

NCBC Youth Group  
October 27, 2019 | Reformation Sunday

REJECTION AND UNBELIEF  
MARK 6:1-13

**Introduction**

It is commonplace to see crowds gathered around Jesus and following Him. In general, the crowds have greeted Jesus with much enthusiasm. They are amazed at His teaching and His ability to perform miracles. They have never seen anyone like this, and people are flocking to him for many reasons: Some are curious and want to see this Person that everyone is talking about; some are desperate, suffering from physical illness or demon-possession; some—especially the pharisees and scribes—were seeking to trap Him and destroy Him.

While the religious elite—pharisees and scribes—were openly hostile toward Jesus, most of the people were not, and in fact, at this point in our studies, most have embraced and welcomed Jesus. But just because they were not openly hostile toward Jesus and showed some interest in Jesus doesn't necessarily mean they had genuine saving faith. In fact, most of the people in the crowd only had a superficial interest in Jesus. They wanted to see His miracles, they wanted healing, they wanted free food (Jn. 6:26).<sup>1</sup> Whatever the reason, it was superficial and not genuine saving faith. Even many of His disciples will stop following Him (Jn. 6:66).<sup>2</sup> This is a demonstration of the lack of genuine saving faith, because true disciples will follow Jesus and remain with Him (1 Jn. 2:19).

By the way, this, too, is a test of the genuineness of your own salvation. Do you remain with Jesus? You may not be openly hostile toward Jesus, but is your interest in Him superficial? When difficulties arise, do you lose faith in Him and depart from Him, or do you remain with Him? I know people who show disdain, or at best, apathy, toward Jesus when difficulties arise.

Today, in our text, we are going to see another group of people. This group of people has shown open hostility toward Jesus in the past, but this time they blatantly rejected Jesus. With expectation, let's begin our studies in Mark 6.

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<sup>1</sup> Some events recorded in John 6 are parallel to events in Mark 6. For instance, the Feeding of the Five Thousand is recorded in both John 6 and Mark 6 (along with the other two gospels).

<sup>2</sup> See note 1.

### Hometown Visit

At the end of Mark 5, we saw Jesus healing a woman who had a bleeding disorder and raised the daughter of Jairus. Those events occurred in Capernaum. Now, at the beginning of Mark 6, we are told that Jesus left Capernaum and went to His hometown, which is Nazareth.<sup>3</sup> Nazareth is 25 miles southwest of Capernaum, and at the time of Jesus, the population is estimated to be about 500 people.<sup>4</sup>

Nazareth is the town where Jesus grew up (Lk. 4:16), so people there knew Him. This is not the first time He visited Nazareth since He began His public ministries. Luke 4 records His first visit to Nazareth in public ministry, shortly after His temptation in the wilderness (Lk. 4:1-13). The first visit didn't end so well. They drove Him out of the city and tried to throw Him down the cliff (Lk. 4:29).

Our text today records Jesus' second visit to Nazareth. This is also the final visit to Nazareth, His hometown. Verse 2 tells us that He was teaching in the synagogue, and many listeners were astonished. We saw this response back in Mark 1:22, where the listeners said, "He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Obviously, anyone who heard His teachings and saw His miracles would be astonished. The people wondered, in verse 2, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?" It's definitely not something humans can do. So, where did He get this? We know the answer to that, don't we? We know and believe that He is God, but that's not the conclusion of these people.

They continued in verse 3, saying, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?<sup>5</sup> Are not His sisters here with us? And they took offense at Him." This is a small town, and they were familiar with Jesus and His family. They knew that this is the same Jesus who lived in Nazareth for over 20 years. They knew that He was a carpenter. They knew His family. But at the end of verse 3, we are told that they were offended at Him. Why is that?

They didn't think that the Messiah could come from Nazareth; furthermore, they didn't think that the Messiah could be a carpenter. They just can't imagine that the

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<sup>3</sup> Hometown of Nazareth is not to be confused with His birthplace in Bethlehem.

<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, *Mark 1-8 The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2015), 273.

<sup>5</sup> Roman Catholics believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary; however, it is very clear in the Scriptures that Mary had other children.

Messiah would be one of them. Perhaps they thought that the Messiah would come from Jerusalem with formal religious training, but wherever the Messiah comes from, they didn't think it was going to be from the small town of Nazareth.

I think they not only took offense at Him, but they also insulted Him. They called Him the "son of Mary." This is the only place where Jesus is given that title. There are two explanations for this. First, Joseph's name is not mentioned, so it is very possible that he is dead. Second, by calling Him the son of Mary, they are insinuating His illegitimate birth. They insulted Him the same way in John 8:41: "We were not born of fornication," implying that Jesus was.

We also see that they listed Jesus' brothers by name: James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. We know that at this point, His brothers did not believe in Him (Jn. 7:5). They will eventually believe in Him (Acts 1:14), but not yet. The townspeople were probably thinking: Not even His brothers believe He is the Messiah or God, so why should we? In Mark 3:21, they tried to take Jesus away, thinking He was out of His mind.

If we stop and think about verses 2-3 for a moment, it is actually really sad what's happening here. They never denied the wisdom and power of Jesus. They never denied the miracles He performed. However, they refused to believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God. What they are doing in verses 2-3 is coming up with an explanation of the source of His wisdom and miraculous works. In other words, they were defending their unbelief.

They came up with some pretty pathetic excuses to not believe in Jesus. This is their line of reasoning: He can't be the Messiah because He's from Nazareth. He's also a carpenter. His brothers and sisters are here with us, and even His own brothers do not believe in Him. Therefore, He must not be the Messiah. None of those excuses are relevant, concerning Jesus being the long-awaited Messiah.

In verse 4, Jesus says, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." This is another way of saying, "familiarity breeds contempt."<sup>6</sup> As a result, Jesus did not do many miracles in Nazareth and only healed a few sick people (5). It's not that Jesus didn't have the power to do miracles, it's that the purpose of the miracles is not simply free healthcare. The purpose of His miracles is to affirm His truth. Today, we have the Bible, and that's our sole authority.

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<sup>6</sup> MacArthur, 278.

Back then, they did not have the Bible, so how do you know if what someone is telling the truth? Well, the truth Jesus proclaimed is accompanied by works only God can do.

Verse 6, “And He wondered at their unbelief.” Only twice in the entire New Testament, do we find Jesus amazed by people. This time, it was negative. He was amazed at their unbelief. The other time is positive, where He marveled at the great faith of the Centurion (Lk. 7:9). What’s amazing about this unbelief is that Jesus performed a series of miracles leading up to chapter 6.

Jesus calmed to storm in Mark 4:35-41. He cast out thousands of demons from one demon-possessed man in Mark 5:1-20. He healed a woman with an incurable bleeding disorder in Mark 5:25-34. He raised Jairus’ daughter in Mark 5:35-43. There is no explanation but that He is God. Despite the displays of supernatural power, the people still rejected Him.

While the second visit to Nazareth did not end in a life-threatening way, the hearts of the people were not changed. The unbelief was still there, and they rejected Jesus. Jesus left there and went around the villages teaching. Now, notice all the way back in verse 1 that we see “and His disciples followed Him.” Very soon, in verses 7-13, Jesus will send out His disciples. They, too, will encounter much rejection.

### **The Twelve Sent Out**

Verse 7 is a turning point in Jesus’ ministry because prior to this, Jesus was the one who preached and performed miracles; however, Jesus will soon be crucified, and His disciples will be sent out to preach the gospel. Their final commission to go out and preach will come after Jesus’ resurrection (Mt. 28:19-20), but Jesus is preparing them. Here, we see them go on short-term mission trips.

They were sent out in pairs, and they were given authority over unclean spirits. We also see, in verse 13, that they were given the ability to heal. I want you to note that a lot of false teachers today will say that they have the power to heal and do all these miracles. Perhaps they even look at verse 7 to say that Jesus gives them authority to do these wonders. The word in verse 7, “gave” in Greek (*didomi*) is in the imperfect tense, which means a past continual action. It is not used in the present tense, as if it applied to us.

As they went out, they were to preach the gospel. They were to proclaim that sinners can be reconciled to God and enter into His kingdom. Those who listened with and responded with repentant faith would be saved. Along with the duty to proclaim the

message, Jesus gave them the power to heal and cast out demons. Again, the reason for that is the works authenticate the message.

If we think about this, the compassion of God is remarkable. He could have chosen any miracle to perform, but the miracles He chose to authenticate His message also brought relief to people's suffering.

As they went out, Jesus commanded them in verse 8 to "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.'" They were only to take necessities with them. A staff is important for personal protection against wild animals and thieves or robbers. Sandals are important for the protection of their feet as they traveled. When they went into a place, they were to stay there until they leave town (10). Undoubtedly, as they met more people in the town, people would offer them nicer accommodations. They were not to seek these upgrades. You see, this separates them from the false teachers, who make much of materialism. Just look at some of the prosperity preachers today who own mansions, drive luxury cars, and amass tremendous wealth. The Bible does not speak against wealth, nor does it speak against luxury, but we are not to use ministry as a way to fund a lifestyle of excess either.

However, nowhere in the Bible are we commanded to take a vow of poverty. Jesus asked them to take only necessities so they can learn to depend and trust in Him. In Luke 22:35, Jesus asks them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack nothing, did you?" Then in verses 36-37, He tells them to acquire a money belt and a sword.

When they go to places, some will listen, but others will reject them. They saw it firsthand throughout Jesus' ministry. In Matthew's account, 10:25 says, "If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!" People accused Jesus of being demon-possessed; His disciples should also expect to be maligned in such a way. They were to shake the dust off the soles of their feet for a testimony against them. That was a symbolic expression of scorn toward Gentiles. The people who reject the gospel and the signs that authenticate the gospel will receive severe punishment (Heb. 10:29).

Despite the promise of rejection and oppression, the disciples obeyed Jesus and went out and preached, authenticating their message with miraculous works, verses 12-13.

### Conclusion

We know that there will be persecution against Christians. We saw the rejection of Jesus and the amazing unbelief of the people. How do we respond? We must also faithfully obey Jesus and preach the gospel. We don't do things to make the gospel more attractive. We just preach.

I want to close by saying a few things about unbelief. Jesus illustrated this very well in the Parable of the Sower and Soils (Mk. 4:1-20). Of all the people in the mission field, not many will respond in genuine saving faith. Many will respond to the gospel. The Parable of the Sower and Soils tells us that. Of the four soils—or four heart conditions—three responded. But of the three that responded, only one soil produced genuine fruit that is the evidence of saving faith.

Are we surprised? We shouldn't be, because the Bible tells us that. There are many who say they are Christians but are not really Christians. In fact, these are people who are sure they are Christians (Mt. 7:21). They are active in the church and do religious stuff (Mt. 7:22). Yet they will hear Jesus say to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Mt. 7:23). Matthew 22:14 says, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

However, there are people who will respond, and we rejoice when they respond in repentant faith. Despite the amazing rejection, unbelief, and oppression, we are to be faithful in proclaiming His message. Whether they come to Jesus or not, that is up to God to draw them (Jn. 6:44).

Let us be faithful to preach His word, and let us examine ourselves that we may be found to be true believers.