

Mark 6:1-30 | The Cost and Commission of Discipleship

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When I was a senior here at the university, I produced a documentary on how the internet is reshaping the isolated and rural culture of Montana. And one of the things we noticed is that the internet was bringing a huge cultural force to Montana which hadn't been present before.

We live in an era where cultural movements are birthed largely over social media. We have seen things as big as government overhauls in Egypt, and as trivial as planking. Remember planking?

It used to be huge, but now it is this weird thing we look back on. But why did it fade out? Mainly because its followers lost interest and stopped talking about it.

This is true for all social movements. I read an article in the Harvard Business review that gave some essentials which must be present for a social movement to succeed and some of those were: decentralization of leadership, sustainable chatter, and advocacy.

If a group is to create anything sustainable, its proponents must be committed to those things. What culture would call activists, the Bible calls disciples. And those three things are equally as valuable in discipleship as they are in business.

Tonight we are going to look at discipleship, what it means to be a disciple, and why Christianity is one of the oldest and most influential social movements in human history. We are going to be looking at Mark 6, and the summary and outline of what we are going to be seeing is this: Discipleship is something started by Christ, who empowered his church to face persecution and plenty for the fame of his name.

Let's **pray**.

Last week we saw Jesus presenting three powerful proofs as to who he was, and even though this was a pre-Twitter era, the news was spreading. In one day Jesus calmed a storm, cast 2,000 demons out of a man, and brought a dead girl back to life. 140 characters or not, that news gets out.

Immediately following these proofs, Jesus travels southwest from the Sea of Galilee and heads to his hometown. This is where we pick up our story: **Mark 6:1-6**

I was watching The Office last night, because that's what I do. And in it Michael had called his mom to tell him that he was engaged, even though he wasn't. And when he tells his mom, her answer is "No you're not." Michael says, "Why do you always say that?" and she responds by saying, "Because you're never actually engaged."

Michael is a weirdo and his mom new that more than anyone else so when the news came that he was engaged she doubted it. Jesus has a similar thing happen here with his hometown. He is teaching these wonderful things, doing these amazing acts, and they are like, "Wait a minute. We know this man. There is nothing special about him. He has a family, we watched him grow, how can he have this sort of power!"

Their familiarity with Jesus had actually blinded them to the power of who Jesus really was. And Jesus is amazed at their unbelief. Mark is turning the tables here, for the first time it is not the crowds amazed at Jesus teaching, Jesus is amazed at the crowd's unbelief.

Mark says that Jesus could do no mighty work there. And that's worth dwelling on because Jesus has a track record of mighty works. Was he just so sad that his God powers were weak that day? No. We know why Jesus didn't do any mighty works because Luke fills us in: **Luke 4:28-30**.

I have already told you that the thrust of this sermon is about discipleship. Well in the drama of discipleship this is the inciting incident. This is the catalyst to the story. For the first time in the narrative, Jesus is being inhibited from doing his work by hostile crowds.

Jesus came to preach and to heal, but people are no longer wanting that. Jesus is getting run out of his hometown, and eventually he will be run straight onto the cross because people can't handle the message and works of Christ.

How will the ultimate work of Christ get done? Well, Christ isn't working alone. He could have. In the same way Gandalf could have dispatched the ring on his own, in the same way Aslan could have saved Narnia on his own, Christ could have accomplished all he wanted to do on his own, but in his wisdom Christ chose to invite us to be co-laborers with us.

We saw earlier in Mark that Jesus called twelve disciples to be with him. Jesus is Lord both of the ends and of the means. And Jesus' means is to use men who labor under his power.

This is the first point tonight: **Discipleship is something started by Christ.**

If Jesus' rejection is the inciting incident, we should be looking forward towards the active response. Look at the response to Jesus' rejection: **Mark 6:7-13**.

When I first took over leading GCF we had a BBQ in a park where the guy who was stepping away from leadership was going to introduce me. So I came and I showed up, and he introduced me and then he said: "Tyler is now going to come up and share with us a short message." And I had no idea I was going to do that.

You can imagine how the disciples felt here. So far in the gospel of Mark they disciples have done almost nothing when it comes to ministry, and they had just seen Jesus, their leader ran out of his own hometown, and Jesus turns to them and says: "Your turn."

But this is why Jesus called them. Jesus calls people to send people. And Jesus never sends people without first calling them to himself.

This is the second point tonight: **Discipleship is something started by Christ who empowered his church.**

In one sense these men, and we ourselves are totally underqualified for what Christ has called us to do, and yet at the same time we are more than capable to do it. Why? Because Christ has empowered us.

In this passage Christ gives them authority, and then he tells them not to take anything. Why? Because Christ will provide provision for their task. Jesus will push us to go and do things that we are not comfortable with, but he does so only after empowering us with his gospel, and providing for us in his strength.

Jesus doesn't call you to be with him only in the safety of the church, he calls you to be with him and go out for him. Jesus in his wisdom and grace has commissioned his people to go places where he is not. The person of Jesus is not in your dorm, that's why you are there. The person of Jesus doesn't work where you work, but you do. This is God's plan. This is what it means to be a disciple. We are called into Christ in order to be empowered and sent out by Christ.

And look at what happened: **Mark 6:12-13**. These men were inexperienced, underqualified, and yet through the power of the gospel they were able to be faithful and effective witnesses for Christ. This is true for you as well.

This is discipleship. Being called to Christ, sent from Christ, to labor for Christ. And the beauty is through the disciples work look at what happened: **Mark 6:14**.

Do you see what just happened? Jesus' ministry was limited, so he sent out the twelve, and as the twelve are doing disciple like things, Jesus is being made known. Through the work of the church the church is not known Jesus is. Through your work as a disciple you are not becoming known, Jesus is.

Now Mark does something interesting with this text. Because immediately after the twelve are sent out, Mark reflects back on the death of John the Baptist. Look at this story: **Mark 6:14-30**.

Kind of an odd interjection into the story line of Mark, so what is Mark trying to accomplish by reminding us of John's death here? Immediately before this story we hear the report of the disciples work, and immediately after it we hear a report again (Mark 6:30).

What John is doing here is he is setting the table for the gambit of discipleship. Discipleship does experience good results. You will see fruit, there will be times of plenty, but there will also be times of persecution.

This is the final point tonight: **Discipleship is something started by Christ who empowered his church to face persecution and plenty for the fame of his name.**

The disciples experienced momentary success through the proclamation of their message, but John was killed for his. And yet through both, Jesus was made known.

Discipleship is not an easy walk in the park, but neither is it a task too difficult for us. And this sandwiching of success and hardship is to do two things for us. 1.) It is to frame our expectations of following Christ. It is good, but it is hard. 2.) It is here to encourage us.

I want us to be mindful of who John the Baptist was. He had his own band of disciples, he also preached a message of repentance, he also, like Jesus was an itinerant preacher who taught the masses. He was put on trial before leaders, and killed by men who caved to peer pressure.

John's life in just about every way mimicked Jesus'. In fact look at what Jesus himself says in **Matt 11:11a**. No one born of women is greater than John the Baptist. He was the man of all men. But look at how Jesus finishes that verse: **Matt 11:11**.

No one born of women has ever been greater than John the Baptist, but even the least born of God is far greater. Why? Because John proclaimed a message faithfully. But John was just a place holder. John's job was never to be Christ, his job, like a true Disciple was to point to Christ.

So why are we who are in Christ greater than John the Baptist? Because we have seen the glory of Christ on the cross. John never had the opportunity to see the fullness of Christ, because he was murdered before it happened. John had a message. John had a great message, but we have a greater motivation. John's disciples came and took his body to a grave. Jesus' disciples came and took his message to the nations. That's our encouragement.

What John hoped for, we have seen. We have seen a savior who came to this earth, who lived a perfect life, who bore our sins, who died in our place, who rose again to release the pangs of death. We have seen this savior who not only forgives us, but purposes us for his glory.

We have seen a savior who calls us to himself, and then sends us for himself.

Why is the cross of Christ the greatest social movement the world has ever seen? Because we have a better motivation. Because Christ has removed the scales from our eyes and we see the beauty of his salvation and everything else is secondary to that.

Why were the disciples able to not just look the part, but act the part? Because Jesus not only called them, he empowered them.

So here is the deal here. In this text we saw three groups of people. Which group are you?

Are you a Nazarene? Are you someone who sees the words and work of Jesus and you reject him? These are the people who say, he is just a man, this is just a fairy tale. How can a man do what Jesus is doing? And so you choose not to follow him.

Are you Herod? Look back at **Mark 6:20**. Herod heard what John the Baptist was saying, he was amused by it, he was troubled by it, but he heard it gladly. But when he looked at John, and when he saw John pointing to Jesus, it didn't click. Is Jesus a novel concept, and an entertaining idea. Are you grateful for a moral leader, do you like the "good people" that Christianity produces, but are unwilling to follow Jesus for yourself?

Or are you like the disciples. Sent out into the world with nothing but the power and message of Christ. But so motivated by the power of Christ that you are willing to do whatever it takes to be a disciple.

You see the Nazarenes refused to follow Christ because he was just a man, Herod refused to follow Christ because he was just a novelty. But the disciples followed Christ because he was their savior.

And out of that realization the disciples were content to face persecution because they knew that it was worth it. Out of that realization the disciples preached the message of repentance and salvation because they knew it worked.

Phil 3:7-8. To follow Christ is not simply to believe, but it is to be. And to be Christian is to be a disciple. To be Christian is to do hard things out of the reality of who Christ is and what he has done.

So if you claim to be one of the disciples my question is: Are you doing the work of a disciple?

Christ has empowered us with the power of the gospel. We have something to give away, but what has God granted you skills, passions or circumstances which allow you to give that away this week. I challenge you to find that outlet, and do Jesus like things.

It is hard. But it is worth it. G.K. Chesterton once said: "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and not tried." But, Christ has carried the ultimate weight of our sin, and he has commissioned us to do hard work, for our good, and for his glory. Repent and follow him.