

'Following the King'

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[0 : 00] Please turn your Bibles back to Mark chapter 6 as we continue our series through the Gospel of Mark.!

Right? He'll make sure that our lives are smooth and easy, right? He'll keep us safe and happy all the time. Right?

No? Well, not really. We've already seen hints of how Jesus operates as our King. When He was in the storm with His disciples, He was present all the time, but He was sleeping.

Jesus doesn't normally deliver His people from storms, but through storms as is present throughout. In this passage, we see more of that. Here we see that Jesus' followers, especially, should expect not only storms, but even more so rejection, persecution, and sometimes even the possibility of death.

[1 : 27] For Jesus and with Jesus. So verse 1 to 2. Jesus left there and went to His hometown, accompanied by His disciples.

When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were amazed. Where did this man get these things? They asked. What's this wisdom that has been given Him?

What are these remarkable miracles He is performing? So people saw the evidence of who He was, that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus had the wisdom of God. Jesus had the power of God to do miracles. But despite seeing the evidence, they did not want to believe His identity.

Verse 3. Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? Aren't His sisters here with us?

[2 : 28] And they took offense at Him. Despite the evidence, He could do miracles. He had great wisdom. They did not believe.

They took offense of Jesus. Not because of the lack of evidence, but because of who they thought He was. Because of their own preconceived ideas about Jesus.

Isn't this just the boy who grew up here and ran around with the village boys? Isn't this just the carpenter that made my cupboard?

Who does He think He is, that now He's performing miracles and teaching us with wisdom? They had a preconceived notion about Him. They thought they knew Him.

In their eyes, Jesus was anything but the Son of God. Just as it is now, people assume they know Jesus.

[3 : 30] Wasn't Jesus just a teacher? Isn't Jesus just a myth? Wasn't Jesus just a religious leader? For a lot of people, Jesus is anything but the Son of God, the King that we need to follow, worship, and obey.

But just as with the Nazarenes, people's questions about Jesus today don't lead them to seek to know more about Jesus.

Their questions only seek to justify their own preconceived ideas about Jesus. Even though Jesus' power is evident around them, many people have been healed and transformed, but still they think, isn't Jesus just...

dot, dot, dot, dot. And so they reject Jesus, just like the Nazarenes here. Verse 4. Jesus said to them, a prophet is not without honor, except in his own town, among his relatives, and in his own home.

In the Old Testament, the prophets faced rejection from their own people, just like Jesus. And so the Nazarenes' rejection of Jesus actually ended up showing who...

[4 : 54] assuring them of who he truly was, that he came from God, just as the prophets came from God. They were rejecting God's representative.

In fact, they were rejecting God himself. And their rejection of Jesus meant that they could not benefit from Jesus' power.

Verse 5. Jesus could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Because of their rejection of Jesus, Jesus was unable to do miracles there. So he moved somewhere else, to another village.

Now here, Jesus' miracles seem to be dependent on people's response. Now it doesn't mean that Jesus cannot work miracles when we don't have faith. Of course he can.

[5 : 54] He's powerful. But it's like a doctor who is able to heal people's sickness, but only if they come to him. If only a few people come to the doctor, then he's only able to heal those, but not others, who are unwilling to come to the doctor.

These people rejected Jesus, so Jesus could not heal them, because they didn't want to be healed. And so, Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith.

They saw Jesus' power, but they still rejected him. Jesus was amazed. If God could be amazed by anything in humanity, it's that our hearts could be so hardened that it stops us from believing despite great evidence and despite potential benefits for ourselves.

Jesus was rejected. Now, this scene of Jesus being rejected prepares us for what happens next.

In verse 7 to 13, calling the twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions.

[7 : 21] Take nothing for the journey except a staff. No bread, no bag, no money in your belts, wear sandals, but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.

And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust of your feet as a testimony against them. They went out and preached that people should repent.

They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. So far, the disciples had been observers of Jesus' ministry.

But now they're sent out to participate in that same ministry, to preach the message of repentance, which is what Jesus did, to drive out demons, which is what Jesus did, and to heal the sick, which is what Jesus did.

They were even given the authority over impure spirits, the same authority that Jesus had, the same authority that demons are scared of.

[8 : 35] And they're even told to do the mission in the same way that Jesus did it, that is, by completely relying on God. Jesus did that. That's why he often withdrew to pray, because he relied on God.

the disciples were sent out to participate in the ministry of Jesus completely. But notice that the disciples were sent out to participate in the context of people's rejection of Jesus' ministry.

They were only sent out after they witnessed the rejection that Jesus faced. And so they were told to expect that rejection would come to them too.

They were given the same mission as Jesus, the same power as Jesus, and so they were to expect the same rejection that Jesus faced.

And when they were rejected, they were not to hate them or curse them or force them to convert or to wage war against them like some other religions in this world.

[9 : 46] they were to face rejection the same way that Jesus faced rejection. They were to accept it, shake the dust of their feet, meaning they're saying, I've already done my job.

If you're punished because you keep rejecting God, it's on you. And they were to leave. Now, this has a massive implication for us.

If we claim that we follow Jesus, this is what we need to expect. Following Jesus means participating in his mission, not just watching him do things for us.

That means we too are called to preach the gospel to the people around us. Did you know that? Yes. That means we too are called to defeat the power of evil with the gospel.

Did you know that? That means we too are called to heal people, especially from their spiritual sickness, with the gospel.

[11 : 01] Did you know that? That sounds intimidating, especially because we're supposed to do this mission in a world that may reject us.

that we go into that mission leaning on Jesus with his power, with his authority, the authority that even demons are scared of.

But we need to expect rejection nonetheless. We share in his mission, so we share in the same rejection. Now, the disciples were not only going to face rejection, but also potential persecution. Verse 14 to 16, the plot thickens. King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.

Others said, he is Elijah. And still others claimed he is a prophet like one of the prophets of long ago. But when Herod heard this, he said, John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead. [12:15] So King Herod heard about King Jesus. The fake king heard about the true king. Jesus was widely seen as a prophet like John the Baptist, and some even thought that Jesus was John the Baptist that had been resurrected.

Herod thought that. And so we can expect that how Herod had treated John the Baptist, he beheaded him, would be the same as how he would now treat Jesus.

And this is how Herod treated John the Baptist. Verse 7 10 to 20. For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison.

He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.

So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him, but she was not able to because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man.

[13:23] When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled, yet he liked to listen to him. Herodias was Herod's step-niece.

So she was the daughter of Herod's older step-brother. and she was also married to Herod's younger brother, Philip. So she was Herod's step-niece and sister-in-law.

But then she divorced Philip to marry Herod, so now she's his wife. This was seen as immorality, and so it was condemned by John the Baptist.

But because of that rebuke of his immorality, Herod arrested John. So that's how Herod treated John the Baptist. We can expect the same treatment for Jesus, who also preached repentance.

And then verse 21 to 29. Finally, the opportune time came. On his birthday, Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.

[14:34] When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, Ask me for anything you want and I'll give it to you.

And he promised her with an oath, Whatever you ask, I will give you up to half my kingdom. The irony is that that's not his kingdom, it's Caesar's.

She went out and said to her mother, What shall I ask for? The head of John the Baptist, she answered. At once, the girl hurried into the king with a request, I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her, so he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head.

The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

[15:44] This is madness, isn't it? Madness. There's a party for King Herod's birthday. Of course, people were drunk. Herod's stepdaughter, who's also his great niece, came in to dance.

Scholars say that this is very likely an erotic dance for the king. And out of his drunken and sexual impulse, this fake king had to kill John the Baptist out of the request of his wife and step daughter. This is madness. If this king thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, then we can expect that he would treat Jesus the same way.

Now, pay attention to what verse 30 says. the apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.

All they had done and taught. What's the context here? It's the previous mission. The story about the disciples' mission was not finished in verse 13.

[16:56] Mark intentionally interrupts the story of the disciples' mission with Herod's killing of John the Baptist and then finishes the story only here in verse 13.

to show that if this is how John the Baptist was treated, then Jesus would be treated like this, then the disciples would be treated like this, because they shared the same mission.

The story of the murder of John the Baptist is included by Mark in the story of the disciples' mission, because the disciples must also experience the same possibility to happen to them.

The disciples need to expect not only rejection, like what Jesus faced in Nazareth, but even and also death.

And indeed, according to church history, almost all 12 disciples were murdered in their participation in the mission of Jesus. disciples. And friends, if we are also Jesus' disciples, reading this passage should make us sober.

[18 : 18] We need to expect the same thing. Many Christians in this world are facing rejection and even dying for following Jesus. Jesus. Having read this passage, we should not question why.

I've told you about my friend whose whole family was murdered in Indonesia for following Jesus. I've told you about my aunt who's a victim of church bombing. Earlier this week, there's a video of a church in Indonesia being destroyed by their neighbors because there were people in it praying to Jesus.

and that's just from one country. There are many countries in this world with people and governments that hate Jesus. And so they hate the disciples, us.

Following Jesus is not safe or comfortable. In the Anglican church, when we are baptized, we are asked a series of questions, and one of them is, do you renounce Satan and all that is evil? That's what it means when we follow Jesus. We renounce Satan and all that is evil, but we know that Satan is powerful, and the power of evil is great. That's whom we are against when we follow Jesus.

[19 : 45] It's not a comfortable life. But in light of last week's passage, church, isn't King Jesus strong enough to save us, to keep us safe, to save us from rejection and persecution and hardship? Of course he is. But that's not how he normally saves us. He doesn't save us from physical hardship. He saves us through hardship.

Because we participate in his life, and his life includes suffering and death. a few years ago there was someone from Iran who came to our church and wanted to meet me and wanted to know about Jesus.

I told him about Jesus, told him about the gospel, and then at the end he said, I believe I want to be baptized right now. I said, whoa, hang on a second, do you know what that means?

Following Jesus is very costly, I said. And then he asked, what does it mean? It means losing your life. It means if you believe in Jesus, your family in Iran might be persecuted.

[20 : 59] It means if you follow Jesus, you can't go back to Iran. If you come back to Iran, you might be persecuted and you might be killed. And he asked, okay, that's the cost, what do I get?

I said, you get the life of Jesus, righteous. If you die right now, God will see you as completely, perfectly righteous, and you will get his eternal life.

You'll exchange your life for his. And he said, that's enough for me, I believe. So, we have hope. Even though following Jesus is not comfortable, we have hope. We participate in his power, we participate in his death and suffering, but we also can expect to participate in his resurrected life. love. A few days ago, during bedtime story, I told my son about Jesus' ascension to heaven and how now he reigns in heaven as king.

[22 : 16] And then he asked, if Jesus is king, does that mean that we need to listen to everything he says? I said, yes, that means you need to listen to everything that I say first.

No, I didn't say that. I'm kidding. I said, yes, that means if he tells us to go somewhere, we go. Remember, this is not our house.

We need to leave it behind and go somewhere else. If he tells us to stay here, we stay. If he tells us to go to a country with people that might kill us for following Jesus, what do you think we should do? He said, we go. So I asked, do you want to do that though? Do you really want to do that? Do you go to go where people might kill us if we follow Jesus?

He thought about it for three seconds and then he said, yeah, I'll do that if Jesus tells us to go because Jesus is powerful and he can raise us from the dead.

[23 : 25] I'm sure he doesn't fully understand what he means, but my four-year-old son reminded me that Jesus saves not from dangers or death, but through dangers and death because he can raise us back to life and that's how he lived, through death to life.

So let's trust and obey. follow Jesus in this world that might reject or kill us even is not easy. But we trust and obey because he is powerful and he has the power to raise us even from death.
Let's pray. follow him to follow him for this great reminder that following Jesus is not easy.
We need to count our costs. But we thank you that as you didn't abandon Jesus in the realm of the dead but raised him back to life, we can expect that you will do the same to us.
That you will not abandon us in the realm of the dead, but you will raise us back to life. So as we live in this world and face potential rejection or persecution, help us to endure and help us to keep holding on to Jesus.
[25 : 01] In his name we pray. Amen.