

"Dealing with Rejection" - Mark 6:1-13

Human beings have a hard-wired need to be accepted. I like to be accepted; don't you? I like people to like me and when I am rejected, for any reason, as much as I might not want to admit it, it hurts.

I didn't like it when I was picked next-to-last when captains were selecting teams for pick-up baseball. I didn't like it when my high school basketball coach cut me from the varsity team. That one especially hurt, because he told me I was the first one in 30 years he ever cut. The rest of them read the writing on the wall and quit or never went out for the team.

It's even tough to accept criticism when you know the criticism is warranted. When you mess up and people call you on it, it still hurts even though you know it was your fault. It is hard to face rejection of any kind

But consider our Lord Jesus Christ. He certainly didn't deserve rejection of any kind. He taught like nobody has ever taught. He loved like nobody has ever loved. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, caused the deaf to hear, fed thousands with just a few loaves of bread. He even raised the dead to life and people were astounded by him ... astonished beyond measure. They said,

"He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak." (Mark 7:37)

Yet He was rejected by the very people He came to save.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. (John 1:11)

For even His brothers did not believe in Him. (John 7:5)

As Chapter 5 of Mark came to a close, Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. She was a 12 year-old girl, a corpse when Jesus arrived. There was no question about her death - the professional mourners had already been assembled. Yet Jesus gave the command and she rose to life. It was sort of a culmination of many demonstrations of His divine power, power over creation, power over evil spirits, power over disease, and power over death.

Yet so many people refused to believe. Oh, they enjoyed the show, but even those who witnessed the miracles and the signs would abandon Him when the going got tough. Jesus says:

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. (John 15:18)

They hated Him without cause. Jesus knew rejection. And we're going to see an explicit example of that this morning.

Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. (Mark 6:1)

As Jesus conducted the bulk of His great Galilean ministry, He made the town of Capernaum His headquarters. It made perfect sense as Capernaum was a crossroads, on a trade route. So, when Mark says "*He went out from there ...*", he is talking about Capernaum. And when he talks about Jesus' own country, he's referring to the region around little town of Nazareth.

Nazareth was really a nothing place. Remember what Nathaniel said?

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)

Nazareth was at the end of a road to nowhere, in the hill country about 40 miles Southwest of Capernaum. You had to want to go there, but nobody really wanted to go there. It was a small town ... best estimates were that it had only about 400-500 residents in the First Century. And it's not even mentioned in any of the Roman or Hebrew records of the day.

Jesus wasn't born in Nazareth, but He was raised there, which is why He was known as a Nazarene. He spent the first thirty years of His life living in obscurity, working as a carpenter ... a builder. At this point in His ministry, Jesus takes His disciples, and travels back to His hometown.

As I studied this week, I had to ask myself why. You see, this isn't the first time He was rejected there. In Luke, Chapter 4, we see an earlier account of His rejection toward the beginning of His ministry. He went into the Temple, read from Isaiah 61.

And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:21)

In other words, He told them who He was. Isaiah 61 is about the promised Messiah. Everybody knew that. Jesus claimed that He was the Messiah, the Christ. What was their reaction? They tried to murder Him.

So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way. (Luke 4:28-30)

So, why in the world would Jesus take His disciples back to this place after having already experienced such a violent rejection? I believe it was very intentional on His part, but then, everything He did was perfectly intentional. He needed to teach them what rejection looks like and how to deal with it. He needs to teach us the same thing because if you are a true follower of Jesus Christ, you are going to face rejection in the world.

And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, "Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him. (Mark 6:2-3)

They were offended by Him, *skandalizō* (σκανδαλίζω) in the Greek. It's a strong word. They were scandalized by Him. But why? They recognized the power of His teaching and they recognized the supernatural witness of His miracles.

Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!

His mighty works blew them away. His teaching astounded them. His teaching always had that affect. At one point, the Pharisees sent officers (the Temple police) to arrest Jesus but they came back empty handed. When they were asked why,

The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" (John 7:46)

Of course not; this was the eternal Word of God!

These guys in Nazareth recognized the uniqueness of His teaching, yet, they were offended. They were offended because they were too familiar with Him.

Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary?

By the way, you might miss it, but this is a pejorative statement. In that culture, you would never say a grown man was the son of a woman, unless the father was unknown. By this time, Joseph had apparently died but they knew who he was. These folks knew Joseph wasn't Jesus' real father. They assumed, like many did, that He was the child of an illicit relationship. We see the same thing explicitly in John 8:41 when the Jewish leadership ... said to Him,

"We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God." (John 8:41)

That was a serious burn. And this too was a burn. "He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary. Nobody knows who His dad really is. We know all His brothers and they don't believe in Him either. We know all His sisters." Of course, they did; this was a small town.

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house." (Mark 6:4)

Jesus responds with a proverbial statement. And His statement is really true. What's the saying? The definition of an expert is one with a briefcase who comes from at least 25 miles away. So often, people cannot recognize the talent, the gifts that God has placed right in their midst.

Speaking of which, do you know that we have everything we need to be successful as a church? And we have it right here! You have been given all the spiritual gifts necessary to carry out the ministry Jesus has ordained for Canyon Community Church. Don't discount the talent God has planted in your midst!

Jesus was not accepted, was not honored, was not believed in His own home town. And if you look at His statement, there is a sort of narrowing down of the scope: not honored in his country, not honored among His relatives, not honored even among His own household.

Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. (Mark 6:5)

This is not to say that Jesus was unable to do a mighty work. Mark makes sure we know that He laid His hands on a few folks. He healed them. The power of God was always available to Him. But the reason He performed miracles was to demonstrate the authenticity of His message, so people would believe in Him. These folks were not going to believe in Him, so, what was the point in performing a sign? Instead, He moved on.

And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. (Mark 6:6)

This word translated as marveled is interesting: *thaumazō* (θαυμάζω) A good contemporary synonym would be "blown away" He was blown away by their unbelief. This word is only used twice in reference to Jesus. Usually, it is other people who marveled at Jesus, other people were blown away by what He said and what He did. But Jesus was blown away (*thaumazō*) by the faith of the Centurion who asked to have his servant healed.

*When Jesus heard these things, He **marveled** at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" (Luke 7:9)*

But here, Jesus was blown away by their unbelief, Unbelief is a powerful, cruel force. Unbelief causes people to ignore facts that are staring them right in the face. Unbelief causes people to mock when they should worship. Unbelief sends people to Hell. It is at the root of the one unpardonable sin.

How did Jesus respond? He moved on.

He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

There was no use trying to argue these folks to faith. They had already rejected Him and they would not be confused by the facts. It was a lesson His disciples needed to learn because He was about to give them their first experience in practical ministry. They too would experience rejection. They needed to know how rejection was to be handled.

And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, (Mark 6:7)

Notice that He didn't send them out alone. As Christians, we need support. We need an accountability structure. That's one thing I really appreciate about Village Missions – It provides a structure for accountability and support. Our district rep is only a phone call away. And they watch what we're doing. They pray for us. We need it. Lone-wolf ministry is not the Biblical model! In your calling, you need the support of your local church.

And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. (Mark 6:7)

Jesus not only sent them out, He gave them what they needed to be successful. In this case, He gave them power over unclean spirits so they could authenticate their ministry. If Jesus calls you to ministry, whatever ministry it is, know that He will also equip you.

He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

Boy, I claim that promise all the time!

He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts—but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. (Mark 6:8-9)

Jesus instructs them to travel really light – taking only what is absolutely necessary for the trip. The Apostles had to learn to trust God for their provision, and if God calls you, He also calls those who will stand in support. As Paul explicitly puts it:

Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:14)

Or as Jesus says in Matthew 10:

... for a worker is worthy of his food. (Matthew 10:10)

Those who hear the gospel have an obligation to provide for those who bring it. If that sounds a bit self-serving, well, so be it! This isn't my idea; this is the clear teaching of both the Old and the New Testament. And let me tell you, this church is faithful in carrying out that particular responsibility. Thank you for your generosity in supporting Kris and me financially.

Also He said to them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable

*for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"
(Mark 6:10-11)*

This is the passage I really needed to get to this morning. Jesus has already shown them, by example, how to handle rejection. Now He is telling them how to handle rejection. The bottom line is, just move on. Shake off the dust from your shoes when you leave. (This was a custom among the Jews when they left Gentile territory. They didn't want to pollute the Holy Land with Gentile dust.) But it is a testimony as well. When you share the Gospel, and someone rejects you, in reality, they are rejecting Jesus. They are rejecting Almighty God. And their judgment is coming. It is a terrible judgment but you don't have to administer it. You don't have to rant and rave. You don't have to scream at them and call them names. Just say, "okay, I'm going to move on." That's what Paul did.

But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." (Acts 18:6)

Or as my pastor used to say, "Well, I guess somebody has to go to hell." If a person has not been kicked to life by the Holy Spirit, no amount of arguing you do will bring them to saving faith. If a person is going to cling to his or her unbelief, you will not change their mind with your impeccable logic or your apologetic flair. Just move on. Don't cast your pearls before swine.

Apparently, the Apostles took this advice to heart. Look what they did.

So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them. (Mark 6:12-13)

They simply preached the gospel ... that people should repent because all people are sinners. You're a sinner. So am I.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

And that puts all people in eternal peril because the wages of sin is death, spiritual death, forever separation from the love of God, enduring eternal torment. But God loves you anyway.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

This Jesus, whom we have been reading about, went to the cross to pay for my sins, and yours too, if you will only believe.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

All you have to do is repent. Turn away from your sin and your sinful life, and turn toward the cross of Jesus Christ. Confess Him as Lord. Believe He was raised from the dead and is living right now. And let Him run your life.

When Jesus first sent out the twelve, He had not yet paid the penalty for our sins. So, the Apostles weren't able to give the whole story but they were faithful in what they did preach and as a result, I think we can imply that some came to faith. Not all; most probably just came for the show but some would receive, by faith, that most precious gift of salvation.

The measure of successful ministry is not the number of people who are converted. It's not the number of miracles you perform. It's not how visible your church is in the community. It's not the size of your church building. It is how faithful you are to your calling.

Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:2)

That's it. If you are a Christian, and you are faithful to your calling, you will face rejection. It is inevitable. Jesus told us it would happen. When it does, we need to put rejection in the rear-view mirror and move on. We need to focus on being faithful. When we do, we be fruitful. And when we finally stand before Christ to give an account, we will hear the words:

'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'
(Matthew 25:21)