

# Gospel Gems from Mark



## Chapter 6: Jesus keeps working--even when faith in him is lacking

Several stories in this chapter mention or refer to the lack of faith that people had in Jesus. In addition the prophet John the Baptist who had pointed people to Jesus, was executed. Yet Jesus continued to carry out his calling perfectly and faithfully in spite of this. What can we learn?



### **Gospel Gem #1: The unbelief in Nazareth (6:1-6)**

*Note: Some Bible commentators feel that the story of Jesus preaching in Nazareth in Luke 4:14-30 is a separate incident from this one, while others feel they are two different descriptions of the same incident. In the Luke account the hearers are so infuriated by Jesus' words that they attempt to throw him off a cliff.*

Why were the people so amazed at Jesus' teaching? How is their amazement different from what we saw in Capernaum in 1:21-28)

Notice in passing what the people call Jesus and what this indicates about his early life.

What does Jesus mean by his words in verse 4? How does it apply today?

In spite of the people's unbelief, what does Jesus still do in Nazareth before leaving town?

Now it is Jesus' turn to be "amazed"! What is he amazed at? How can he be amazed at anything if he is the all-knowing Son of God?

How can this story help us when we don't see why someone won't listen to our witness?



### **Gospel Gem #2: Jesus' compassion for the crowds (6:30-44)**

Notice how busy Jesus and his disciples were (this was also stated in 3:20). What did he suggest, and what can we learn from this?

Yet, when Jesus arrives and his plans for some R&R have been dashed, how does he react? How does he view the crowds? What are two important lessons from this?

Why did Jesus tell the disciples to feed the crowds, and what response did he get?

What are some ways in which Mark demonstrates the power and reality of this miracle?

Use this story to show that Jesus had concern for people's spiritual and physical needs. Which was the priority? What can we learn?



**Gospel Gem #3: Jesus encourages the fearful (6:45-52)**

Why did Jesus dismiss his disciples and the crowd at this point? (see also John 6:15) How does what we read earlier about Jesus' busy schedule underscore his commitment to prayer?

"Fourth watch" was 3 to 6 a.m. Why did Jesus wait this long to come to his disciples?

How do the disciples react to the appearance of Jesus, and how does he encourage them?

What sad detail about the disciples is shared in verse 52? How does this also help us better appreciate Jesus' compassion for them?

How can this story help us...

...when we are afraid sudden catastrophe in our lives?

...when we are frustrated while dealing with someone we feel "ought to know better"?

**Bonus questions (if time)**

Are there any lessons we can apply to modern ministry from Jesus' instructions when he sent out the Twelve in verses 8-11?

Notice the sordid details of what led to John the Baptist's execution. Are there any warnings or lessons to our ministry to a world that, like Herod and his court, doesn't want to hear about boundaries when it comes to sexuality? (Don't overlook what is said about Herod in verse 20!)

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## Chapter 6: (answer page)

### Jesus keeps working--even when faith in him is lacking

Several stories in this chapter mention or refer to the lack of faith that people had in Jesus. In addition the prophet John the Baptist who had pointed people to Jesus, was executed. Yet Jesus continued to carry out his calling perfectly and faithfully in spite of this. What can we learn?



#### **Gospel Gem #1: The unbelief in Nazareth (6:1-6)**

*Note: Some Bible commentators feel that the story of Jesus preaching in Nazareth in Luke 4:14-30 is a separate incident from this one, while others feel they are two different descriptions of the same incident. In the Luke account the hearers are so infuriated by Jesus' words that they attempt to throw him off a cliff. (My personal opinion is that they are describing the same incident, but it is possible they are two separate occurrences.)*

Why were the people so amazed at Jesus' teaching? How is their amazement different from what we saw in Capernaum in 1:21-28) *In this case they were amazed because they had thought Jesus was just "one of them"-- the carpenter that they knew. It was not an amazement of faith, but of unbelief-- refusing to accept that Jesus was anyone special, much less the Son of God.*

Notice in passing what the people call Jesus and what this indicates about his early life.

*They call him the carpenter. In Matthew's version they say "carpenter's son". This indicates that Jesus had worked alongside his earthly father as a youth and young man.*

What does Jesus mean by his words in verse 4? How does it apply today?

*It's ironic and yet true that a prophet would be accepted by 'strangers' and yet not by the people who knew him best. A similar saying might be "familiarity breeds contempt". They thought they knew Jesus, and yet their ingrained opinions kept them from seeing who he truly was.*

*We apply this today by, for example, not normally expecting pastors and teachers to serve in the congregation in which they grew up as children. It might also apply in a situation where a different Christian is better able to "get through" to an individual than a person's own family could do.*

In spite of the people's unbelief, what does Jesus still do in Nazareth before leaving town?

*He still does a few miracles. He still wanted to help the people of his home town, even though they didn't want him.*

Now it is Jesus' turn to be "amazed"! What is he amazed at? How can he be amazed at anything if he is the all-knowing Son of God? *He is amazed at the people's lack of faith. It was an amazement of sadness because these were people that he knew and loved. In his state of humiliation--not fully using his divine attribute and powers--he could be amazed just as any human being.*

How can this story help us when we don't see why someone won't listen to our witness?

*Jesus' example can remind us not to respond with anger, even if we are sad that someone won't listen. We can also remember that even if someone won't listen to our Christian witness, they may later listen to someone else's.*



### **Gospel Gem #2: Jesus' compassion for the crowds (6:30-44)**

Notice how busy Jesus and his disciples were (this was also stated in 3:20). What did he suggest, and what can we learn from this? *He suggested that they go away privately by themselves to rest. We can learn from this both to work hard and faithfully, but also to take time out; not just for physical rest, but for our own personal quiet time with Jesus and his Word. Without a strong personal devotional life, we put our entire life of Christian service in jeopardy.*

Yet, when Jesus arrives and his plans for some R&R have been dashed, how does he react? How does he view the crowds? What are two important lessons from this? *Instead of being disappointed or frustrated that his plans were blocked by crowds, Jesus is filled with compassion. He sees them as lost sheep. We can learn from this 1) to be thankful for Jesus' compassion and love for sinners like us; and 2) To feel similar compassion for other lost sinners--to see them not as people who harrass us or get in our way but as lost souls who need our help.*

Why did Jesus tell the disciples to feed the crowds, and what response did he get?

*This seems to be a test for the disciples--to see if they would turn in faith to Jesus to do what only he could do. Instead they were alarmed and confused.*

What are some ways in which Mark demonstrates the power and reality of this miracle?

*The remark about "groups of hundreds and fifties" shows that it was possible to count the crowd accurately. He shows exactly how much food Jesus had to start with, states that everyone had enough food and records exactly how much leftover food there was--far more than the original amount.*

Use this story to show that Jesus had concern for people's spiritual and physical needs. Which was the priority? What can we learn? *Jesus' first priority was to teach the people so they would no longer be lost sheep but part of God's flock. Yet he also cared for them enough to provide for their hunger.*

*The mission of the Christian church is to save souls, not to feed bodies. Yet as we do that we should also show compassion for people's earthly and physical needs.*



### **Gospel Gem #3: Jesus encourages the fearful (6:45-52)**

Why did Jesus dismiss his disciples and the crowd at this point? (see also John 6:15) How does what we read earlier about Jesus' busy schedule underscore his commitment to prayer? *The verse from John indicates that he was trying to prevent the crowds from trying to declare him an earthly king. Considering that Jesus had been incredibly busy, it is amazing that he stayed up apparently most of the night in prayer rather than trying simply to sleep.*

"Fourth watch" was 3 to 6 a.m. Why did Jesus wait this long to come to his disciples?

*Just as in our own lives, Jesus doesn't immediately solve every problem for his disciples! His goal is always to teach his people to turn to him.*

How do the disciples react to the appearance of Jesus, and how does he encourage them?

*They thought he was a ghost or spirit. Superstition might have suggested that this was an omen of death or disaster. Jesus called out to them to take courage and not to be afraid.*

What sad detail about the disciples is shared in verse 52? How does this also help us better appreciate Jesus' compassion for them? *It says that their hearts were hard and they had not understood about the loaves. In other words, they somehow seem to have failed to have grasped the miracle that had just happened. They were at risk of being just like the people of Nazareth.*

*After all the time Jesus had already spent with the twelve and all they had seen, their lack of faith had to be incredibly frustrating. The fact that Jesus calmly continues to work with them and instruct them shows us his incredible patience with sinners--us included.*

How can this story help us...

...when we are afraid sudden catastrophe in our lives?

*Jesus' timeless words "Take courage...don't be afraid" remind us that even in the fears and catastrophes of life, he has not abandoned us.*

...when we are frustrated while dealing with someone we feel "ought to know better"?

*We can keep on being patient as long as the person is willing to keep listening and learning. Remember, these hard-hearted men eventually became the apostles and leaders of the Church.*

### **Bonus questions (if time)**

Are there any lessons we can apply to modern ministry from Jesus' instructions when he sent out the Twelve in verses 8-11? *The main point seems to be that the twelve were supposed to simply trust in God to provide through the support of the people to whom they spoke, to provide for their whole livelihood. We still practice this today by having called workers serve full-time without seeking outside employment. (At times, though, Paul did support himself for the good of the Gospel--see Philippians 4:15) The verse "shake off your feet" is a reminder that if one person or area is not receptive to the Gospel, we are simply to give a warning and move on to other locations and people.*

Notice the sordid details of what led to John the Baptist's execution. Are there any warnings or lessons to our ministry to a world that, like Herod and his court, doesn't want to hear about boundaries when it comes to sexuality? (Don't overlook what is said about Herod in verse 20!)

*John was originally imprisoned for upholding God's word regarding marriage and divorce. He was also executed due to the fallout from a lascivious dance routine. We shouldn't be surprised if our modern society with similar views responds with equal hostility to God's law. The verse about Herod, though, shows that even in the most unlikely places our message can still find a hearing and the Holy Spirit can do his work.*