

## **MARK 6:1-13   CBC 25.7.2021**

***Please read Mark 6:1-13 ...***

Mark has been showing us that Jesus is the King in God's kingdom, and when we receive Him as our King we are put in a right relationship with God and our broken lives begin to heal. But not everyone welcomes Jesus. Many prefer to be king of their own little kingdom of one.

We're looking today at two cameos from Jesus ministry that highlight the polarizing effect He has. In the first, we see people rejecting Jesus and missing out on the good things He came to bring – as we always will if we reject Him. And in the second, we see that despite this rejection, His kingdom is unstoppable! The gospel continues to be preached, and those who receive Jesus as their King are richly blessed – as we always will be if we receive Him.

### **1. JESUS IS UNWELCOME vv.1-6**

v.1 is probably a reference to Nazareth, where he grew up. It's estimated it had a population of about 500 people, so a place where everybody knew everybody. A scrappy little village which isn't even mentioned in the Old Testament, but Jesus put Nazareth on the map. But there's no hero's welcome for Jesus. No "Welcome Home" banners, no home-town parade. Just the opposite!

v.2: When He begins to teach in the local synagogue, He no doubt explains how the Scriptures they'd known from childhood are fulfilled in Him. And people are amazed – but not with the amazement of praise to God, but of cynicism and scepticism.

Oh, they know deep down that Jesus is special. His wisdom is outstanding and His miracles are undeniable (v.2). The evidence is right before their eyes. But they hate the idea that Jesus – the local boy – should be their King! How dare Jesus talk to US like this! We've known Him since He was in nappies! He's the local carpenter and yet He's setting Himself up as the Messiah! He's from a bog-standard family except for the doubt over His parentage (v.3 "*Mary's son*" - *not Joseph's!*"). And here He is, raising Himself above the rest of us! Time we chopped Him down!

They want to cut Jesus down to their level. That's what unbelief always does. There's no lack of evidence for the claims of Jesus for anyone who want to investigate honestly. But our proud hearts are deeply offended at the idea that we need to bow to God even when He takes flesh and walks among us. We actually hate even the possibility that there should be such evidence – we want to dismiss it contemptuously without looking.

Our hearts are like this. We have the capacity to know the right thing to do, yet to choose the wrong thing because we prefer it. It's a heart problem more than a head problem. That was true in Nazareth 2000 years ago and it's true today. There's plenty of evidence but people don't like it and they don't want it to be true.

It leads Jesus to comment (v.4) "*A prophet is not without honour except in his own town ...*" – and while that's a lament, it's also something of a sentence of judgement, because it meant the people of Nazareth largely missed out on the good things Jesus came to bring. v.5: "*He couldn't do any miracles there, except lay His hands on a few people who were ill and heal them.*" That doesn't mean Jesus had His hands tied by unbelief – as though if we say to God, "*We don't believe you*", we rob Him of His power. Pharaoh tried that trick and it didn't work (Exodus chs 7-14). But it would

have been inappropriate to bring the joy of the kingdom where the King was rejected, so only a few people in Nazareth received the kind of healing from Jesus that was common elsewhere.

And so the story ends (v.6) with Jesus' pointing in amazement to their lack of faith. Mark is teaching us again and again that if we will not trust Jesus as our King, we suffer incalculable loss.

We're not critical of the people of Nazareth, because we know what our own hearts are like. Unbelief is a dark reality that's never far from the surface. We may know about Jesus, be familiar with His unparalleled teaching and life, yet still not want Him to be our Lord. If that's you, ask yourself, *Why is that?* Do you need to ask Jesus to forgive your surprising lack of faith?

It's not surprising that we don't receive His blessings if we have no real connection to Him. What IS surprising is the way we persist in throwing away the chances we are given.

## **2. BUT JESUS IS UNDETERRED! vv.7-13**

So Jesus is rejected in Nazareth, but He's already taught us in Mk 4 that God's kingdom is unstoppable. And so instead of giving up in despair or becoming bitter, Jesus does the opposite. In the face of rejection, He sends out His disciples to many more villages.

He sends them just as they are, though they certainly haven't fully grasped the gospel. If we wait till we know all the answers we'll never get started! But they can make a start - they know something of Jesus and they can share that.

And they go out with authority (v.7) - not their own, but the authority of the One who rules everything. That's our authority this week. And if anything good is going to happen, it will be because of Him.

And He tells them to travel light (vv.8-9), with nothing much beyond the clothes they're wearing. Sandals but no bag. Does that mean we shouldn't wear trainers or take a suitcase if we go on a mission trip? No - this is a unique moment in history, a trainee mission with disciples moving quickly from place to place. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, we find the church engaged in long-term mission and the apostles in Acts work and plan in a different way.

But what Jesus wants them to learn from the outset is their total dependence on God for everything. Every day they'll have to look to God to supply their needs as they tour the villages telling people about Jesus. He's teaching them where their help comes from, and we're in big trouble if we forget!

I really hope we know that, because as soon as we become independent and confident in ourselves we're in a dangerous position. God's blessing is on the humble, not the proud. I hope we know this as a church as we look to the future. If we really know our total dependence on God, we'll pray. That's the test.

So Jesus sends them out fully aware that they'll need God to provide for them. And He underlines that they're on serious business, and people will be polarized by their message:

- v.10: Some will welcome them – and they should accept hospitality from those people because that’s how God will provide for them. But they are not on holiday, so don’t go moving to a bigger house with a swimming pool. They’re there to work!
- But v.11: Don’t expect everyone to like the message! Plenty of people don’t want to give up their sin. They don’t think they need to repent. They don’t want Jesus as their Lord. Don’t be surprised when they reject you, says Jesus – because they’re really rejecting Jesus Himself.

And Jesus doesn’t tell His disciples to change the message to make it easier. He tells them (v.11) to leave that place and to shake the dust off their feet. That was what some pious Jews did when they exited a Gentile area if they’d had to enter it for some reason. It was a way of saying “*We’re leaving the unclean area and returning to safety.*”

And Jesus says, “*If people reject you, even Jewish people, wipe the dust off your feet to show them that by rejecting me they are not clean and they are not safe.*” You think you’re in a safe place, but you’re in a dangerous place, because you’ve rejected the only One who can bring you to safety in God.

So even the way the disciples leave the village is meant to express the seriousness and urgency of the message they bring.

And knowing the response could go either way, these disciples still go out and call on people to repent. We’re told very simply (v.12) “*They went.*” And despite all their inadequacy and inexperience, there were great blessings. Many obviously did repent and (v.13) were delivered from all manner of physical and spiritual threats. Because the kingdom of God is unstoppable, just as Jesus promised in Mk 4.

### **SUMMING UP:**

Keep holding these two stories together! Everyone needs what only Jesus can give, and Jesus offers Himself to everyone – to those who despise Him as well as to those who welcome Him. But our response makes all the difference in the world:

- vv.1-6: the home-town which has so much privilege rejects Him and receives virtually nothing.
- vv.7-13: the villages that accept Him receive great blessing.

And today Jesus says to us: Come to me, don’t turn away – I’ve come to do you good, not harm. Choose life, not death.

### **If you’ve not yet gladly taken Jesus as your King:**

I hope you’ll see that if you persevere rejecting Him you won’t harm Jesus, you’ll harm *yourself* by missing out on His blessing. To reject Him is to close the door to life. And I hope you’ll see that to bow to Him is to open that door and find life in this world and the next.

If you’re resisting Jesus, ask yourself WHY you’re doing it. Is there anything about Jesus that makes you afraid to trust him? If not, why will you not accept him? He came for rebels like you and me. And He was willing to be rejected not only in Nazareth but all the way to death on a cross in order to save us – so great is His love.

And that means you don't have to be afraid to come to Him. You can run into His presence and say, *"Lord Jesus, I want to follow You but I've got so many fears and doubts – please help me in those places where I'm holding back."*

And if you come to Jesus like that, be ready for an adventure. Because when you belong to Jesus He'll send you out in His Name!

### **If you are already a Christian:**

You've received Jesus – and everything He won for you in His life and death and resurrection is yours. You are incredibly blessed because of Jesus. What are you doing to share Him with others?

Jesus never imagined that the little mission we've been reading about would complete the job! After His resurrection He commissioned His followers to make disciples of all nations, till the very end of the age (Mt 28:19-20). We aren't all called to be paid missionaries, but we're all called to be gospel people – regular Christians who take our faith seriously and intentionally live a gospel lifestyle. Everyone in our town or village needs to know about Jesus! Who are the best people to tell them? We are!

Think of how the people of this world respond to a disaster such as earthquake or famine – there's usually compassion, and help quickly appears because people are dying. As we leave today we need to remember that all around us people are dying without hope, not ready to meet God, strangers to Him. The rescue mission can't wait. Let's pray that we'll have our Lord's compassion for the lost so that we share Him with others.

And there'll be a polarizing effect – be prepared for that. There'll be rejection of Christ – some polite, some aggressive – and we'll need to be patient but also wise to know when to move on and share the gospel elsewhere.

But there'll be others who'll turn to Christ, just as we once did. And they'll find what millions have discovered – that the call to repent and to receive Jesus as their King, which sounds so costly, actually produces deep and lasting blessings which are far greater than we could ever measure.

Do you see? Jesus is not just giving us a job to do – He's giving us mercy and joy to share with people who need it. We're sharing Christ Himself – the Bread of Life for the hungry, Living Water for the thirsty. So let's pray for God's help to do it.

**PRAYER:** We thank you, Heavenly Father, that our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Help us by your Spirit to receive Him as our King, and to live for Him wherever we go, so that others may find the life He came to bring; for Your glory's sake. AMEN.

### **FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION**

- Have you welcomed Jesus as your King?
- How are you seeking to share Him with others?