

Mark 6

V.1-6 Jesus in Nazareth, His hometown.

Jesus' love for the multitudes, His compassion, His healing, His authoritative teaching, did not endear Him to His countrymen, nor to those from His own hometown - even His family.

While they recognized that God was working in this situation, and at least partially acknowledged that fact, they did not honor Jesus.

However, their refusal to honor Jesus did not invalidate the works of God or the truth.

The old saying, "Familiarity breeds contempt," was in full effect here.

Since the people of Nazareth thought they "knew" Jesus their hearts were hardened - and that would keep some of them from ever truly knowing Jesus at all.

In many ways that is the challenge for us today - we live and serve in the Bible Belt, a region that is theoretically, though may not be practically, familiar with the person and work of Jesus.

The response that we have all witnessed in our everyday interactions with people about Jesus is a common one - essentially the lukewarm response is: "yes, I know Jesus, of course I do I'm an American," or "my grandfather was a minister," or some similar response. But what is required for salvation is knowing Jesus personally, and belief at the center of one's soul!

We see in these opening verses that Jesus counted this "knowledge," among those who thought they knew Him best, as unbelief and it astounded him. This degree of unbelief by people who knew him was enough to cause Jesus, the all-knowing one, to be moved to astonishment.

This is the danger, people can "know" Jesus, but not believe; and people can walk with Jesus for ages and still not know Him at all.

[Jhn 14:9-11 NKJV] 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip...

That is why Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians is so important:

[2Co 13:5 NKJV] 5 Examine yourselves [as to] whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified.

Keep in mind Paul was writing to the church but as it has been said before, “Just because you sit in the garage doesn’t mean you are a car.”

The same holds true for people “in a church.”

V.7-13 The disciples are sent out, they become Apostles.

Αποστέλλω (Present active verb) = to send

Αποστολοσ (Nominative, masculine, singular) = a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders

These disciples, sent out, are fully dependent on the commandment of the Lord.

There doesn’t appear to be any strategic planning meeting - just Christ’s words, and what He supplied by His Spirit.

That doesn’t mean don’t be wise - it means be obedient in whatever circumstances we are called to.

Walking by obedience and faith the Apostles shared in Christ’s labor and were witnesses to many miraculous things. Notice too that their

ministry was a preaching, a proclaiming ministry, not purely a social ministry.

V.14-29 John the Baptist is killed by Herod

How could God allow one of His messengers to suffer, to be killed, especially when he is in the right, when he is obedient, and has given so much?

Suffering is promised - we live in a fallen creation. We are called to suffering, we are called to share in the suffering of the Lord Jesus, who being holy of holies, endured suffering and submitted His person to be stained by our sin, became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God through Him.

This was surely a trying time for the Kingdom and for these new saints that are following the Messiah. While imprisoned, John the Baptist himself was shaken.

[Mat 11:2-3 NKJV] 2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

This was the same John the Baptist who not too long before his imprisonment declared boldly of Jesus, [Jhn 1:29 NKJV] ..."Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Here is, lost, killed at the whims of a teenage girl and her mother.

Sometimes it looks like evil is winning! But that battle is already won. It is only by God's protracted patience and mercy that we continue in this state and all to give the unbeliever, the enemies of the cross, time to turn to Jesus - to be reconciled to God.

V.30-32 Jesus desires to give His disciples rest after their time on the road ministering to people - which is taxing.

Resting is not wrong, but necessary, we should especially take time to rest WITH Jesus - not apart from Jesus. He is the one who brings refreshment to our weary bones.

But what we find next challenges our notions of "essential" rest and even challenges the idea of when we say "no" to serving others.

V.33-44 Jesus feeds 5,000 men (women and children are uncounted).

In the midst of Jesus desiring to give His dearly loved friends some rest - after all they had worked so hard, done so much - a need arises, an almost unfathomable need for this group of men.

They are met by the multitude, a multitude of needy, and lost people.

Why did Jesus meet with them? He was “moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd.”

How did He minister to them first? He taught them many things. Spiritual malnourishment is the first and greatest need. What a caricature we would each be if our physical appearance matched our spiritual appearance. I wonder what we would look like?

But take heart. The requirement to meet with Christ is not a requirement for spiritual fitness, but spiritual poverty and a desire to be fed at the King’s table.

[Mat 5:3, 6 NKJV] 3 "Blessed [are] the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ... 6 Blessed [are] those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

About this poverty of spirit, this intrinsic human need, Arthur Pink writes: “To be poor in spirit is to realize that I have nothing, am

nothing, and can do nothing, and have need of all things. Poverty of spirit is a consciousness of my emptiness, the result of the Spirit's work within. It issues from the painful discovery that all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. It follows the awakening that my best performances are unacceptable, yea, an abomination to the thrice Holy One. Poverty of spirit evidences itself by its bringing the individual into the dust before God, acknowledging his utter helplessness and deservingness of hell. It corresponds to the initial awakening of the prodigal in the far country, when he began to be in want." (Pink, An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount)

These are the blessed and yet diverse souls that Jesus meets with. Blessed because they meet with Jesus; Diverse because who can tell the various states of the souls in this multitude!?

Because of these souls Jesus defers His own rest, and the rest of his friends. He demands even more of his dear friends. And, in Jesus' eyes this is not unreasonable but rational, expected, compassionate - it's a public display of His heart.

Take note that the disciples even ask Jesus to send this mass of shepherdless sheep away. And their words do have the ring of care to them - "this is a deserted place and the hour is late, send them away

so they can buy food” - they could say “we are only looking out for them.”

But Jesus tells them, “You give them something to eat.”

They were obedient to His first command to go out and preach, and heal, and call people to God. Now they are met with another command that challenges their beliefs on what is possible and feasible.

But Jesus has something to teach these tired men. They didn’t get the rest they were looking forward to. Instead they got another task - you feed them.

Now they were required to empty themselves, unable to physically provide for this mass of people. This task was literally outside of their ability to accomplish. Shall they obey or say it’s impossible?

But there’s more.

Jesus moves into the realm of the miraculous after first meeting this crowd's need for spiritual food, He will feed them practically, and He does. And by way of doing so He also teaches His disciples about belief, obedience, and God’s provision.

A few more tasks for these sleepy Apostles though.

Go and see how much food we have - put your eyes on it, know that it is limited.

Make the crowd sit down in groups - quite a task for 12 men among a crowd of 5,000 men and their families. How do you do that!?

Also, who gets to rest now? The crowds. While the disciples were looking forward to a little retreat and refreshment with Jesus they find themselves as one armed men in a paper hanging contest while the crowds are now treated to some rest and some dinner. And they are the servants.

It is here they are getting a hands-on lesson in who Jesus is, what His purpose is, and how big His heart is for people.

The disciples serve - this must have taken hours. AND, they are on clean up duty too! They are not at the head table, revered for their station, but at the table of others serving their meal.

I wonder what beautiful things they must have learned moving among the crowds - wondering if the food would run out. I wonder what

challenges they faced from the crowds too - the bullish, brash, unlovable.

V.45-52 The disciples cross over, Jesus meets them on the water

Following this event the disciples finally get some rest right?

Not quite - they find themselves at the literal oars of a boat rowing across the Sea of Galilee with the wind against them.

I wonder how attitudes were at this point. What conversations were had among them.

But, Jesus meets them there. You will notice that before this Jesus intentionally took time to pray though. And the time He spent in prayer was more than cursory. It was intentional, deliberate, and meaningful.

In this way the disciples are reminded of who Jesus is, and they are truly amazed when they meet him.

We find here too that their hearts were hardened during their ministry. This is all too possible. And you know what - by putting them in the boat Jesus gave them time to deal with that. We don't have a recorded transcript of Jesus dressing them down and writing pink slips

for their poor attitudes. That was something they had to deal with on their own. But their poor attitudes and the hardness of their hearts kept them from understanding what it was that Jesus was accomplishing through feeding the multitude. We should be on guard for this ourselves.

When Jesus asks us to forego our rest, to love a little more, to serve a little longer - how do we respond to that?

V.53-56 Here we go again!

Is there any rest at all? Yes, in Jesus - in the midst of the chaos - Jesus is our rest and our reward.

We see here too an interesting connection to an earlier miraculous healing.

[Mar 5:27-28 NKJV] 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came behind [Him] in the crowd and touched His garment. 28 For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well."

Perhaps word of this had gotten around and inspired people to the same faith that woman had!

The word of God among His people was spreading, moving, causing excitement - but as we saw at the beginning of chapter 6 also causing disbelief and resentment.

Nevertheless the gospel of Jesus went out, people responded, and His compassion abounded to those who would receive it - AND part of being a disciple is being teachable during the hard times and stretching according to Jesus' word - becoming more like Him. Amen.