

**Text: Mark 6:1-29**

**Theme: The Rejected King**

**Sermon delivered by Iyabo Agbelusi during Service of the Word on 19/11/2017 at 10.30am**

### **Vs (1-6) The King is rejected**

From the beginning of Mark's gospel, Jesus has been teaching, healing, and casting out demons. In this section, we see Jesus rejected, and his disciples told to expect the same. John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner is not only rejected, but executed. This execution anticipates the fate Jesus can expect.

In chapter 6, Jesus comes home to Nazareth. Nazareth, a little backwater town that is despised and looked down on by the rest of Israel. Here is their big chance to show that *something good can come out of Nazareth*. Would the Nazareth Gazette run the headline, "Local Boy Makes Good"? Or would there be some form of a red carpet rolled out for Him?

We soon discover that this is not the case. Jesus arrives in town with His disciples, having calmed storms, exorcized demons, and raised the dead. He goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath, takes his place as an adult male and preaches that day with stirring wisdom (vs2).

He is not like the Jesus they watched grow up. He has grown and changed. He is no longer the obedient child learning to handle a carpenter's plane. He stands tall and speaks with authority they cannot fathom. His words and ideas are far beyond what he could have learned in Nazareth. The stories of the mighty deeds he has done are discussed in hushed tones as his one-time neighbours listen to him teach. They were amazed when they heard Him. They could not reconcile their knowledge of the simple carpenter who grew up among them to this 'Teacher' with disciples. Their reaction was not wonder, but contempt. They took offence! Rather than receive His words with faith, they questioned his motives, his authority & His teaching. "He is not like one of us anymore." "He has changed." "Who does he think he is, anyway?" "We know him too well for Him to put on those airs!" Their negative reaction to his words meant he could do very little good among them. Jesus points out that a prophet can be recognized anywhere but at home. In their arrogance, they rejected Jesus and His message and their opportunity to receive the blessing of eternal life He had come to bring.

People say knowledge is power. Was that the case here? So, what did they know about Jesus? They knew that he: was a carpenter, performed remarkable miracles, the son of Mary, belonged to a family they knew well as they named his brothers and sisters. They could see that Jesus was special, had extraordinary wisdom, in a class set apart from them, but they flatly refused to love Him or trust Him with their lives. Their knowledge caused the people to stumble because they knew the man as Jesus, but refused to look beyond the past-refused to see that He was also the Messiah, the Christ. Familiarity they say breeds contempt. They could only see him as the local carpenter whose words did not merit paying attention to.

Vs 5 records, "*He was not able to do any miracles there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.*" Was Jesus' power taken away for a time? Was Jesus lacking the power of God for a time? Not at all. The reason for this occurrence is given in verse 6. "*And He was amazed at their lack of faith.*" The people's unbelief was the cause for Jesus not working miracles. They did not believe in who Jesus was. They did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, the prophesied king, the Son of God. They hardened their hearts against Jesus therefore, Jesus maintained all of His power and abilities, but He was not allowed to work this power in their lives because the people rejected Him. God never forces His blessings on us.

Could my/your familiarity with God be limiting His power in our lives? Do we think we have God all figured out- we know all about Him? We may be regular in church but are we listening and obeying His Word? Do we hunger and thirst after His righteousness? Are we making Jesus known wherever we are through a life in which we are choosing to stand for Jesus all the time? What about a lack of faith that God will take care of us meaning we put ourselves first and worry about our possessions because we do not trust God? Do we study God's word daily to help us in our spiritual growth? Ephesians 3:20 says, *"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us."* His power is at work within each of us. Do we allow God to do His work? Our unbelief/self-centredness limits the power of God to transform us. When we face trials/difficulties, that may be His will for our lives. Remember, Jesus isn't a God who is far off, unaware of our needs. Psalm 46:1 – *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

### **The King Commissions His disciples (Vs7-13)**

If His own people rejected Him, at least others in surrounding villages needed to hear the good news, so Jesus first goes round teaching then sends His disciples out on preaching missions. He gets them to travel light, Jesus tells the disciples not to take a bag, food, money, and or extra clothing. Why did Jesus give them these instructions? There is nothing inherently wrong with taking these things on their journey. Jesus was making the point that the disciples needed to rely upon God to take care of them and trust God that provision would be made for them just as they would need to depend upon Him to fulfil their mission. We need to have this kind of dependence on God also. To be a disciple of Jesus we must place our total trust in God. Such dependence on God can free us from worry, stress, and anxiety so that we can focus on sharing the good news. The next time we begin to worry or be fearful, let us remember that we need to have faith in God's provision.

*Jesus warns; 'And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them' (v. 11).* Jesus forewarned them about rejection so that they would not feel like failures when it happened. We need the same preparation. The gospel we preach will get a frosty reception from the majority of people with whom we try to share it. Repentance is a hated word to any arrogant heart and that is how most people are. We need to tell everyone about Jesus salvation but don't expect everyone to like it. However, that knowledge should not stop us. We need to live as pilgrims, with light backpacks, knowing that 'this world is not our home'.

No doubt we have seen some people who view their ministry environment as a means of privilege and wealth. Like the original twelve, we too must learn to walk by faith, trusting the Lord to provide for us as we surrender in service to Him. Jesus did not want the twelve to be greedy or expect to have the best accommodation. We are not called to live better than those around us, but to join in their struggles and share in their suffering. If anyone is serving the Lord for the material benefits, s/he is a hireling and not a true shepherd/disciple.

Argument and fighting over words is not the way of sharing Christ's love. When we experience mockery, rejection or ridicule, we should not be discouraged. It happened to Jesus and He warned that it will happen to us. Nothing should stop us from being proactive in our faith.

### **John's Obedience to the King**

The passage ends with the beheading of John the Baptist. His crime was to confront Herod's with his immorality - it's what a prophet is meant to do. But Herodias will have none of it. No doubt she hated the message of repentance and the effrontery this prophet had to point out her sin of adultery. She waits for an opportunity and promptly makes her evil demand through her daughter for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Though Herod seems to regret his rash offer nevertheless he goes through with the killing of John.

If you are feeling unwelcome because of your Christian commitment at work, or at home, then do not be surprised. This is the burden we need to carry as followers of the Jesus, the Man of Sorrows who 'came to ... his own, but his own did not receive him' (John 1:11). Don't let that stop you living a vibrant Christian life - it's what Jesus calls us, His followers to do.

John would have had a good excuse not to be preaching to Herod about his unlawful marriage. He could have worried about the other issues with Herod. But John preached about everything in Herod's life that was in error to the word of God. We, as Jesus' disciples, must preach the whole counsel of God to people that we know. We are not allowed to leave some bits of the Scriptures out to make it easier for people to come to God. Cheap salvation is no salvation. It cost Jesus His life. We must teach about sin and its consequences—otherwise we are not doing them any favours nor helping them. They are still lost in their sins. We share the gospel so that people become right with God.

Are we willing to surrender all to Christ? Willing to give up all things to be a follower of Christ. John was imprisoned and killed for the sake of God's truth. How far would we go to teach the word of God? Are we willing to suffer to the point of prison and death, just as John did? It's happening daily in other parts of the world.

In verse 29 we read that the disciples heard what had happened to John. Did the disciples quit or give up? No, the gospels do not end here. The disciples continue to teach the good news of Jesus. Imagine if one of our own was killed for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Would we pack it all up? The disciples knew that this was a possibility, but nothing was going to stop them from living and teaching God's word. We must develop the same resolve that we will continue to obey Jesus, no matter what, for the sake of our Lord.

**Conclusion:** To be a disciple of Jesus means we will experience rejection, possibly from family and friends, even our governments. But rejection does not relinquish our responsibilities to continue to seek and save the lost. This is how faith in Jesus works in us. Even to the point of death, we will entrust our lives to the Creator. Let us live up to our calling, not be ashamed of the gospel and teach the gospel to all who will hear us.