

Bible Study

Mark 6:1-56

Can you discern anything that ties all of these incidents together? A theme that you see coming through all of them?

- Rejection of God's word
- Who is Jesus?

Vv 1-6 Notice the setting. It is Jesus' hometown. He is teaching on the Sabbath, in the synagogue.

Note that all of the things that we think will influence someone towards faith don't actually do that in this story.

6:1-6

- How do the people respond to Jesus?
 - Note that they are *astounded* at his teaching and its wisdom, and his power, yet as verse 3 tells us 'they took *offense* at him'. There is a sad disconnect by what they see and how they respond. Instead of being filled with awe which leads to reverence, their amazement leads them to reject Jesus.
- Why do they respond in that way?
 - Don't just go for quick answers here; the answer to this may be deeper than it may initially appear.
 - Have your group reflect on this a bit. Note that the crowd sees something of both Jesus' divinity (his miracle and power) and his humanity (they know his parents and siblings), and they don't know how to reconcile the two.
 - The things that we imagine would influence someone towards having faith in Jesus' – miraculous signs, powerful and novel teaching, actually don't have that effect in this instance.
 - 'Their expectations were that a Messiah would be exotic, esoteric — not so commonplace. Thus they simply solved the tension of their expectations and the evidence by ignoring the evidence. Their pre-conceptions were offended by the facts, and they would not part with them, even in the face of so much evidence. No wonder we are told that Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith (v. 6).' Page 60, Leaders' Guide, Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2005.
- Does this sound familiar? In what ways do we see this sort of thing happen now, with Jesus and his message?
- Why can Jesus 'do no deed of power there' (except to cure people)?
 - This could be a good question to encourage people to think hard about what they are reading, and not to just dismiss 'tricky' passages. Encourage them to think through what the possible answers could and couldn't be. (For example, it obviously

can't be that Jesus lacked the power; we see in the same sentence that he does heal some people, and we have seen him still a storm and restore a girl to life)

- The possible answer may address what was at the heart of the miracles Jesus did do: 'The answer... is that Jesus' miracles were not "**magic tricks**" designed to prove how powerful he was, but "**signs of the kingdom**" to show how his redemptive power operates. His miracles always healed and restored and delivered people in ways that revealed how we are to find him by faith and have our lives transformed by him. This is why Jesus made the woman with the blood flow "go public" (5:23-34). He is not just using his miracles to show his greatness, but to show how his kingdom comes into the world and into lives; who he is and how he had come to save. If Jesus saw people who would not believe, even with miracles, he did not do any. Why? He "could" not (due to the character of his mission) do a deed of power that would not redeem!' Page 62 ,Leaders' Guide, Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2005, emphasis added.
- What are the implications of this for us? What are we looking for when we ask God to act in our lives?

6:7-13

- What is the mission of the twelve?
 - Note the similarity with Mark 3:14-15
 - Note that they proclaim that all should repent, they have authority over unclean spirits, they cast out demons, they care for the sick and cure them.
 - Why do they do this? What connects these things?
 - They are proclaiming and demonstrating the kingdom, preparing people for Jesus.
 - Interestingly, they have a challenging message, but a caring mode. That is, they call people to 'repent' (which we unfortunately tend to shirk), but they also care for the sick. It might be helpful for your group to reflect on their approach to reaching non-Christians. Are they favouring challenge to the exclusion of care, or vice versa?
- Why does Jesus give them these particular instructions?
 - He wants them to operate in community with each other, and with the people they are trying to reach.
 - They must truly integrate with the people they are trying to reach – they must live with them, depend on them. This also means that they have to have integrity with what they do – everyone will see everything they do.
 - Though it is not mentioned explicitly, going out without provisions must depend on God to provide for them.
- What should they expect in response?
 - Both welcome and rejection
 - If you think about the previous passage, we have seen that even Jesus was rejected. It makes sense then, that the apostles would also be rejected.

6:14-29

Why is this story here? Notice that it breaks up the narrative about the 12 being sent out and then re-gathering. It feels a bit weird to have this backstory inserted here. But Mark is always thoughtful and deliberate about where he places stories, and why.

Often, when a story is inserted within a narrative, it is to draw a *comparison* or a *distinction* to the main narrative. So what could be the purpose of this story?