during Jesus' lifetime; but in principle, with the necessary modifications according to climate and other circumstances, they still hold for the continuing ministry of the church. The service of the Word of God is still a matter of extreme urgency, calling for absolute self-dedication.' Cranfield.

You take nothing for the journey. It's not clear, as in Matthew and Luke it says take no staff, but in Mark it says take a staff. A staff would have helped with walking on longer journeys, but also a defensive weapon. It might be that Matthew is meaning you shouldn't buy a 'new staff', but you can take your existing one. A parallel might be today that you need a 'new vehicle' just to go on mission - the suggestion would be "You don't". If you didn't wear sandals you might tread on a snake. Two tunics - Ben Witherington suggests the point is you'd wear the spare one at night, to protect against the cold. If you're only wearing one tunic, you're going in faith that God will provide hospitality and you'll sleep indoors.

This is very contextualised, these instructions, so we have to be careful not to be too literal about it.

Thus the provisions about clothing and eating were never taken in the early church to be generally applicable to all missionary ventures.

Mark 6:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Also He said to them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place.

Culturally, this was true in Jesus' day:

Hospitality was especially important in those days, since inns were few and far between, and those that existed were often unsafe or unsavoury places. It was essential, therefore, for Christian people to open their homes to travellers. 11 Stott, J.R.W. (2001) *The message of Romans: God's good news for the world*. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press (The Bible Speaks Today), p. 332.

But also don't be too picky. Someone offers a nicer house - NO, stay where you got an offer as that's what God has provided for you. We don't do mission for the money or the perks.

Mark 6:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there,

shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"

Luke 10:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

Jonah wanted judgement to come on Nineveh and was angry when God had mercy - he is a merciful God. Jeremiah in contrast wanted Israel to repent; but his message was one of unremitting judgement because of unbelief. Unbelief is a real and active force in the world - no wonder Jesus marvelled at it.

Notice 'many' demons - we're back to the true power of the kingdom, this 'many' implies a good success rate. Not 100% like Jesus normally - in Mark 9 we'll see they struggled with exorcism at times, but they're seeing a lot of impact here. This is encouraging for us - to go out two by two, under the anointing of Jesus, in His name, in the way that he asks us to; we will have an impact.

Anointing with oil! Jesus doesn't anoint anyone with oil, but his disciples do. The oil is linked to sickness, not demons.

James 5:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.