

## **Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**

Mark 6:1-13

Even Jesus “wondered at their unbelief.” Jesus visited His home town of Nazareth to teach. He was rejected by most.

We are tempted to blame them: “How could they not accept and trust Him?” What about us? Do we really believe that Jesus can do mighty things in our lives? Or do we accept that Jesus is our Savior, our “pass” into heaven, without recognizing that He is our Lord and God today?

There are two gifts from Jesus at work in our lives. One is justification—that is, our reunion with God; the forgiveness of our sin through the death of Christ on the cross. The second gift, the one that we often leave unopened and unexplored, is sanctification—the process of becoming more like our Master every day.

When we fail to seek Jesus in our daily lives, we fail to proclaim Him “Lord.” While our justification is secured by the gift of faith, our sanctification can lie motionless for years. When we fail to yield to the Holy Spirit to guide us and provide our needs, we end up trying to run on our own power (which is at best questionable) and missing out on growing stronger in Christ. At such times, do we, like the people of Nazareth, cause Jesus to wonder at our unbelief?

On the other hand, what about those who believed Jesus and became His companions—the apostles. His message to them can be summed up as “Keep moving and telling the good news to anyone who will listen.”

It wasn’t just the apostles that He sent. He sends us too. Not just the pastors or the elders, but we—the pew sitters.

We are to share the Good News with our friends. When did you last share Christ with an unbeliever? (Swearing doesn’t count).

Speaking about our faith isn’t easy, but few will discover our faith in Christ through osmosis.

Only God has the power to make you and me tellers of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Ask Him!

***Join a regular Bible study—it will change your life!***

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

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Mark 6:1-13

1. The Gospel writer refers to Jesus’ hometown. What place was known as His “home”? (Mark 1:9; Luke 2:39-40) What do you think Jesus’ life was like growing up in His hometown?
  2. What prevented those who knew Jesus best from believing in Him and worshipping Him?
  3. What instructions did Jesus give to the Twelve? What were they to do if their message was rejected?
  4. How do we know that the disciples’ mission was “successful”? Who or what was the source of their power?
- For Family Reflection**
5. Why do you think the disciples went out “two by two”? Can you think of a time where the presence or support of a partner was important to you?
  6. To whom is Jesus sending you? Where is He sending you? What power does He give you?

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 6:14-29

Now Mark tells us about John the Baptist's arrest. Herod Antipas arrested John. Serving under Rome, Herod ruled a part of what had been his father's (Herod the Great) kingdom. The unhappy marriage that John condemned was almost incest. Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great; Herodias was the grand-daughter of Herod the Great by another of his wives. Herodias, living in Rome, married Herod Antipas' half brother, Philip, her half uncle. Herod Antipas, visiting Rome, seduced his sister-in-law/niece from his half brother and married her. In doing so, he smashed the Old Testament marriage laws. This is what John had been loudly condemning. To charge a typical Jew of such a crime would have caused much discussion; to accuse the king cost John his life.

Herod feared John and the people who followed and listened to him. Herodias had no such concern. Her daughter's dance for her stepfather could be the way to her revenge. Herod's enjoyment of his stepdaughter's dance was no doubt more than an appreciation for great art, and his statement that he would honor her any wish trapped him.

John perfectly understood the danger that his words brought him. Yet, he spoke out anyway.

In our own society, there are many things going on that go against God's demands for behavior; even the denying of God's existence or His truth, or even His love. Abortion, adultery, homosexuality, lying, cheating on taxes or tests, destroying human embryos, the belief that there is no right religion—that there is no right or wrong—are only some of the sins that plague our culture. Some of these sins are even under the protection of our laws.

What do John's story and our culture have to do with the Gospel of Christ? Everything!

We are challenged to be John—to comfort those seeking God and challenge others to change. Not through hatred and condemnation, but by speaking honestly and with Jesus' love.

***Get to know God through His Word this week!***

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 6:14-29

1. What explanations were offered for the person and power of Jesus?
2. Review the ministry of John the Baptist. (Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-20). What was John's message? Why was John's ministry so important to the ministry and message of Jesus?
3. Why was John a threat to Herod and Herodias? How did they rid their world of John's and his challenge to their lifestyle?
4. Read Matthew's account of this story in Matthew 14:1-12. Read the notes on Herod, Herodias, and the daughter (Salome) from the Concordia self-study Bible or another resource. How would you describe them?

### For Family Reflection

5. Is speaking out against sin still unpopular? Are Christians still persecuted for speaking the truth?
6. Can you think of others who gave their life for speaking the truth of God's word? Do you think you would be willing to stay true to Jesus even if your life depended on it?

## Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 6:30-44

At the beginning of this passage, Jesus and the disciples are trying to withdraw for a time of renewal and rest, but the crowds discover them and thousands come for a glimpse of Jesus and the hope of hearing Him speak, or perhaps even seeing a miracle in their lives.

Jesus and His apostles were tired. We also get tired, and it is necessary for us to get away from all of the stress and hard work of life in general and even from our work as volunteers in the church and community. But, as with Jesus and the apostles, the time of rest isn't permanent—there is no retirement from our calling as God's agents in His world.

In the Old Testament, men like Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah got so tired that they sat down and expressed this feeling to God—"I've had it. I'm done with this. I quit." Each time their frustration peaked, God did two things. First, He showed them compassion and understanding concerning their need. Second, He sent them back to work.

Today, we must set aside time to rest, just as Jesus needed to do. As we step back and stop trying so hard to do it all, we realize that Jesus has the strength and patience to comfort us in times of frustration. He has the power to enable us to get back to the ministry in which He has placed us, whether it is teaching, preaching, shoveling, sweeping, or praying. In today's passage, we find a proof of His ability to take care of all our stress and worry...

Has Jesus ever said to you, "Well, what do you think we should do about this?" What would you have said when Jesus told the apostles, "You feed them?" Somehow our imaginations could never envision the possibility. The apostles couldn't "think outside the box" to use a modern phrase. They couldn't imagine that Jesus could feed 5,000 "men" plus all of the women and children present, and have leftovers.

As we struggle through today's problems, worries, and frustrations, Jesus is always there, not to pat us on the back, but to provide real answers. He has promised that our needs will be met. Rest in Him, trust Him, rely on Him, seek Him in prayer, and act on His promises.

***Join a regular Bible study—it will strengthen your life!***

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## Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 6:30-44

1. Why would Jesus seek some privacy for Himself and His disciples (vs. 31-32)?
2. What do we learn about Jesus in vs. 34? Was Jesus concerned only about the physical and emotional needs of the crowd?
3. Compare Mark's account of this miracle with that of the other Gospel writers. (Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:5-13). What differences do we see in the accounts? Why do you think this miracle is mentioned in all four Gospels?
4. What was so amazing about collecting twelve baskets of leftovers?

### For Family Reflection

5. What example does Jesus provide us in 41? Is it your family custom to offer a prayer of thanksgiving at every meal?
6. What was the disciples' solution to a hungry crowd? Do we sometimes limit Jesus' presence and power? What happens when we turn our predicaments over to Jesus?

## **Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**

Mark 6:45-56

Before discussing the spiritual message of today's passage, you have a question to answer—and it is a serious one. Did Jesus walk on the water?

Many Christians today would reply, "Of course not—not *really*." It all comes back to a question Jesus asked the disciples at another time in His ministry—"Who do you say that I am?" You see, if Jesus' separation from God on the cross did not really pay for all the sins of mankind; if He did not walk out of the tomb, even if He were not born of a virgin, then His ministry is of no more value than that of Mahatma Gandhi or Confucius. His religion, as many in our world already proclaim, is no more real than Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, or Scientology.

But, if you believe that He, as one Person, could pay for all sin; that He did walk out of His tomb; that He was born of a virgin; then why would walking on water seem so impossible? Just a thought.

The apostles were terrified at the sight of Jesus walking past them on the rough seas. Then Jesus calmed them and the sea. He again demonstrated to them that, far from fearing Him, in Him they could always find peace. He was still teaching them that He was the Son of God, their Savior, and their Master. He would get into the boat with them, no matter how impossible the situation seemed. He would provide the answers to their confusion. He will do the same for us.

Verse 52 says that the apostles' hearts were "hardened". Commentator John D. Grassmick has an answer for this difficult verse. He says that they were not hardened like the Pharisees, but were still finding it difficult to realize that the Son of God was their traveling companion and teacher.

It is wonderful to know that even the apostles could be as foggy as we are at times. Happily, we can come to know what they came to know: no matter how hopeless life seems, Jesus keeps loving us, encouraging us, answering our doubts, and helping us know Him better. He really was and is the Miracle Worker, the Son of God, the Man who walked on water.

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## **Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**

Mark 6:45-56

1. What does Jesus do after a very busy time of earthly ministry? (vs. 46) What can we learn from Him?
2. What was the disciples' first reaction to the stormy seas and the "ghost"? What was Jesus' solution?
3. Why were the disciples still ignorant about their Master and "amazed" by His power?

### **For Family Reflection**

4. At what times in your life have you been afraid? How do Jesus' words in vs. 50 help you?
5. If you could approach Jesus for yourself or for another (vs. 55) what would you seek of Him? What promises does He give you?
6. The lessons for the past four weeks have come from Mark chapter 6. Review the events of this busy chapter. What did you learn about Jesus?