


Teaching Notes/Life Group Study Questions

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Uniquely Jesus
Mark 6:1-29

October 23, 16

As Mark writes the story of Jesus, along with telling us about his teachings and miracles, he also informs his readers, (1) that large numbers of people were drawn to Jesus, and (2) that people's responses and reactions to Jesus were very different.

Recap

2:2 – So many gathered that there was no room left, even outside the door...

2:13 – A large crowd came to him...

3:7 – A large crowd from Galilee followed [him].

3:32 – A crowd was sitting around him...

4:1 – The crowd that gathered around him was so large...

4:36 – Leaving the crowd behind...

5:14 - ...the people went out to see what had happened

5:21 - ...a large crowd gathered around him...

5:24 - ...a large crowd followed him and pressed around him.

Recap

2:5 – When Jesus saw their faith...

2:7 – “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming.”

2:12 – This amazed everyone and they praised God...

2:15 - ...there were many who followed him.

3:6 – The Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

3:10 - ...those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.

3:20 – He is out of his mind

3:22 – He is possessed by Beelzebub.

4:41 – Who is this?

5:17 – Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region

5:18 – “Take me with you!!”

5:20 - ...all the people were amazed.

5:23 – My little daughter is dying. Please come...

5:28 – “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.”

5:40 - ...they laughed at him

5:42 - ...they were completely astonished.

Coffee/Question:

Why do you think people reacted so differently to Jesus?

Feedback?

In chapter six Mark writes of two significant reactions - one by the people of Jesus' hometown, and the other by King Herod and his wife Herodias. In between these two interactions, Mark describes something Jesus did as he mentored and built into the lives of the Twelve; something that powerfully speaks to us today.

First Interaction – Jesus in Nazareth – 6:1-6a.

Read verse 1-2.

Those who heard Jesus teach in the synagogue were 'amazed' (ekplesso), in the sense, they were astonished.

What does it mean to be astonished?

Something astonishing is astounding, staggering, stupefying, or incredible. It's not the things we see every day that astonish us.

A dog shaking its paw is not astonishing.

Astonishing things are the things that don't normally happen.

A dog calling 911 for its owner – now that would be astonishing.

If you find yourself saying, "Oh my goodness! I can't believe what I'm seeing or hearing," you're probably seeing or hearing something astonishing.

<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/astonishing>

What was it about Jesus' teaching that astonished many people in Nazareth?

Mark writes of two things.

verse 2b – wisdom and remarkable miracles

What astonished/astonishes you about Jesus?

When Jesus taught he made sense of life; he explained profound things in simple ways. Rather than quoting others; he taught as the source of truth.

And... he performed miracles that couldn't be ignored or easily explained away.

As soon as they voiced the question, **“Where did this man get these things?”** many immediately rejected the obvious answer. **Read verse 3.**

Jesus’ earthly family was not wealthy or powerful - they were like everybody else in town - ordinary. *“We know his mom, his brothers, his sisters.”*

Until his public ministry began, there is every indication that Jesus himself was ordinary in every way. *“We know him!”* **“He’s the carpenter.”**

How did those people, go so quickly, from astonished to offended?

What other reasons can you think of that might explain what happened?

The parable of the soils.

The seed Jesus had sown into their hearts, at that moment was snatched away... because their hearts were hard.

Read verse 4.

In answering them, Jesus spoke to the heart of the issue.

“You think you know me, because I grew up here.”

“You think you know me because I’ve done work for you.”

“You think you know me because I’m your brother, your cousin, your nephew.”

Example of Murray Lawrie in Ottawa, living next door to Tom Cruise.

Others might be in awe of Tom Cruise.

But Murray always sees Tom as the kid who played in his backyard with his son; the kid who made a hole through the shrubs along the driveway.

I think this is how it was for many in Nazareth, even for some in Jesus’ family.

His siblings had grown up with him - seen him, day in and day out.

Others in town still saw him as the teenager apprenticing with his father; or as the young man who rebuilt their door, fixed their shed, or put on a new roof for them.

Maybe some remembered him as the young adult who turned down a marriage offer.

Their relational and spatial proximity to Jesus hindered them from seeing him for who he really was.

What reasons can you think of that hinder people today from seeing Jesus for who he really is?

What was it that initially hindered you?

What happened in Nazareth after this?

The better question is, what didn't happen?

Read verse 5.

Here we encounter **mystery**.

It wasn't that Jesus chose "not" to do miracles.

It was that he "couldn't."

Do you remember what Jesus said to the woman who had been sick for 12 years?

5:34: *Your faith has healed you...*

Do you remember what Jesus said to Jairus?

5:36: *Don't be afraid; just believe.*

Faith invites Jesus into a situation or into a life in order to do the miraculous.

Unbelief restricts him.

Is this a principle that could explain why God doesn't seem to be doing in Canada what he is doing in other nations?

Explain your answer.

How is it possible that human beings can hold back the Sovereign God?

God has given us a will to choose, and if someone makes the choice to exclude God from their life, God will not force his way in; nor will he miraculously intervene.

But not everyone in Nazareth was offended by Jesus.

Did you notice the word, "except," in verse 5?

There were a few, who having heard Jesus teach, responded in faith, believing that he was **more than just a carpenter**.

And some of those who did, experienced Jesus' healing touch.

Second Interaction – John the Baptist with Herod and Herodias – 6:14-29

Read verse 14a.

If people hadn't yet seen Jesus, they'd at least heard of him.

Read verses 14b-16.

Do you remember what the disciples asked each other after Jesus calmed the storm?

Who is this?

They were not the only ones asking this question.

John the Baptist... raised from the dead.

Elijah... the forerunner who Malachi said would come (4:5).

A prophet... like Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel.

All of these options tell us that while Jesus' upbringing and family might have been ordinary, those who interacted with him... saw him to be extraordinary!

What options are put forward today as to who Jesus is?

What do these options reveal about people's understanding of Jesus?

Who do you think Jesus was when you first heard of him?

Jesus and Herod never met... until after Jesus had been arrested (Luke 23:8).

But everything that Herod had heard about Jesus, convinced him that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead.

Why would Herod think that, other than a guilty conscience?

Because of the similarities between Jesus and John's life.

Because both of them spoke of the kingdom of God coming near.

Because both called people to repent of their sins.

King Herod rejected John's message of repentance, but he did so for different reasons than those of the people in Nazareth.

Read verse 17a, 18.

Read verse 17b, 19.

Herod didn't like what John said to him about his adultery.

But the text tells us that his reasons for arresting and imprisoning John were because Herodias had insisted he do so.

The offense Herodias felt towards John, was “nursed” – v.19a.
She replayed what John had said, over and over in her mind.
Her sinful pride fed her sense of indignation.
And her indignation, as it grew, turned to bitterness and hatred.
She became convinced she needed to respond to John’s accusation, not with repentance,
but with deadly force.

“Who does he think he is to tell me the Queen, what I can and can’t do!!!”

While the gospel of Jesus is good news, it also brings the bad news that every single person desperately need a Savior, and that Savior isn’t us.

Each of us is responsible for what we do with that news.
A person can choose, like those of Nazareth, to be offended and reject Jesus.
A person can choose, like Herodias, to become angry, and oppose Jesus.

What other responses have you observed people making?
What response did you initially make?

And then some can respond like Herod did.

Read verse 20.

Herod was torn.

He refused to repent and give up **Herodias**.

But he also refused to kill **John** like Herodias wanted.

He wanted to please his wife; but he feared John.

He knew John was right, but he refused to admit **his sin**.

He loved to listen to John speak about **righteousness**, but what John said greatly puzzled him; he didn’t understand.

Herod was caught between **his kingdom** and **God’s kingdom**.

He felt the pull of God’s kingdom on his heart. But he found himself unwillingly to give up his sin; and bow to God’s greater authority.

Herod tried to manage his sin and his attraction to God.

He tried make them co-exist.

And for a time it seemed he was able to make it work.

Until...Herodias forced his hand.

Read verses 21-26.

I don't doubt Herod was greatly distressed when Herodias' daughter asked for John's head. So why didn't he say no? Why didn't he tell her to ask for something else?

Herod had John killed because what others thought of him mattered most.

Some will choose, like Herod, to turn away from Jesus, because their reputation in the eyes of others, is more important than what God thinks of them.

This concern for reputation can hold people back from coming to Jesus. Can this same concern also impede a person after they've come to Jesus? Explain your answer.

If this happens, how does one get free?

In the story of Jesus, as told by Peter to Mark, we see the fame of Jesus growing. Great crowds of people came to him. But not everyone believed in Jesus.

There were many who chose to follow Jesus, leaving everything in order to do so. But there were also many who didn't; many who were offended by him; many who rejected him.

It was in this context, that Jesus did something remarkable with the Twelve.

Fast forward two thousand years, and people are still divided by Jesus. There is great hostility in the Western nations towards Jesus. There is a substantial pushback that desires to stamp out his name and influence.

But Jesus' church is growing in unprecedented ways in many other nations of the world; millions upon millions of people are choosing Jesus.

The kingdom of heaven continues to invade earth, and to advance, life by life. But it does so in a hostile environment.

What Jesus did then with the Twelve, is still what he does with his followers today.

Read verses 6b-13.

Jesus didn't tell the Twelve to wait until the hostility died down.
He didn't tell them to only go where it was safe.
Jesus didn't have a curriculum they had to finish before they could speak on his behalf.
Nor did he say it's ok to wait to speak until they weren't afraid.
He didn't promise that everyone would welcome or love them.
He simply told them to go...and they went.

Matthew in his account gives greater detail regarding the instructions Jesus gave.
Matthew 10:5-42.

There is much here to meditate upon.

What in this passage encourages you?
What challenges your life and practice?
What do you see as most pressing for our church to do?

I would encourage you to read this passage this week, again and again, in order that the Holy Spirit might grip each of our hearts with the urgency of the mission.

Here are a few emphases I want to leave with you.
I see these instructions in Matthew 10 as powerfully speaking to us.
They remind us of what is most important; of what we are to be focused on.
They keep before us what is eternal.

We announce the same good news Jesus announced.
And as we do, we are given his authority to do what he did.

Jesus knows displacing the kingdom of darkness is a risky task.
We, his followers, still go out like sheep among wolves.
He tells us to be careful; to move on when rejected; even to flee if necessary.
He warns that some who oppose us will be unknown, but many of our adversaries will be family members - a brother; a father; a child, a daughter-in-law.

Jesus urges us, "Live to please your heavenly Father. You are of great worth to him."
He says to us, "Don't let their opposition make you afraid."
When you have to make a defense, Jesus promises, "It will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

To follow Jesus is to make him one's highest priority.

To follow Jesus is to understand, that because he died for the sins of the world; and defeated sin and death and the works of Satan, his mission of rescue and reversal is his passion; which becomes ours.

It may make some of you uncomfortable to hear that in this present time, we are at war with unseen spiritual forces of evil. But this is not a war whose outcome is uncertain. However, it is a war in which the eternal destiny of men and women are at stake.

It is a war that may require God's people to suffer for the name of Jesus, to even lay down their life, if needed. And if that happens, again Jesus assures, "Don't be afraid. They can only kill the body, which I will raise again. They can never harm your soul."

Which of the above statements stirred urgency within you?

This is the mission of Jesus.

It is a mission to undo what sin ruined.

It is a mission that will ultimately result in a new heaven and a new earth.

It is a mission to rescue lost men and women, and to recreate them in the image of Jesus.

It is a mission, from start to finish, driven by love.

It is a mission that will succeed.

And it is our mission.

Jesus says to us, "Go to the lost in Sooke. To the lost in Victoria. To the lost on this island. To the lost in our province; in our nation. To the lost in other nations."

"And as you go, tell them of me!"

The Blessing

* Does Jesus cause offense, because he is an offensive person?
Or could it be something else?
Could it point to a profound flaw within human beings?

From an early age we all assert our independence.
We see that as a good thing, and to an extent it is.
But cut off from God, the Bible tells us that our independence takes us to places God never intended us to go.

In the words of C.S. Lewis, our lives are but shadows of what we were created to be.
Without God, sin has actually made us sub-human.
And hearing this, can offend one's pride.

Jesus says he came to seek and to save that which is lost.
And again, human pride can be offended as it asks, from what?
When a person hears Jesus teach, and sees how he lived, it can shake up the delusions of grandeur with which we all live.

Do you remember the children's story, 'The Emperor has no Clothes?'
Jesus in his teaching essentially tells us we are like the emperor.
He calls those who hear him to make a radical commitment – to repent; to turn their lives around; to move from self-centeredness to God-centeredness.

And some, hearing him, will repent and some will be offended.

What else does Mark want us to understand.

It wasn't just the people of Nazareth who were amazed.
Look at verse 6.

Jesus himself was amazed.

Is this the same word that was used in verse 2? No.
verse 2 - ekplesso - amazed in the sense of astonishment.
verse 6 - thaumadzo - meaning to wonder at, to marvel.

why did Mark use a different word?

What was he wanting to communicate about Jesus' reaction?