

Mark 6:1-29 - Of Whom the World was Not Worthy

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Introduction - World history and recent events repeatedly and painfully demonstrate the utter depravity of mankind's heart when it is separated from God. The news this week of Charlie Kirk's assassination causes us to mourn and grieve the evils of the human heart, pray earnestly for the ones who are suffering, be thankful for all that we have, pause as we reflect on our own morality and what we'll be remembered for, and ponder what our purpose is. How can we move forward in confidence when the outlook seems so bleak?

John the Baptist dedicated his time on earth preparing the way for the Messiah and convincing people to repent of sin and receive the Lamb of God. When the political leader of the day was offended and imprisoned John, he stood fast on his beliefs and the truth revealed in Scripture. Jesus sends His disciples to preach even as He's rejected, misunderstood, and John is executed for his faith. We should preach the gospel even though we'll face rejection and injustice just like Jesus and John. We should have confidence in Who Jesus is, His message, and the power of the gospel and Holy Spirit to change hearts. What gave Christians like Charlie Kirk such boldness and confidence in their faith? It is their own experience with the saving grace of the gospel and the knowledge that it is the only thing that can transform the world. John and Charlie were ambassadors of a different kingdom, that of Jesus Christ, and their confidence gave them authority and passion to speak up. How can we all do the same? How are we encouraged?

v1-6 - The ones closest to Jesus were offended at Him - Jesus' hometown was Nazareth (1:9). He follows His normal routine of teaching in the synagogue. The people ask interrogative questions about Him. Their assessment shows why they are offended at Him: they know Him as an ordinary dude. He had no special training, no prominence growing up. Jesus healed those who had faith in Him and marveled at their unbelief (Matt 13:58). May we not be that kind of marvel!

- Like the parable of the soils, some will receive the gospel and many will not. Even Jesus Himself wasn't received by everyone. Be encouraged it is not our responsibility to change hearts - only God can do that.

v7-13 - Jesus sends His disciples knowing they'll have mixed results - In the middle of this confusion (who is Jesus?) of His Own people, Jesus sends out His disciples to preach. It should serve as encouragement as they go that even Jesus was rejected (Mat 10:25, Heb 11:37-12:3). The disciples are told to not take along provisions but rather rely entirely on God's provision. This was a specific command to His disciples during this time (Luk 22:35-38). Jesus was teaching the important lesson of depending on God for provision.

There will be some who respond positively and there are some who will not listen nor accept Christ. Shake off the dust as a testimony against them - "Devout Jews did this when they left Gentile (alien) territory to show that they were dissociating themselves from it."¹ (Matt 10:15). They urged the people to repent! (Luke 9:2, Matt 10:7).

- Take courage: there will be some who listen to the message and others who reject it. The disciples were not responsible for the response, only that they go with the message and preach it.
- God will equip us for the mission He has set out for us. When we are in need, He will provide.

v14-16 - King Herod misunderstands Jesus due to guilt - The shift of Jesus sending His disciples out to minister catches King Herod's attention. This is not King Herod when Jesus was an infant - "Herod the Great" died 4 BC. This is King Herod Antipas, one of his sons of one of his five wives, who ruled Galilee and Perea 4 BC to 39 AD as the tetrarch (one of four rulers of his father's kingdom). He was known by his contemporaries as "cruel, scheming, vacillating, utterly evil."² The people have several theories who Jesus is: a raised John the Baptist, Elijah, an OT-like prophet. They miss one: the forgiver of sins! (Mark 2) Only God can do that. Herod selects one theory that speaks to his feeling of guilt.

- How can we help people in our culture properly identify who Jesus is and understand the gospel message?

v17-29 - John's execution foreshadows the suffering of Jesus and His church - Matt 14:5 - Herod wanted to put him to death but feared the people since they considered him a prophet. Herod had a half brother, Herod Philip I. Herod married

¹ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*. Walvoord and Zuck. Pg. 126, 128-129.

² *The Great Physician: The Method of Jesus with Individuals*. G. Campbell Morgan. Pg. 290.

Philip's wife, Herodias, Herod's half niece. "Herod divorced his wife in order to marry Herodias who had divorced Philip."¹ It was both an adulterous and incestuous relationship (Ex 20:14, Lev 18:6, 20:21). John is an upright person who will speak the truth into anyone's life. He does not fear Herod or what Herod could do to him. We should be gracious representatives like that to our culture, politicians, and leaders. Don't they need to hear the truth that God loves them and made a way for them to know Him by removing their guilt and shame through what Christ did on the cross?

Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death because he gave God's moral assessment of her. She literally "had it in for him."³ Lost people attempt to eliminate God. Most people have a moral issue about God, not a factual/logical one. People do not want to be accountable to anyone besides themselves. Herod at some level recognizes John's righteousness and clear appointment by God. But more than anything, he feared what other people thought about John and what they would think of him if he killed John (Matt 14:5 - "he feared the crowd"). Herod capitulates and executes John. See Luk 23:7-15 (Jesus' trial) and Act 4:27-28 on the final accounts about Herod in the NT.

John's disciples came and buried his body. Matt 14:12-13 says they then reported what happened to Jesus, and He then withdrew to a desolate place by Himself. Why does Mark include this story? 1) It shows that all across the land and economic and power divides, people were trying to figure out who Jesus really was. 2) It anticipates Jesus' death and increasing persecution. 3) It anticipates how other followers of Jesus will face similar persecution. In a lot of ways John's death foreshadow's Jesus': testified of the truth and convicted people of their sin, those who were most convicted by his teaching hated him and wanted him dead, the price for his execution was great, the leader who confers his execution sentence was hesitant but persuaded/manipulated by others, his disciples recovered his body and buried him in a tomb.

Henry H. Halley summarized John's life: "Thirty years in seclusion, 1½ years of public preaching, a year and 4 months in prison - and then the final curtain. This is the resume of the man who ushered in the Savior of the world, and of whom Jesus said there had not been born anyone greater (Matthew 11:11)."⁴

So, what? Now, what? Not everyone whom Jesus approached responded positively to Him or His message. Even in the midst of His rejection, Jesus sent out His disciples to preach the gospel and urge their generations to repent. We saw the tragic ending of John's life by someone too enthralled with the passions of the world to repent and embrace the righteousness of God. They missed out on a relationship with God and fixing the brokenness in their own lives.

John the Baptist was boldly confident in God's Messiah when confronting a perverse culture. Like him, we saw a man, Charlie Kirk, lose his life this past week based on His confidence in Jesus to speak truth to his generation and the younger. They both knew without a doubt it was worth it all. They were received into the arms of their savior. Jesus Christ has urged us to go and do likewise, knowing that He will be with us, even until the end of the age. If we endeavor to be followers like that within our hearts, God will give us the power and authority to be His witnesses to our generation and the generations to come.

As Christians responding to the murder of Charlie Kirk, what are we to do? Here are lessons from our passage:

- *Take a moment* - process what has happened. Honor the person and their family. Mourn, pray, reconnect with God, read the Word. Ensure we have not compromised the truth in our own lives to be comfortable or accepted.
- *Gather together* - as a body of believers. Talk about it, encourage one another in unity. Hug your loved ones, your friends. Cherish the moments with your family. Check your priorities. Reorient ourselves toward God - enter His sanctuary and let your perspective be changed (Ps. 73:16-17). Will our spouses be able to stand up and share a good testimony of how we loved them and our kids?
- *Live unashamedly on mission* - be resolute to love God and love our neighbors. Stand by our convictions and God's Word. Love the masses and bring them the hope of the gospel. See people as guys and gals who don't know Jesus yet. Look forward to the joy of meeting your resurrected Lord and Savior!
 - This event has gotten people's attention. Be ready to give a defense for the hope that is in you! Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what to do. What will we do to engage the people around us?

³ *Word Meanings in the New Testament*. Earle. Pg. 39.

⁴ *Halley's Bible Handbook*. Henry H. Halley. Pg. 656.