

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/19/04 Brad Brandt

Mark 6:1-13 "The Master's Ministry"***

Main Idea: By observing Jesus in action in Mark 6:1-13, we discover that the Master's ministry involves two elements.

I. The Master's ministry involves rejection (1-6).

A. Jesus tried to minister at home (1-2a).

B. Jesus offended the people (2b-3).

1. They misunderstood His message.

2. They misunderstood His works.

3. They misunderstood His true identity.

C. Jesus was amazed (4-6).

1. He saw their lack of faith.

2. He left them, but didn't give up on them.

II. The Master's ministry involves reproduction (7-13).

A. Step #1: Show them how.

B. Step #2: Give them tools (7).

1. They need support.

2. They need authority.

C. Step #3: Clarify expectations (8-11).

1. He told them what to take (8-9).

2. He told them where to stay (10).

3. He told them how to handle rejection (11).

D. Step #4: Send them out (12-13).

1. Help people see that the Lord expects change.

2. Help people see that the Lord makes change possible.

E. Step #5: Debrief after they finish.

Response: Some questions to ponder...

1. If Jesus came to your home, would He be welcome?

2. Are you involved in the ministry of reproduction?

3. Are you willing to face rejection for Him?

Campbell Morgan was one of 150 young men who sought entrance to the Wesleyan ministry in 1888. He passed the doctrinal examinations, but then faced the trial sermon. In a cavernous auditorium that could seat more than 1,000 sat three ministers and 75 others who came to listen. When Morgan stepped into the pulpit, the vast room and the searching, critical eyes caught him up short. Two weeks later Morgan's name appeared among the 105 REJECTED for the ministry that year.

Jill Morgan, his daughter-in-law, wrote in her book, *A Man of the Word*, "He wired to his father the one word, 'Rejected,' and sat down to write in his diary: 'Very dark everything seems. Still, He knoweth best.' Quickly came the reply: 'Rejected on earth. Accepted in heaven. Dad.'"

In later years, Morgan said: "God said to me, in the weeks of loneliness and darkness that followed, 'I want you to cease making plans for yourself, and let Me plan your life.'"

As it turned out the Lord used Campbell Morgan in significant ways for kingdom purposes. Isn't it interesting that those who first inspected him said he'd never cut it?

He's not alone. Did you realize that people wrote off Jesus, too? And not just people, but His own people,

His *family* members.

This morning, in our *Straight Talk about Jesus* series, we come to one of the most painful events in Jesus' life. In fact, as we'll see, it's one of two times in Jesus' life when the Bible says He was "amazed." The passage before us will help us know Jesus better. It will also help us understand what we can expect if we follow Him. By observing Jesus in action in Mark 6:1-13, we discover that the Master's ministry involves two elements.

I. The Master's ministry involves rejection (1-6).

As we begin Mark 6 we've come to the second longest chapter in Mark's gospel. Jesus is in Galilee, probably Capernaum. In chapter five He demonstrated His authority over the devil, over disease, and over death itself with a series of miracles, the last of which was the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead.

Verse 1—"Jesus left there [that's Capernaum] and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples." Jesus' rejection involves three scenes.

A. Jesus tried to minister at home (1-2a). The KJV says He "came into his own country." Mark doesn't here specify that it was Nazareth, but he mentioned Nazareth by name back in 1:9. Both Matthew and Luke make it clear that Jesus, although born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth (Matt 2:23; Luke 2:39-40).

Morgan says that Nazareth was a town of about 10,000 inhabitants, describing it as, "...One of those towns where every one knows every one else, and every one knows every one else's business, as a rule a little better than people know their own business!"

They knew about Jesus in Nazareth, or at least they thought they did.

But Jesus isn't returning home for a family reunion. He's coming as a Rabbi as Mark emphasizes, stating He had His disciples with Him. In first century Israel rabbis traveled around the country accompanied by their followers.

Verse 2—"When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed [KJV, 'astonished']." It's the same word (*ekplessomai*) Mark used to describe how the folks in Capernaum responded to Jesus back in 1:22, "The people were *amazed* at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law." But for Nazareth it was a different kind of amazement.

This is actually Jesus' second visit to Nazareth since initiating His public ministry. Mark doesn't mention the first, but Luke does (in Luke 4). It occurred about a year earlier, at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. During that visit Jesus went to the synagogue and, after reading a messianic prophecy from the scroll of Isaiah, said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:21)." Later, upset by His words, they tried to kill Him by throwing Him off a cliff, but He escaped and left Nazareth (4:30). That was the result of visit #1. His hometown tried to take His life!

Between that first visit and the one we're considering Jesus preached and did many miracles throughout Galilee, and consequently His fame spread throughout the land. In an incident that took place shortly before this second visit (described in Mark 3), word of His exploding work got back to His family in Nazareth who concluded He was insane (if not demon-possessed) and came to take Him home by force. When informed that His mother and brothers had arrived, Jesus said, "Here are my mother and brothers!" pointing to His disciples. Apparently, that was His last contact with the family prior to returning home.

On visit #2, He went to the synagogue again. Verse 2 says He taught again, or at least He *began* to teach.

Apparently, He never finished His lesson. What happened? Look at the end of verse 3, "And they took offense at him."

B. Jesus offended the people (2b-3). You say, "What did He do that was so offensive?" It's not so much what He did as who they perceived Him to be. Verse 2 again, "'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles!'"

When I was twenty-one my home church invited me to become their first Pastor's Assistant. I'd attended that church since the age of ten. I came to know Christ in that church. I was baptized in there. I grew up in the youth group. I can still remember going to those elders' meetings, sitting next to the man who'd been my junior high Sunday School teacher and across from another who'd been to my high school basketball games and another who'd been my youth leader. What amazed me was that they didn't look down on me because of my youth, but rather allowed me to minister with and to them. They had learned that pastoral authority is linked to the Book, not human perception.

I find it interesting how the crowd in Nazareth *didn't* respond. "Well, I always knew there was something special about that boy!" They didn't say that. Nor, "Welcome home! You've made Nazareth famous!" No, they simply took offense.

Why? The cool reception they gave to Jesus that day was due to three misunderstandings.

1. *They misunderstood His message.* Notice their first question, "Where did this man get these things?" It's been said, "An expert is an ordinary fellow from another town." They knew which school Jesus had gone to—the same one their kids had attended. They knew which synagogue He attended—probably the very one He's in on this day. *Where did He get these things?* they wanted to know. His message didn't make sense to them.

By the way, what *was* His message? Check out Matthew 5-7 for a sample, the Sermon on the Mount. There was nothing status quo about His teaching. He preached a radical message that challenged the centuries-old traditions of Judaism. He told people that if their righteousness didn't surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, they would not enter the kingdom of God (Matt 5:20)! That kind of preaching offends people, particularly people who've bought into the system of the Pharisees and teachers of the law!

2. *They misunderstood His works.* "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles [KJV, 'mighty works']!" Note they don't deny His miracles. They just question the purpose and even origin of them. Perhaps they've bought the party line being circulated by the teachers of the law. Remember 3:22? "By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

3. *They misunderstood His true identity.* Verse 3—"Isn't this the carpenter?" That was Joseph's occupation, you'll recall. And apparently, Jesus learned the same trade and practiced it until the age of thirty. That's how the folks in Nazareth knew Jesus, as a working man, a layman if you will. They were plagued by what Morgan calls, "The inability to believe that the man who worked by our side could ever be our teacher."

"Isn't this Mary's son?" That's interesting. During Jesus' visit the year before the people at Nazareth said, "Isn't this *Joseph's* son (Luke 4:22)?" Now they say, "Isn't this *Mary's* son?" Why the change? Most scholars feel Joseph died years before this, so that's not the reason. More likely it's a slur, a jab at Him. Typically, a first century Jew was identified by his father's name and not his mother's, even if the father was deceased. To refer to Jesus by His *mother's* name is to raise the stigma of His birth, for His mother conceived him out of wedlock.

On another occasion when Jesus was talking about His heavenly Father, His critics responded sarcastically,

"We are not illegitimate children (John 8:41)," with the unspoken implication—"but that's what *you* are."

"Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" The Roman Catholic church teaches that these were cousins, but there's no textual basis to redefine the terms. The fact is, Jesus had half-brothers and half-sisters, children born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus' virgin birth. James was probably born next to Jesus and later became a church leader in Jerusalem and author of the epistle that bears his name. Judas was probably the man who later authored the book of Jude. We know nothing of Joseph and Simon and the sisters.

By the way, did you ever wonder why Jesus waited until He was thirty to begin His public ministry? Why did He keep a low profile in Nazareth all those years, working as a carpenter, while a world waited to be saved? According to Barclay, "The reason was that Joseph died young and Jesus took upon himself the support of his mother and of his brothers and sisters; and only when they were old enough to fend for themselves did he go forth. He was faithful in little, and therefore in the end God gave him much to do."

There are Apocryphal stories that embellish Jesus' growing-up years, stories about the boy-Jesus performing miracles, but they're just stories and they lack biblical basis. The fact is, Jesus lived an absolutely normal life as a child, a young boy, a teen, and later as a young adult. The other boys who played with Him saw Him as a boy, upright, pure, honest, a better boy, no doubt, but still a boy. The same could be said for the customers who paid Him for His carpentry work. I'm sure He was an exceptional carpenter, but to them He was a carpenter and no more.

"And they took offense at him," Mark says. Familiarity breeds contempt.

What was their problem? In short, *they thought they knew Him*. They thought that because they knew *some* things about Him they really knew Him. But they were wrong, and sadly they're not alone.

Churches are full of people who think that because they know a few things (or even a lot of things) about Jesus they really know Jesus. But they don't. They've settled for a Jesus that doesn't exist. That explains why they, too, are offended by the Word of the real Jesus.

Scene 1—Jesus tried to minister at home. Scene 2—Jesus offended the people.

C. Jesus was amazed (4-6). Verse 4—"Jesus said to them, 'Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.'" The crowds flocked to Him everywhere He went, but in Nazareth they shut their hearts.

Verse 5—"He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them." Those are tragic words, *He could not do miracles*. It's not that He lacked the ability. It's that they lacked something...

Verse 6—"And he was amazed at their lack of faith." Faith is a prerequisite for seeing the work of God. Hundreds of people touched Jesus' clothes, but received no healing. How is it then that the woman who'd suffered twelve years with a bleeding disorder was healed by touching Jesus' robe? Jesus gives the answer in 5:34, "Your *faith* has healed you."

Jesus didn't do miracles to impress people. Furthermore, His purpose went beyond simply getting rid of physical suffering. The reason He performed miracles was to substantiate His true identity as the Messiah so that people would *believe* in Him.

We see Jesus "amazed" only two times in the Gospels. In Luke 7:9 He is amazed by the great faith of a Roman centurion. Here He is amazed by the lack of faith. Don't miss this...

1. *He saw their lack of faith.* What does He see when He looks at us today? Did you come to church today really expecting to hear the speech of God through the preaching of His Word, or did you just come to hear "what the pastor has to say?" Did you walk through those doors with an expectant faith, believing that God was going to transform your life, or did you come with your mind already made up, no changes today?

Barclay's observation is worth pondering, "Our churches would be different places if congregations would only remember that they preach more than half the sermon. In an atmosphere of expectancy the poorest effort can catch fire. In an atmosphere of critical coldness or bland indifference, the most Spirit-packed utterance can fall lifeless to the earth."

Verse 6 concludes, "Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village." Don't miss the weight of those words. *The Jesus went.* He left them. He saw their lack of faith so He went elsewhere. His rejection led to their loss.

How do you handle rejection? When people don't treat you right, when your own family members hurt you, how do you respond? Do you get angry? Do you sulk? Do you think of ways to get even? Take another look at what Jesus did.

2. *He left them, but didn't give up on them.* How do I know? Less than two years later the disciples were in a prayer meeting. Guess who joined them? Acts 1:14—"They [the disciples] all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and *with his brothers.*" By the grace of God these brothers who had once *rejected* Jesus eventually *received* Jesus as their own Savior and Lord.

The Master's ministry involves rejection. Thankfully, that's not all.

II. The Master's ministry involves reproduction (7-13).

Ironically, the rejection led to the reproduction. Right after the negative response at Nazareth Jesus launched the next phase of His public ministry. Verse 7—"Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits."

D. L. Moody said, "It is better to train ten people than to do the work of ten people. But it is harder." What's involved in the ministry of reproduction? How do you train disciples? Jesus followed five very practical steps as a disciple-maker.

A. Step #1: Show them how. Verse 7—"Calling the Twelve to Him." Here's the heart of discipleship. It's life on life. Jesus selected twelve men and invested three years of His life into them. "Come and follow Me," He had told them. He traveled with them, ate with them, talked with them, and of course, taught them. They would learn what to do by watching Him.

It starts here. *Show them how.* For the Twelve the "show them how" phase lasted about a year, maybe a little longer. First they observed, then they imitated.

By the way, here's what they saw Jesus doing most recently, the end of verse 6 again—"Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village." Isn't it interesting that the rejection led Jesus to begin a village ministry. We might call this new approach "village evangelism."

By going to the villages Jesus taught His men—and us—a critical lesson. Yes, people in the cities need hope, and Jesus went there. But so do the obscure, the often looked-down-upon folks living out in the villages. Jesus cared for the towns of thousands, yes, but He also cared for the villages of five hundred and smaller.

There is a story told about C. I. Scofield, the man responsible for the reference Bible that bears his name. He

was invited to preach in a church in North Carolina. The night was rainy and only twenty-five people came to the meeting. The young preacher leaned over and apologized to Dr. Scofield for the small turnout to hear the doctor. Scofield replied, "Young man, my Lord had only twelve men in His school and in His congregation most of the time. If He had only twelve, who is C. I. Scofield to be concerned about a big crowd?"

In the ministry of reproduction the first step is to *show them how*.

B. Step #2: Give them tools (7). What kind of tools? Disciples need several things to succeed, and here we see Jesus giving His men two particular "tools."

1. *They need support*. Verse 7—"He sent them out two by two." Why did He send them in pairs? For starters, the Law demanded two witnesses to substantiate a claim (Deut 17:6). What's more, it provided His men with accountability and support.

The fact is, these men were going to face what Jesus faced, *rejection*. Ecclesiastes 4:10 puts it this way, "If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!"

2. *They need authority*. Mark says Jesus "sent" them. The Greek verb is *apostellein* and indicates they were His official representatives. They went out as an extension of Him.

He also gave them something, verse 7—"He gave them *authority* over evil spirits." To give someone a job to do and *not* give him the necessary authority is to handcuff him. Jesus gave His men what they needed to accomplish what He expected. Give them tools.

C. Step #3: Clarify expectations (8-11). In this case the Lord gave very specific guidelines about three matters.

1. *He told them what to take (8-9)*. "These were his instructions: 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag [AV, 'no scrip'], no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.'" Talk only a staff, a walking stick. They weren't even to take an extra tunic—which would have come in handy on cool nights for Jews used the tunic as a covering.

The Lord was teaching them to put their absolute trust in God to meet their needs. In short, they were to travel light, taking only what they had on their backs. God would provide, using people whose hearts He prepared to show hospitality.

2. *He told them where to stay (10)*. "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town." Apparently, the Lord didn't want His men to pick and choose. They weren't to stay in one place until they found somewhere better. He wanted them to expect the treatment of servants, not pampered guests.

3. *He told them how to handle rejection (11)*. "And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them."

When Orthodox Jews returned to the Holy Land from Gentile territory, they "shook off the dust." I don't believe Jesus is endorsing snobbery. He is showing that the disciples' message, just like His own, brings judgment as well as salvation.

Jesus prepared His men ahead of time for the inevitable. Yes, there would be fruit, but there would also be hecklers in the crowd. There would be rejection. Jesus made it clear He didn't expect His men to make everyone happy.

Show them how. Give them tools. Clarify expectations. Then...

D. Step #4: Send them out (12-13). Note the first words of verse 12, "They went out." Sooner or later you've got to leave the classroom. There's a time for learning but then it's time to play the game. Here's the order. First learn, then teach.

Some don't want to learn. They want to *do*. Some young people are that way. They don't want to invest the hard work in their studies so they're prepared to do what the Lord wants them to do in kingdom work.

But others *only* want to learn. Some sitting in church pews have been learning for years. If you were to draw a picture of their spiritual body it would be a huge head with tiny little legs and arms. They need spiritual exercise. They need to get out and share what they've learned with the lost. *Send them out.*

Having been sent, what did Jesus men do? Verses 12-13—"They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them."

Simply put, our task in preaching is twofold.

1. Help people see that the Lord expects change. Note the curriculum the disciples preached. It doesn't say they told men to repent, but rather that they preached in such a way as to *produce repentance*. Sadly, that's a forgotten theme in soul-winning these days.

Clarence Jordan, author of the "Cotton Patch" New Testament translation and founder of the interracial Koinonia farm in Americus, Georgia, was getting a red-carpet tour of another minister's church. With pride the minister pointed to the rich, imported pews and luxurious decoration. As they stepped outside, darkness was falling, and a spotlight shone on a huge cross atop the steeple. "That cross alone cost us ten thousand dollars," the minister said with a satisfied smile. "You got cheated," said Jordan. "Times were when Christians could get them for free."

Repentance isn't optional. Our task is to call for people to change. Barclay explains, "The change is not necessarily from robbery, theft, murder, adultery, and glaring sins. The change may be from a life that is completely selfish, instinctively demanding, totally inconsiderate, the change from a self-centered to a God-centered life—and a change like that hurts."

Think about this observation by D. L. Moody, "It is a great mistake to give a man who has not been convicted of sin certain passages that were never meant for him. The Law is what he needs...Do not offer the consolation of the gospel until he sees and knows he is guilty before God. We must give enough of the Law to take away his self-righteousness. I pity the man who preaches only one side of the truth—always the gospel and never the Law."

We need to help people see that the Lord expects change. But our message isn't self-reformation. The fact is, people can't change in the way God requires. Thankfully, there's a second component to our message.

2. Help people see that the Lord makes change possible. The Lord does the changing. The disciples gave people a taste of Jesus' power. They cast out demons, just like Jesus did. They healed people, again just like the Lord had done. In so doing they pointed people to the Lord, to the One who came to earth from heaven to bring salvation to sinners.

That, of course, is why He went to the cross. Jesus did for the sinner what the sinner cannot do for himself. He paid for his sin. He offers the gift of righteousness and eternal life. The Lord expects change, yes, and the Lord makes change possible. To as many as receive Him to them He gives the gift of eternal life. That is our message.

Show them how. Give them tools. Clarify expectations. Send them out. Finally...

E. Step #5: Debrief after they finish. That's what Jesus did in verse 30, "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught."

So there's the Master's ministry. It involves rejection and reproduction.

Response: Some questions to ponder...

1. *If Jesus came to your home, would He be welcome?* Nazareth took offense at Him. What place have you given Jesus in your home? Open your arms today.
2. *Are you involved in the ministry of reproduction?* For some it's not *were* you involved, but *are* you? Perhaps you've been on the sidelines too long. For others it's time to move from being a learner to a doer. Why not get involved *starting today*.
3. *Are you willing to face rejection for Him?* He did for us. The rejection of Nazareth. Ultimately, the rejection of the cross. Are you willing to face rejection for Him?