

DAY 7: MISUNDERSTANDING AND MARTYRDOM

Mark 6

FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT (MARK 6:1-6) Jesus returns to His hometown with His disciples and begins teaching in the synagogue—as though He were a rabbi. His wisdom and His mighty works capture the attention of the townspeople, and they are puzzled. What explains His ability to speak such wisdom and perform such miracles? Some question, “*Is not this the carpenter?*” (6:3), calling Jesus an ordinary tradesman in an attempt to discredit Him. They express deepening skepticism in a slur on Jesus’ paternity: “*Is not this ... the son of Mary?*” No Jew ever called a person a son of his mother, even when the father was no longer living, except as an insult. To do so was to insinuate illegitimacy. “*And they took offense at Him*” (6:3). In response to the disbelief in His hometown, Jesus “*could do no mighty work there*” (6:5). The great obstacle to Jesus’ ministry in Nazareth is not the failure or inability of God to act, but the townspeople’s slowness of the heart to believe.

SENDING OUT THE TWELVE (MARK 6:7-13) Having been rejected in Nazareth, Jesus begins His third preaching tour in Galilee. Now He sends His disciples out as His representatives. This journey, unlike previous journeys, must be made without provisions. They may take a staff, sandals, and one shirt (normally worn under a mantle); all else must be left behind. Where they are not accepted, they are to “*shake off the dust that is on [their] feet*” (6:11), tantamount to declaring the place heathen. Their time is to be spent preaching, casting out demons, and healing.

THE FIRST PASSION NARRATIVE (MARK 6:14-29) The account of the execution of John the Baptist begins with King Herod. Herod fears that John, whom he had imprisoned and later killed, has returned in Jesus to haunt him. This introduces the flashback on John’s murder. Herod, Herodias, her daughter (Salome, according to the historian Josephus), and the guests are fascinating and tragic characters. During a lavish birthday party in Herod’s honor, Herodias plots against John, brazenly using her daughter’s attractiveness to achieve her design. Salome is a pawn, young and talented, who is willing to do her mother’s bidding, oblivious to the consequences. And the guests—people of position and influence—are a fawning audience, manipulated by Herodias to force Herod’s hand. Herod recognizes John’s righteousness, but the devices of Herodias and his impulsive promise to Salome of “*up to half of my kingdom*” trap him. The end for John the Baptist comes by the edge of a sword.

MANNA FROM THE HAND OF CHRIST (MARK 6:30-44) After their missionary journey, “*the apostles returned to Jesus and told Him all that they had done and taught*” (6:30). Following their harried undertaking, Jesus draws them into much-needed retreat and rest. But what they need they cannot have. A thronging crowd invades their privacy. How remarkable that Jesus looks on the crowd with “*compassion,*” and He begins to teach them.

As dusk turns to darkness, the disciples suggest the crowd be dismissed to buy food in surrounding villages—a futile suggestion, given the number of people and lateness of the hour. Jesus then commands, “*You give them something to eat*” (6:37). The disciples toy with the idea of going to buy food for the crowd, but realize the amount of money required would equal more than eight months’ wages.

Jesus now takes charge, asking, “*How many loaves do you have?*” (6:38). The resources are pitifully small—five loaves and two fish—but Jesus orders them all to sit in groups. Then He blesses the food, and the disciples give it out to the crowd. Mark says, “*They all ate and were satisfied*” (6:42), and there are 12 baskets of leftovers. The feeding of the 5,000 almost leads to a revolutionary uprising; indeed, the people want to make Jesus their king. But Jesus knows that is not His calling at this time.



THINK ABOUT how Jesus miraculously fed the crowd with only five loaves and two fish.

Many times it feels as if our resources are just not enough for what Jesus is calling us to do. Yet when Jesus blessed the disciples’ meager offering, the crowds were not only fed, there was plenty

left over. How have you seen this principle at work in your life? How does this encourage you to believe God will give you all you need for what He is calling you to do today?

HE WHO TREADS ON THE WAVES OF THE SEA (MARK 6:45-52) The account of Jesus walking on the water begins on a note of urgency, with Jesus compelling the disciples to get into a boat and row to Bethsaida. He dismisses the crowd and retreats to a mountain to pray. Mark then shifts the focus to the disciples. Although the lake could normally be crossed in six to eight hours (even in poor conditions), the disciples are helpless in the face of a strong wind against them.

At the fourth watch of the night (3 a.m.), Jesus comes “*walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them*” (6:48). The disciples mistake Jesus for a ghost and shriek in terror. Jesus calms them by saying, “*Take heart; it is I.*” Not only is Jesus walking where only God can walk, He uses the personal name of God (in Greek) when He says *I*. When Jesus gets into the boat with the disciples, the storm dies down.

THE MAN FOR OTHERS (MARK 6:53-56) We are not told why the boat puts in at Gennesaret (five kilometers southwest of Capernaum) instead of Bethsaida as planned. Had the storm blown it off course? If the change was intended to avoid the crowds and find rest, it was futile. Wherever Jesus puts His foot—in villages, towns, or countryside—the clamoring crowds demand attention and healing.

Mark does not mention Jesus teaching here. How much does the crowd want to know Jesus, or even know of Him? Perhaps very little. Yet their faith, although flawed by superstition and selfishness, is in Jesus. They are more honest than the scribes and Pharisees who come to Jesus only to try to discredit Him, as we shall see in the next lesson.

PERSONALIZE this lesson. The miracles we see Jesus perform in Mark 6 were meant to build faith in Himself as the unique Son of God. They attested to His deity, and they showed that He could meet His followers’ needs, relieve them of fear, and deliver them from danger. Think about one of the greatest needs in your life right now, whether physical or emotional. Reflect on how you saw Jesus empower, provide for, and encourage His disciples in this chapter. Which episode most encourages you in your need? What do you sense God wants to say to you through these Scriptures?

REVIEW: MISUNDERSTANDING AND MARTYRDOM

11. As you think back over this week’s questions, Core Group discussion, teaching, and related Commentary, share one way in which the lesson is impacting your life—affecting your behavior or your attitudes, building up your faith.