

# Mark

## Chapter Six

### Introduction

In Nazareth, Jesus "could do no mighty work...except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them."<sup>1</sup>

In Bethsaida, "wherever He entered into villages, cities, or in the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well."<sup>2</sup>

The different *results* were because of the different *responses*: In Bethsaida the people believed Jesus could heal them, while in Nazareth "...[Jesus] marveled because of their unbelief."<sup>3</sup> Belief unlocked blessing. Unbelief blocked Jesus from blessing the people of Nazareth.

The word "unbelief" occurs three times in the Gospel of Mark: here in 6:6, then again in 9:24, and finally in 16:14. The verse we've read doesn't surprise us; we expect unbelievers to express unbelief. But when Jesus uses this word in Chapter Sixteen, He is talking to *believers*:

Mark 16:14 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Unbelievers harden their hearts through unbelief; but so do *believers* harden *their* hearts through unbelief!

The unbelief of unbelievers, and the unbelief of believers, is the theme of Chapter Six. As we study unbelief, it is my prayer that people in both groups would identify with the man in Mark 9:24, who said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

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<sup>1</sup>Mark 6:5

<sup>2</sup>Mark 6:56

<sup>3</sup>Mark 6:6

#1 Unbelief Hardens The Hearts Of Unbelievers  
You Are Sent-Out To Reach With The Gospel  
(6:1-29)

"Unbeliever" describes a type of person. An unbeliever is someone who has not put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God is always sending you out to unbelievers with the good news that their sins can be forgiven and that they can have eternal life.

"Unbelief" describes a typical reaction by unbelievers. They hear the good news but they don't believe it for themselves. For a variety of reasons, unbelief hardens their hearts.

In our text, Jesus and His twelve disciples are sent to unbelievers. They hear the good news but they don't believe it for themselves. Unbelief hardens their hearts, and at least three reasons are given: Because of their *stumbling*, because of their *scoffing*, and because of their *sinning*.

Unbelief hardens the hearts of unbelievers because of their stumbling:

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

Mark 6:2 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!

Mark 6:3 "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?" And they were offended at Him.

Mark 6:4 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 6:5 Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.

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

The people of Nazareth "were offended at Him." "Offended" is a fascinating word. It is used to describe the bait stick in a trap or snare, the stick that springs the trap. It has come to mean a *stumbling-block*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Hendriksen, *Mark*, p. 157 (footnote 147).

They were stumbled by the nature of Jesus. They could not deny the supernatural power of His words, His wisdom, and His works. Yet they knew Him as a "carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon"; they knew His sisters, too. In each of these descriptions there is a hint of why they were stumbled:

Jesus was a "carpenter" by trade. He was common, ordinary; not at all what you would expect in a Messiah. Isaiah said,

Isaiah 53:2 For He shall grow up before [the Lord] as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Many unbelievers are stumbled at the nature of Jesus - the humility of His incarnation....Unbelief hardens their hearts.

When you share with unbelievers, they are often astonished at God's power and anointing upon you. Yet they stumble at your lack of formal training or education...Unbelief hardens their hearts.

Jesus was "the Son of Mary." Jews were known as the sons of their fathers - *not* their mothers. This was a derisive, derogatory way of referring to Jesus' questionable birth!

Unbeliever's stumble at their need to be born-again by God's Spirit...

Jesus had uterine brothers and sisters. Earlier, when these had come to Him with Mary, Jesus said, "Who is my mother, or My brothers?" He was seen as a religious fanatic Who had abandoned His own family.

Unbelievers stumble at what it might mean to give their lives to God...

Because they were stumbled, their unbelief blocked God's blessings from all but a few in Nazareth.

Unbelief hardens the hearts of unbelievers because of their scoffing:

Jesus commissions His twelve disciples as apostles - men sent out Who act with His same authority. They are given the following instruction:

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

Mark 6:8 He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff; no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts;

Mark 6:9 but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics.

Mark 6:10 Also He said to them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place.

Mark 6:11 "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 6:12 So they went out and preached that people should repent.

Mark 6:13 And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.

These were particular instructions for this particular short-term mission. We should not look so much at the particulars, but at the principles:

You are sent-out by Jesus...

You are empowered by Jesus...

You are to walk by faith, seeking first the Kingdom of God...

Jews who traveled in Gentile lands would "shake off the dust under" their feet as a symbol that they did not want to defile the purity of Israel by their contact with pagans. For an apostle to shake off the dust in Jewish cities and villages meant that those people were no better than pagans - they were unbelievers even though Israelites by physical birth. While it is true that the apostles met with much success, the emphasis of Jesus' words is on the unbelief of some they would preach to:

Mark 6:11 "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!"

Much could be said about the unbelief of Sodom and Gomorrah. You could certainly say that they *scoffed* at God's coming judgment, because they did. Because they scoffed at the prospect of coming judgment, their unbelief hardened their hearts.

People today generally scoff at the prospect of God's coming judgment. The Apostle Peter indicated this would be a characteristic of the Last Days when he wrote,

2 Peter 3:3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,

2 Peter 3:4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

The gospel you are sent-out with must include the promise of God's final judgment. Those unbelievers who scoff at God's judgment have their hearts hardened by their unbelief.

Unbelief hardens the hearts of unbelievers because of their sinning:

Jesus' apostles went about the countryside preaching. This brought news of Jesus to Herod's attention. Herod was the ruler appointed by Rome over the region. Mark pauses to recount the story of John the Baptist's beheading by Herod. As he does you see unbelievers hardened against believing in Jesus because of their sinning.

Mark 6:14 Now King Herod heard of Him, for His name had become well known. And he said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him."

Mark 6:15 Others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets."

Mark 6:16 But when Herod heard, he said, "This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!"

Herod had a guilty, accusing conscience. Conscience is one of the ways God seeks to reach unbelievers. Herod's conscience bothered him because of his sin, and because of what he did to John:

Mark 6:17 For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her.

Mark 6:18 For John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Mark 6:19 Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not;

Mark 6:20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

### Herod heard the gospel, but preferred his sin to salvation.

Mark 6:21 Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee.

Mark 6:22 And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you."

Mark 6:23 He also swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom."

Mark 6:24 So she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist!"

Mark 6:25 Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

Mark 6:26 And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her.

Mark 6:27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison,

Mark 6:28 brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.

Mark 6:29 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

### Sin begets sin. Lust led to adultery. Adultery led to murder.

Think, also, of how sin had been instilled in her daughter by Herodias. It's hard to raise godly kids when your own life is guided by sinful desires.

Sin is not bad for you just because it is forbidden by God. Sin is forbidden by God because it is bad for you!

Unbelief hardens the hearts of unbelievers because of their sinning.

You may be an unbeliever, but you don't have to respond with unbelief! Paul the Apostle wrote in 1 Timothy 4:10,

1 Timothy 4:10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

Jesus died and is the Savior of the world! But not everyone is saved:

Romans 10:9 ...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

#2 Unbelief Hardens The Hearts Of Believers  
You Are Sent-Out With To Preach The Gospel  
(6:30-56)

Unbelief among believers may seem a contradiction to you. It is - but it nevertheless occurs. Remember, Jesus Himself said it was possible in Mark 16:14.

A "believer" is a type of person. A believer is someone who has personally trusted Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

"Unbelief" in a believer describes a typical reaction to God. God puts you in a position where your faith can be tested but you fail the test by your unbelief.

In our text, the disciples' faith was tested. They failed through unbelief. The areas *they* failed in through unbelief are the same areas *we* fail in through unbelief when our faith is tested. We fail by our unbelief in His *proxy*, in His *power*, and in His *presence*.

We fail by unbelief in His proxy:

"Proxy" is *the authority to act for another person*. When Jesus commissioned the apostles and sent them out He gave them His proxy. As they return, they give Jesus this report:

Mark 6:30 Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.

They had acted in His place, with His authority. Now Jesus wanted to teach them something more about acting in His place, with His authority, as His proxy. The lesson would take place in a secluded place, surrounded by needy multitudes.

Mark 6:31 And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

Mark 6:32 So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.

Mark 6:33 But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him.

Mark 6:34 And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. **So He began to teach them many things.**

Mark's gospel presents Jesus as the ruler Who serves. Servanthood is a key theme. Once again you see that Jesus and His disciples had little time for themselves, little time even to eat. Commentators point out the need for rest, but they hardly ever got their "needed" rest! Expect to be busy serving your Lord. Rest is an exception.

There were in this crowd about five thousand men. The crowd certainly exceeded ten thousand counting women and children. The disciples were overwhelmed.

Mark 6:35 When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, "This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late.

Mark 6:36 "Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat."

Mark 6:37 But He answered and said to them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?"

The disciples acted like many church committees. They were practical and rational in concluding that the people should be sent away to take care of their own needs. A church committee has been described as a group of people who individually can do nothing, and who collectively think that nothing can be done!

Jesus said, "You give them something to eat." It was a lesson in His proxy, in their acting in His authority. He wanted them to look to Him as the source and to themselves as His instrument of blessing.

Beloved, *you* are the Lord's proxy! You are commissioned and sent out with His authority. "You give them something to eat." Jesus wants you to look to Him as the source and to yourself as His instrument of blessing.

Unbelief hardens our hearts when we fail to recognize God's proxy in our lives. Jesus still puts His dear disciples in overwhelming situations. You might be in a situation that seems overwhelming. If

so, believe that God has sovereignly put you there - chosen the situation with you in mind to bless those around you as they see you act in His authority.

As Jesus miraculously feeds the multitude, you see that,

We fail by unbelief in His power:

Mark 6:38 But He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they found out they said, "Five, and two fish."

Mark 6:39 Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass.

Mark 6:40 So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties.

Mark 6:41 And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all.

Mark 6:42 So they all ate and were filled.

Mark 6:43 And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish.

Mark 6:44 Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.

The disciples had seen Jesus raise the dead and rule the elements. They should have known His power was sufficient for their situation. You and I believe Jesus' has power over all things; why do we sometimes express unbelief at His ability to work?

Part of the answer is in Jesus saying, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." Jesus wanted them to offer what they had, limited as it was, before He would bless them.

We fail by unbelief in His presence:

Mark 6:45 Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away.

Mark 6:46 And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray.

Mark 6:47 Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land.

Mark 6:48 Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.

Mark 6:49 And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out;

Mark 6:50 for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

Mark 6:51 Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled.

Mark 6:52 For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.

In a previous storm, Jesus was with them in the boat. In a very real way, Jesus was "with" them this time, too - only they didn't recognize His presence! He saw them through the dark, stormy night, and He accompanied them on the waves.

We fail by unbelief in the presence of Jesus in our storms. He sees you through the darkest storms; He is there walking beside you.

## Conclusion

The chapter ends with the belief of many in Gennesaret:

Mark 6:53 When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there.

Mark 6:54 And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him,

Mark 6:55 ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was.

Mark 6:56 Wherever He entered into villages, cities, or in the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.

Remember, unbelief had blocked the blessings of God in Nazareth. Belief unlocked the blessings of God at Gennesaret!

Unbelief is present in unbelievers - *but it need not persist!* Don't be stumbled at the coming of Jesus into the world; don't scoff at the coming judgment of the world; don't prefer your sin. "Believe in your heart that God has raised [Jesus] from the dead, [and] you will be saved."<sup>5</sup>

Unbelief is *also* present in believers - *but it need not persist!* See yourself as sent-out with the gospel. Jesus has given you His authority; He can give you His anointing; and He will accompany you.

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<sup>5</sup>Romans 10:9

