

# First Serve

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Studies in the Gospel of Mark

Text

Mark 6:1-13

Topic

Jesus sends the twelve out two-by-two and tells them to shake off the dust under their feet anywhere they are not welcomed

Title

*"In God We Dust"*

Introduction

Who would you cast to play the role of Jesus?

In the 2014 movie *Son of God*, Jesus is played by Portuguese actor Diogo Morgado, whose appearance has been compared to Brad Pitt and a young Marlon Brando. He inspired a twitter hashtag of "Hot Jesus."

Jim Caviezel is the most recognizable Jesus in acting history. He played Jesus in *The Passion Of The Christ*, which is the most successful Christian movie of all time, and number twenty-seven all-time among all domestic films.

Did you know that Christian Bale, of *Batman* fame, played Jesus in the movie *Mary, Mother Of Jesus*?

I hesitate to mention it, but Will Ferrell portrayed Jesus in the movie *Superstar*, although he was on screen only briefly.

Who would I cast to play Jesus? In his thirties, I would have cast Dustin Hoffman. He's Jewish, he's plain-looking, and he's about the right height at 5' 5" tall.

(Jewish men in the first century were short by our standards; so were the Romans. We know this from skeletal remains, and other archaeology).

**The people of Nazareth, among whom Jesus grew-up, thought He was miscast in the role of their Messiah.**

Despite His extensive resume of works that gave solid evidence He was the promised deliverer, they rejected Jesus. We're told they were "offended" by Him, and we'll see some of the reasons why.

I want us to see something else that is brought out in the text. I want us to see Jesus in His relationship to God the Holy Spirit.

The people of Nazareth will ask, "Where did this Man get these things?", referring to His *wisdom* and His *works*. He got them from being filled with, and being led by, God the Holy Spirit.

R.A. Torrey said, "Jesus Christ is the one perfect manifestation in history of the complete work of the Holy Spirit in [a] man."

*We want to see the complete work of the Holy Spirit manifested in Jesus because that same Holy Spirit is given to each of us as His followers.*

I'll organize my thoughts around two questions: #1 Do You See What The Holy Spirit Can Do Through A Man?, and #2 Do You See What The Holy Spirit Can Do Through You?

## #1 Do You See What The Holy Spirit Can Do Through A Man?

(v1-6)

The headline read, *Americans who foiled terrorist gunman on Paris-bound train get hero's welcome with parade in their California hometown.*

It's the least we could do to honor them for what they did to save lives.

You'd think the Nazareth News would publish a story with the headline, *Local man who foils legions of demons and heals multitudes gets hero's welcome with parade in hometown.*

It didn't happen. Instead of claiming Jesus as their favorite Son, Nazareth made several disclaimers and distanced themselves from Jesus.

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

His "own country" is His hometown of Nazareth.

Most people familiar with the few details given in the Bible about the early life of Jesus are aware of the fact that following the visit from the wise men, Joseph and Mary took Jesus and fled to Egypt to hide Him from the murder of the children ordered by Herod (Matthew 2:13-14).

Later, after Herod's death, Jesus' family departed Egypt for Nazareth where they made their home (Matthew 2:19-23).

It's hard to find solid facts about first century Nazareth, but one source said, "Nazareth was a relatively isolated village in the time of Jesus with a population less than two hundred."

Mar 6:2 And when the Sabbath had come...

Stop there for a moment. Jesus returned to Nazareth and, whatever day He arrived, nothing noteworthy happened until the Sabbath had come.

Everywhere Jesus went, He was thronged by people upon His arrival. Huge crowds came out to Him. Not so in Nazareth.

It's mind-boggling. How could this miracle-working, demon-defeating, wisdom-wielding local boy be so ignored?

You could ask that very same question today. Not only do we have the historical record, the evidence, that Jesus did these things. We can factually say that He rose from the dead.

Men still ignore Him. They go about their business as if it didn't matter that the sinless Son of God took their place on the Cross so that they could receive the forgiveness of their sins and live forever in Heaven.

Mar 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

At the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus went in to the synagogue in Nazareth and read a passage in Isaiah that described the works that the Messiah would perform. Stopping in mid-sentence, Jesus said, of Himself, "today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

It didn't go over very well. We read in the Gospel of Luke,

Luk 4:28 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

Luk 4:29 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.

Luk 4:30 Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.

Jesus returned to Nazareth having performed those many mighty works. His neighbors don't try to kill Him this time, but they reject Him just as resoundingly as they had before.

They had to acknowledge the works themselves, and that is, perhaps, why they were less inclined to try to kill Jesus. He wasn't claiming He'd perform them; He'd actually done it.

It sounds like they are going to receive Him, as they praise the works He's undeniably performed. So what was it that offended them? Several things are listed.

Mar 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?" So they were offended at Him.

They had watched Jesus grow up, from a boy, until He was around thirty years old. During that time He did no mighty works, but instead worked as a "carpenter." The insinuation is that Jesus had no professional training for the things He was doing.

They were offended by the thought that their Messiah could be a lowly carpenter. Jesus' extraordinary works were overshadowed by His ordinary, even sub-ordinary, background.

It's odd that they would think that, because the Old Testament is full of heroes that had no training, who came from ordinary circumstances. King David, from whom the Messiah would come, was a shepherd boy when he was first anointed.

You know what this tells me? No matter how many examples we have of God using ordinary people, we still look for, and prefer, formal education and training.

We're not looking for God's anointing as much as we are for man's appointing. It's a hard habit to break, but break it we must.

Next they called Jesus "the Son of Mary." It was a rather mean insult. Men were always known as sons of their father - *unless the father was not known because the son was illegitimate.*

The people of Nazareth did not believe in the virgin birth. They were offended by the thought that their Messiah had a significant moral stain on His name.

We could point to the Scriptures and see folks who were morally compromised who were nevertheless used by God.

Rahab the harlot assisted the two Hebrew spies when they were being hunted in Jericho. She found herself in the physical line of the Messiah.

It's one thing to look back on Rahab with wonder; it's another to be contemporary with her, and think highly of her.

Evangelists often take liberties with a Scripture from the Book of Hebrews and say that Jesus Christ saves "from the guttermost." No moral stain is too deep to be beyond the Lord's forgiveness.

The citizens of Nazareth next listed Jesus' brothers by name, and mentioned more than one sister. (In Matthews Gospel, the word "all," qualifying sisters, can mean three or more).

I don't want to get off on a rabbit trail, but the plain reading of this is that after Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had other kids - at least six or seven. These were not children from a previous marriage of Joseph's, because that would make them all older than Jesus, and there's no indication anywhere in the Gospels He was the least in His earthly family.

There is no biblical basis for the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that Mary remained a perpetual virgin.

I'm not sure exactly why the Messiah having a slew of siblings would be offensive. Maybe one of them was like Jimmy Carter's brother, Billy, who was known for his embarrassing public behavior; and for *Billy Beer*.

Mark's readers would remember that a few verses earlier Jesus' family had come seeking Him, to try to bring Him home, because they thought He was crazy.

They would be offended by the thought that their Messiah was crazy. No one wants to think that their commander-in-chief is mentally incompetent... Do we???

Lots of Bible characters had families that held them in contempt. Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him, and instead sold him into slavery.

Mar 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."

Your family and friends know the real you. That's why, when doing background checks, law enforcement will talk to anyone and everyone they can find who has any knowledge of you.

Now in Jesus' case, there were no negatives, no faults to find. But that didn't stop the people from finding fault.

Let that be an encouragement to you. People can find fault with your walk with the Lord even when there is no fault to find.

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

God wanted to do a "mighty work" through Jesus in Nazareth. The people didn't come out for it. God showed up but the people were a no-show.

Do you know someone who needs God to do a "mighty work?" Maybe they are struggling with some addiction... Or their marriage is failing... Or their finances are a disaster.



You and I know that God wants to do a mighty work for them. We know it because He's done it for us. You were once addicted... Your marriage was a bust... Your finances were shot... And God intervened.

More-and-more people are coming by the church office during the week, looking for help. We do our best to help those we can, but we try to tell all of them to come not just to the office, but to our services. It is here, gathered with the people of God, under the authority of the Word of God, that they will find the greatest help - both physically and spiritually. Instead, they are no-shows.

"Except" He did heal some. That's a pretty big "except," if you were one of them. Mark was emphasizing how much more the Lord could have done, to help people, if they had simply come to Him.

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

Fresno is a city that gets a bad rap, don't you think? So much so that there have been campaigns to change its image. One of them was, "Fresno - Smile when you say that."

Nazareth got a bad rap in the first century. The common adage was, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

The answer was a resounding, "Yes!" Nevertheless the people preferred their reputation to repenting and receiving the Lord.

"Where did this Man get these things?" Jesus' wisdom, and His works, were things beyond a carpenter with a questionable birth whose own family thought Him to be insane.

Jesus got them from His relationship to God the Holy Spirit. He'd been born of the Spirit and baptized by the Spirit. He was filled with the Spirit. He was constantly led by the Spirit.

No one had ever seen a man like that before. While the Holy Spirit certainly came upon believers in the Old Testament, not until Jesus was there ever a man under His complete control.

## **Jesus promised you that same Holy Spirit.**

### **#2 Do You See What The Holy Spirit Can Do Through You?**

(v7-13)

Jesus commissions His closest disciples to go out and perform similar works to those He had been doing.

He was showing us what was to come, after He was ascended back into Heaven. He would go on to tell us that we - His followers - would do "greater works" after He was gone, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Mar 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.**

Do you suppose that the disciples liked the pairings Jesus chose? Just wondering, because it's human nature to complain.

You're bound to be paired-up at times with people, and in situations, you don't really like. Most often (not always) it is God's choice to grow you into greater, deeper, spiritual maturity.

Don't always be looking for a way out, or a different pairing.

"Two by two" was practical as much as it was spiritual. They'd be traveling, and that was always dangerous. It's nice to have someone whose got your back in ministry.

Mark emphasizes they were given power over demons. As we've pointed out before, there was no mention of demonic possession whatsoever in the Old Testament. Unless my math is faulty, the Old Testament spans about four thousand years of human history, starting with creation week. Then there are four hundred years between the end of the Old Testament and the New Testament era.

No demonic possessions for almost five thousand years, then, "*Bam!*" At the coming of Jesus into the world, it seemed as though demons were everywhere, possessing people.

It must have been a calculated satanic strategy to try to counter the effect of having the Son of God, filled with the Spirit of God, on the earth.

Instead of Jesus going out alone against the demons, there were now twelve more. As I said - it's showing us things to come.

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

The instructions Jesus gave them about their clothing communicate traveling light because of the urgency of getting from place to place.

We ought to travel to Heaven through this world as lightly as possible. That will mean something different to everyone, but it's worth meditating upon.

Since the coming of Jesus for His church is imminent, I'd say there is an urgency in our ministering to folks.

They didn't need money or food, but were to depend upon local hospitality.

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

Travelers would be taken in by locals and shown hospitality. The disciples were to be content with the first invitation - not holding out for, or later switching to, better accommodations. That way the focus could remain on the ministry, and they could not be accused of taking advantage of folks for their own benefit.

Mar 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!"

Devout Jews would shake the dust off after they'd been in Gentile territory to symbolize that they had not picked-up any spiritual defilements from being there. For a Jew to do this in a Jewish setting was saying that they were acting like Gentiles - like people outside of the chosen nation.

Sodom and Gomorrah were Gentile cities that had very little of the Word of God. What they had was enough for God to judge them - which He did.

The first century Jews had the entire Old Testament, and their Messiah was physically on the scene, with plenty of proof it was really Him. Thus they would be held more accountable than largely ignorant Gentiles.

Mar 6:12 So they went out and preached that people should repent.

Don't lose sight of the mission - calling people to "repent."

As far as theologians go, you can't go too wrong with Charles Ryrie. Regarding what it means to repent, he wrote:

Many understand the term repentance to mean "turning from sin." This is not the biblical definition of repentance. In the Bible, the word repent means "to change one's mind." The Bible also tells us that true repentance will result in a change of actions. Acts 26:20 declares, "I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." **The full biblical definition of repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action.**

To repent, with regard to salvation, means to change your mind about Jesus Christ.

No one can repent unless God grants repentance. All of salvation, including repentance and faith, is a result of God drawing us.

By grace, He does draw us. All of us. Jesus said that if He be lifted up on the Cross, He would draw **all** men to Himself.

John 3:16 is so famous, so often quoted, that we forget about its context. Jesus referred us back to an episode in the Old Testament Book of Numbers.

Joh 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
Joh 3:15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.  
Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites starting complaining against God. The Lord sent fiery serpents among them, as a judgment. The bite of the serpents was fatal.

There was a remedy. Moses made a bronze serpent and put it on a tall pole. Whoever got bit by a serpent, if they simply looked at the bronze serpent, they would be saved.

Who could be saved? *Anyone* and *everyone* who looked to that pole.

By the Cross of Jesus Christ, God draws all men to Himself. *Anyone* and *everyone* can be saved.

**But they must "believe in Him."**

So, while it is true that no one can come to salvation unless God draws them, God draws all men by the Cross.

We say that His grace, although resistible, frees the will of all men to either believe or reject the offer of salvation.

Cutting through all the doctrine - We preach repentance and faith. If you are not a Christian, you need to repent of your sin, receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior - made possible by the Cross at Calvary on which Jesus died for the sins of the world.

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

This is something new. This is the first mention of "oil" in Mark's Gospel. In Jesus' day, olive oil was often used medicinally. But it was also used symbolically to represent the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Prophets and priests and kings were anointed with oil to symbolize their need to depend upon the Holy Spirit.

We still sometimes anoint with oil when we pray for folks - especially the sick - since that is something the Letter of James recommends.

Whether we use oil or not, we recognize that we are dependent upon, and therefore submitted to, the work of the Spirit. Sometimes that work is to heal, but often times that work is to have us bring glory to God out of patiently enduring our suffering.

Jesus commissioned the twelve. After He rose from the dead, in what we call the Great Commission, He commissioned every disciple to "Go!" preaching the Word, making disciples and baptizing them.

He promised to be with us on that mission, and He fulfills that promise by the Holy Spirit living in us, and coming upon us, and filling us, for the work of the ministry.

Do you see what the Holy Spirit can do through you?

Nonbelievers are a lot like the people in Nazareth. They think of things that discredit you, so they don't have to think about the Gospel you're preaching.

You're in good company:

1Co 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

1Co 1:27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

1Co 1:28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

1Co 1:29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

We've got it backwards. We still tend to think that the more we know, and the more experience we have, the better we can serve the Lord.

God has cast **you** in the role of little-Christ - which is what the word "Christian" means. Don't think someone else would be better cast.

It's the role of a lifetime.



