

THE GOSPEL OF MARK
Grounded in the Gospel
x. Mounting Opposition
Mark 6:1-13

Mark 6: 1-13 shows us how Jesus carried His mission in His hometown and how people responded to His ministry. Christ has commissioned us to carry His mission into our hometown, our families, and the rest of the world. This passage therefore, helps us to understand the purpose, the offensiveness, and the nature of Christ mission.

1. The purpose of Christ mission

Verse 2 shows us people's response to Jesus's teaching in the Synagogue. Mark tells us that people were amazed at His teaching. In Matthew 7:29, we are told that the crowd were amazed because Jesus taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. But the purpose of Christ mission is more than just to give an amazing teaching or exposition of God's Word. The purpose is that, through His Word;

- a) We may be **liberated** from the dominion of darkness (from fear, doubt oppression, sickness, addictions, disbelief, pride, anxiety, shame, etc.), into His glorious kingdom (eternal life, hope, courage, faith, etc.).
- b) Our lives may be **transformed** to be more and more like Him.
- c) We may be **empowered** to carry His mission to the rest of the world.

By looking at the lives of Christ disciples, both in the gospels and in the book of Acts, we are able to see the transforming power that Christ's teaching had on them. It is only right therefore, to say that people who are immersed in Christ's teaching have their lives liberated, transformed, and empowered.

The other examples of such transformation can be found in the life of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), Zacchaeus, Nicodemus (Luke 19:1-10) (John 3: 1-21; 7:50-51; 19: 38-40, just to mention a few. All of these people had one thing in common; they opened up their heart and mind to Christ's teaching.

Sadly, most people from Jesus's hometown never got to experience the life that Christ's offers. Christ did little in Nazareth (in the sense of ministry), because of their unbelief. Most of the people were never liberated, transformed, and empowered, because they were hostile to Christ and offended by Him.

For us, our desire must be to be in the presence of Christ constantly, and immerse ourselves in His Word. Although we have the Word preached to us in church, at our bible study, in our prayer groups, and other ministries, each one of us needs to spend quality time with Jesus regularly. We need to set apart some time for the Lord, where the focus is only on the study of God's Word and prayer.

I truly believe that if each one of us cultivates a habit of spending more time in the presence of God every day, in prayer and studying of His Word, we will begin to see a change in us and we would be empowered to carry Christ's ministry to the rest of the world.

2. The offensiveness of Christ mission

The people of Nazareth were not offended by the teaching and the miracles of Christ, but they were offended by the humanity of Christ. They were offended by His ordinariness. The prophet Isaiah prophesied about the ordinariness of Jesus and he said, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held Him in low esteem" (Isaiah 53:2-3).

Jesus had no training; He never studied with any of the famous rabbis. He had no pedigree to account for his authoritative teaching. Jesus was just a home town boy. He was to them an ordinary man from an ordinary family and from an insignificant town. In other words, He was a nobody. So, they were offended and refuse to recognize His true personhood.

They were too familiar with Jesus. The people had grown up with Jesus and knew Him only as the village carpenter, who had worked on their homes. He was too familiar, and familiarity breeds complacency. Mark tells us that one point His family followed Him to Capernaum to take charge of Him because they thought He was out of His mind (Mark 3:21).

This story shows us that the result of mission often is resistance and hostility. Jesus always responded to unbelief and opposition with gentleness, He never argued with sceptics or those who were offended by Him. He never forced them to receive his teaching or do miracles to prove His authority. He simply left the place where there was unbelief and carried on with His mission somewhere else.

Lesson for us

Jesus has warned us that if they have rejected Him, they will also reject us. Some people find Jesus and His message offensive. His mission may offend our family, our friends, our colleagues, our neighbours, etc. But our response to opposition and hostility should always be with gentleness, knowing that it is not us they are rejecting but God. Paul tells us in Philippians 1:29 that, "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him."

Opposition and hostility is therefore inevitable, but it must never discourage us from carrying Christ mission. Our response to opposition must always be with gentleness. We must never force Christ's message on those who are offended by it or act in disbelief. Just like Christ, we must simply leave them and go to other places where it will be received, but always praying for them that their eyes will be open.

3. The nature of Christ mission

The disciples had lived with Jesus for a long time; they had seen both His life and ministry. They were constantly immersed in Jesus's teaching and ministry. They had been liberated, transformed, and empowered. And now Jesus sends them out to different villages to relive the life and ministry of Jesus. As He sends them, He prescribed how He wanted His mission to be done.

a) It was to be conducted with the authority of Christ

Jesus gave them authority over evil spirits. He also gave them instructions to follow. Like the disciples, we are officially sent as official representatives of God, we go out and serve under His authority, and we must be obedient to His instruction. He has given us the authority to preach the kingdom truths, to deliver people from all kinds of oppression, and to heal people from all kinds of diseases. We must constantly pray that we would not be tempted to out carry Christ's mission in our own strength, we are not in control over His mission, He is.

a) It was to be kingdom centered

Carrying Christ's mission involves sacrificing what seems most important in our lives for the sake of the kingdom. The kingdom of God is at the centre of Christ's mission. Jesus wants us to always be kingdom minded. Jesus sent out the disciples to places that were out of their comfort zone and gave them instructions that challenged their way of life.

Jesus will constantly send us to places that are out of our comfort zone, where our normal way of doing things will be challenged. He does this so that we can learn to trust and depend on Him completely. Sometimes it means serving people that are different to us. Sometimes it might mean sacrificing our time, dreams and ambitions for the kingdom.

Sometimes it may be preaching the truth that people don't want to hear, for the sake of the kingdom. Other times He may send us to remote, uncivilized, and dangerous places for the sake of the kingdom. For other this may be facing persecution and even death, for the sake of the kingdom. We need to trust Him.

Jesus died so that we can come into His Kingdom, we must also be driven by a desire to bring people into His kingdom at any cost.

b) It was to be driven by love

John 3:16 tells us that Jesus was sent to us because the Father loves us. Out of love and in obedience to the God Jesus went from village to village doing His ministry. People who carry Christ mission do so because of their love for God and unbelievers. Let our love for God and for one another be our motivation for His mission.

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