

Mark 6:1–13

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Date: 07 June 2026

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[0 : 00] We're in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, verses 1-13. Let's hear God's word. He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.

And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue. And many who heard him were astonished, saying, Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, and Joseph, and Judas, and Simon?

And are not his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, and among his relatives, and in his own household.

And he could no longer do mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.

[1 : 06] And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two. And he gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

And he said to them, Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you, and they will not listen to you when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning. Good morning. It's great to be with you today. I was speaking with someone about this text recently.

And they said they would title it, were they to be preaching, that is, Jesus, Hometown Zero.

[2 : 22] Hometown Zero. I think it's a pretty decent title. I'm just going to hang this word on that. The argument I want to make from this text for us today, though, is this.

That the gospel's value is worthy of your trust. I want to talk about its value and our trust.

Let's talk value for a moment. Think about how you value, say, for instance, a business. Valuation is a process a business will go through in an attempt to determine the price that their company is worth.

There are a number of factors. One of the main ones is annual revenue. Let's say, for instance, you started a business and your annual revenue at the close of the year was \$100,000.

You might come to me and say, I'm eager to sell my business. And I might say to you, well, I would value your business at three times your annual revenue.

[3 : 39] They call that 3X, which means that if you were to sell the business to me, I would pay you \$300,000. Valuation. Valuation.

When you arrive at Mark 6, you get a firsthand look at valuation. You get a question that should be answered today. What is the gospel's true value?

Take a look at verses 1 and 2a. Here comes Jesus into his hometown. Disciples with him. It's a worship day.

He heads off on the Sabbath and begins to teach in the synagogue. Interesting word. Teaching. The value that he's placed upon his own enterprise, this gospel enterprise, has always been associated with this term teaching and preaching.

For those of you who haven't been with us over the last few weeks in the opening chapter, it says that he came proclaiming good news. And the good news was the gospel and the gospel related to the kingdom.

[4 : 55] And what we've been seeing is what he had on offer. And it's amazing the things we've seen already. He's been teaching that he is God's son come in the flesh.

He's been teaching that he has authority to forgive sins. He's been proclaiming that he can restore humanity to God's original design. He's actually been functioning like the high priest of the Old Testament and is able to take people that are unclean and bring him back into the community of the clean.

He's actually been teaching that he can rid the world of the destructive forces of the demonic world. So we can envision him now in his hometown pulpit.

Place he went to as a boy. Now teaching these things. And what is the valuation that his hometown put on his gospel?

Well, it's kind of in my title. Zero. Not much. Look at 2b through 3. Many who heard him were astonished, saying, Where did this man get these things?

[6 : 07] What's the wisdom given him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Isn't this the son of the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? Are not his sisters here?

And they took offense at him. Literally, they were like scandalized by this. Which is interesting given that opening word of astonishment.

They were astonished is a neutral term that can be negative or positive. And in this contextual sense, it's negative. They're astonished.

Who does he think he is? Where is he coming up with these things? We know this guy. We've known him from his youth. And so they took offense at him. They felt that his ministry had little value.

They felt that his ministry had little value. The eternal proposition that he had put on his entrepreneurial enterprise in their minds was unjustified.

[7 : 13] He valued his own work way beyond what he should have done. It's almost like, from their perspective, he had walked into the shark tank.

That's a TV show. He had made his pitch. And no one in the hometown is buying it. Everyone thought that he thought much too highly of the market value he placed on his own work.

Now in business, and I'm not a businessman. We have a few here. When people aren't buying what you're selling, you're in trouble.

They call it ROIC, a return on investment capital.

What's the return on investment? If you don't have a return on investment, you're going to run out of cash. And if you run out of cash, you've got no liquidity. And if you have no liquidity, you've got no chance of making your annual sales.

[8 : 22] And what they are saying is, we're out. But what about Jesus? Does he share the opinion on the value of what he brings?

No, he doesn't. Take a look at what he says in verse 4. And then what Mark will have to say in verse 5. Jesus said to them, a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his relatives and his own household.

And then Mark's voice. And he could do no mighty work there except that he laid hands on a few sick people and healed them. The marveling that both Jesus and Mark express at their unbelief matches the astonishment and the offense that they had toward him.

And so, it's very clear, no mighty work. Last time I heard it, the word no meant none. Nothing. Nada. Nothing here.

Couldn't get anything done. Or the word few. That means a few. That means little. That means Peter talking in his own letter about only a few got through the flood.

[9 : 45] Eight in number. Or when he writes about Silvanus who's writing a letter to you briefly. Short. Not much. So in a moment like this, what value does Jesus place on his own gospel?

That's really the question. Does he cash out? Call it quits?

Does he close up shop? Does he shut it down? Does he say, well, I gave it a run? I mean, if you can't get the hometown to buy what you're selling, how much hope are you going to have at an outside market?

I remember when I was young, I thought I was going to be entrepreneurial in business. And that's why I got involved with one of these pyramid schemes. You know, and I was selling like athletic shoes that were terrible quality and tennis rackets that broke right away.

And even my best friends were the only ones who bought it and they wouldn't buy again. If you can't get your own hometown to join you, then what hope do you have?

[10:53] But take note of what he does. Six B, very, very interesting to me. All week long, it's been preaching to me. And he went about among the villages teaching.

Evidently, Jesus, from his perspective, places some kind of value on his own ministry.

Teaching. There it is, 6B. What he opened with in 2A. Came into the synagogue teaching. No return.

He's still teaching. Now, he's actually expanding the opportunities, the places in which he's going to be teaching. He's moving from the hometown to the surrounding town.

And more than that. Look at verses 7 to 13. I've always wondered why these verses are stuck here at this very moment. It speaks of the value he places on his own ministry.

[11:55] It says that he called the 12 and then sent them out two by two with similar authority. To the point in verse 12, when they went out and proclaimed, they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

Like, he didn't get much return, but they got some more return. In other words, he valued his ministry at this point 12x 12 times.

I'm not doing very well, he says. I'm preaching my church empty, he says. Even in my hometown, he says. But I value what I'm doing. I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing.

I'm going to keep speaking of the kingdom and the authority to forgive sins. I'm going to keep putting things right. And in fact, I'm bringing on 12 more people with me. Stunning to me.

He comes to his own and they reject him. And he's more than willing to replace them with a new family. Led not by tribal heads of Israel, but by self-selected heads of his own in-breaking kingdom.

[13:08] He's multiplying men. And look, the return on investment pays off. You go from none, nothing, no, to many, many, much, mucho.

I think that's similar in interpretation. But evidently not. In fact, you give Jesus just a minute and he's going to raise the valuation of his enterprise, not only to what he does and continues to do, not only to 12x, but in Luke's account, while all this takes place in chapter 8, what does he do in chapter 9? He sends out 70. He now values what he's doing at 70x. It's incredible. This now begins to make sense of the parable we saw earlier in Mark 4, where the seed is going out.

It's not all producing fruit. There's a lot of nothing going on, but in some of the soil, there's 30, 60, 100-fold return.

The question is, then, what value do you place on the gospel? What value are you putting on your role to spread the gospel, to provide for the gospel, to multiply the gospel?

[14:48] Let me just give you two simple little stories from history that were encouraging to me. Guy's a shoemaker. True story. Shoemaker.

Winter. Terrible snowstorm. He goes to church. He goes to church. Only 15 come. 10 or 15, according to the record written down.

And the shoemaker is not the pastor, and the pastor didn't come because the pastor was snowed in. Someone looks at the shoemaker and says, well, I guess you need to say something. So he gets up into the pulpit.

Unbeknownst to him, there's a 15-year-old who's also walked in. Sat down. And the preacher, who's not a preacher, begins to preach. And he takes for his text where Jesus says, look unto me. The writer who was there that day said he managed to spin out about 10 minutes or so. And he was at the end of his tether. Then he says, he looked at me.

[15:58] This is the 15-year-old under the gallery. And I dare say, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. And he fixed his eyes on me as if he knew all my heart.

And he said, young man, you look very miserable. And you'll continue to be miserable in life, in death, if you don't obey my text.

But if you obey now, this moment, you'll be saved. Then lifting his hands, he pointed to him and said, young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look, look, look.

You have nothing to do but look and live. And now the writer, older than 15, says, I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said.

I had been waiting to do 50 things. But when I heard that word, look, what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh, I looked until I almost could have looked my eyes away.

[16:56] And then the cloud was gone. The darkness rolled away. And in that moment, I saw the sun. Oh, that somebody had told me this before. Trust Christ and you shall be saved.

And who was the young man on that day? Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Who becomes one of the greatest preachers in the 19th century in England.

And in his own day, it is said that he preached to more than 10 million people. Now, when we get to heaven, this is why I'm telling the story. It's not about Spurgeon for me.

Not today. When we get to heaven and we're going to be walking around, we're going to see that big man. People are going to say, that's Spurgeon over there. And I'm going to say, yes, that's Spurgeon.

And somebody introduced me to the shoemaker. Somebody introduced me to the man who went to church in the midst of the snowstorm. Get me in front of the guy that stood up to preach, not being a preacher.

[17:58] Talk to someone who actually knows all I need to do, because I value the gospel, is to present it as simply as I can to anyone. Even a room of 15 people.

And the return on investment is incalculable. Let me tell you just another story. Another guy. This guy's a greeter in church normally.

Goes to a revival tent meeting. Takes his job. I'm at the door. I'm an usher. Place is packed because there's this traveling evangelist rolling through town.

Two young boys come once the place is filled. They walk in, looking for a seat. Can't find it. This is a true story. Can't find it.

Turn on their heels. Walk out. He chases them down at the door and says, hey, fellas, I can find a seat for you. Turns them back around. Sits them in a seat.

[18:55] That night, one of them becomes converted. His name? Billy Graham. Now, when we get to heaven, you and I are going to go, that's Big Billy over there.

Let's go meet Big Billy. And I'm going to say, where's the greeter at the door? That's the one I want to talk to. That's the one who values the kingdom.

That's the one who does everything in their power to put others in the midst of the hearing of God's word. And so that's what's happening. The gospel has value.

What value do you place upon it? We ought to be asking that personally and as a church. What value do we place on the gospel?

Are we doing everything in our power to help people come under the hearing of Jesus's ministry?

Are we multiplying men and women who know how to share the word?

[20:01] Are we prayerfully engaged with even finding a proper seat for someone, a right relationship for someone, where the gospel can take root?

The gospel value. The gospel value. The gospel value. The gospel value. The gospel value. It's invaluable. It's eternally valuable. The gospel value.

The gospel value. Well, my arguments only half done. I said I'm going to talk about the gospel value. It's worthy. Worthy of our trust.

Let me just sit on this for a minute. Let's talk about being worthy of our trust. Sit down there. Did you notice the words that Jesus uses in the second half of our text when he sends his workers out into the harvest?

Verse 8. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff. No bread. No bag. No money in their belts. But to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

[21:03] Now, without these words, can you imagine how these guys would have dressed for the enterprise? They'd have been, man, he's sending us out.

I got to go down in the basement. Got to get my travel bag. No, not that carry-on. I'm going to have to get that big one. He didn't tell me how long we're going to be gone. They're going to be planning. There's going to be packing.

There's going to be three trips to Target. They're going to be struggling to get the suitcase closed, maybe even sitting on it on the front door, because you're going to be prepared. But what Jesus says here is, no, no, no.

What really requires this particular journey is trust. There's no liquidity involved in this assignment. The simplicity of a staff.

And then he says, after that, you know, there's no bread. Don't have that with you. Then he says, no bag, no beggar's bag.

[22 : 01] In other words, it's not like a knapsack that you and I wear around. It would have been something that someone would have held out begging to be remunerated for the things they were doing while away.

But he's saying, no, there's no, when you go, there's no open guitar case that you're hoping will generate your ability to play at the next stop. There's no Slurpee cup that you're supposed to shake around and hope that somebody provides for you.

Nothing. He says, no bag. And then he actually goes on. No money. Literally there. Copper. Like little small coins.

Think pennies. Evidently, Jesus wanted to take pennies out of circulation before we did. But he's saying, you don't bring anything with you. Then he actually goes on.

There's no extra set of clothes. No two tunics. I'm not quite sure why. I just travel a lot, you know. I can go for 16, 18 days on the road with a carry-on.

[23 : 06] Why? Well, not because I got all these tunics with me. Because I put my stuff into the hotel and say, can you launder all this for me until I get moving along?

But this time, there's probably shepherds in mind that you would need one thing to be wearing in the day. And when you're traveling, you need another thing to be laying under at night.

He says, no, don't even prepare for where you're going to stay at night. Not even what home you'll be in or if you'll have one. Now, where does Jesus come up with this? Now, we're talking, aren't we?

Not just about the gospel's value, but that you can find it worthy of your trust. I was thinking on that this week. What's behind this?

And I thought about Exodus 12. Passover. Passover. Where they're supposed to put the belt on. Cinch it up.

[24 : 04] Be ready to leave in haste. Got the staff in your hands, it says. Put the sandals on your feet, it says. And then in Exodus 12, it says, They were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

You see, God, when he saved his people, sent them into the wilderness on mission, totally, totally, absolutely, fundamentally ground floor dependent on him.

And it goes on and says he did so as a test. Not a test hoping you get it wrong, but a test because he had good things for you and wants you to know that he will provide.

That's what Jesus is doing in this particular mission. He's in a sense calling her first followers to represent Israel of old, who knows what it is, not only to value their salvation, but to trust entirely upon him for every provision necessary along the way.

And if you've read your Bible at all, you know that on the backside of 40 years, God provided for them and the manna never dried out until they entered into the promised land.

[25 : 30] Deuteronomy says even the sandals, sandals themselves, sandals never wore out. I got some shoes on, probably a couple decades old.

I've resoled them twice. So I, in one sense, I needed new sandals, but these are the same sandals. God provides. God gets it done.

Think about it. The gospel you and I believe demands your trust. God, and that is his divine test. Ever feel like you're backed up against the waters of your own Red Sea? Radical dependence on God to provide. Don't fail the test.

Don't fail the test. Don't fail the test. Even when our church, over 30 years now, has had to go without, and we have, on many occasions, had to go without, guess what?

[26 : 37] Even when we went without and go without, we've never been without. That's just the truth of the matter. God doesn't always work in the same way.

He doesn't always get it done in three days or on a particular month or on a particular day. But we've seen him provide for this work over the course of 30 years. Lord willing, maybe we'll get as long as Moses in the wilderness and get 40 to keep testing our belief that the gospel we value, worthy of our trust.

I've seen him provide for me and my family. You've seen him provide for you. He doesn't always do it on rhythm. He doesn't always do it in plenty. He often does it in just a little bit.

It's like getting to the store to get that one can of Progresso soup, you know, the one can, 190 calories, that's chicken pot pie. So you've got a little potato and tasty, tasty carrot in there.

I've seen him do that. I've seen my family, when we couldn't pay bills when we first got underway, saying, how are we going to get through the end of the month? I don't know. We pray.

[27 : 48] Some person walks up to you on the street and says, you know, God wants me to give this to you. Gives me an envelope, bring it back home, show my wife. Three Ben Franklin's in there.

Three Ben Franklin's. We paid our bills. We wept. Why? Because we couldn't do anything. Yet God did. I remember thinking about coming down here.

30 some years ago now, it feels like. We sold our house. Didn't have a place to move in. Had no place to lay our heads. Thank God, though, even without a house, I had a friend who had a basement.

They took us all in. Until we found a place to lay our head. God provides. I remember Josh remembers calling me saying, Dave, we're in the midst of this building project.

It's been great. But you and I are about dead. So what's the matter, Josh? Lunchtime again. An ordinary day. So we got money to take the stained glass out.

[28 : 52] We don't got money to fix it or put it back in. We got money to get folding chairs. I'll send you some samples. We don't got money to get the chairs you're presently seated in. We got to put some laminate flooring down because we can't do three-quarter inch oak.

End of my life. Praise to God on that day. I say to Lisa, it's over. I asked Josh what we need. He said a million. I said, well, we've already been everywhere.

He said, well, let's pray. I said, oh, come on. You pray. You pray. And I'm not calling anybody.

Because when anybody sees my name on their phone now, they're running.

She prayed. I said, I'm not talking to anyone. Not calling the elders. Josh knew. I knew. We're sitting home that night watching The Crown or something.

My phone rings. Pick it up. I hadn't heard from in months. Months and months and months and months. You know, I'd put my best pastor face on. How you doing? He goes, yeah, how's it going?

[30 : 04] I go, oh, it's going great. Really? Really? I just want to call to let you know that I'm excited about what you're doing.

And I want to give you a million dollars. I'm going to put it in the mail tomorrow. That's true.

Sometimes it's more important when it's a single Ben Franklin, is it not?

The gospel's value is worthy of your trust.

Because our God is worthy of finding ways to give praise from us.

Our Heavenly Father, we can't get it done in life. None of us. Many men and women, even here, wondering how they get to the end of the month. Wondering what value we should place on all this.

[31 : 20] Lord, help us to value the gospel in a manner consistent with Jesus' own self-understanding. And then help us to trust as you provide in Christ's name.

Amen.