

Gospel of Mark Chapter 6 Study Guide

Chapter 6 takes us on a journey highlighting the relationships other people had with him and their reaction to his divine nature and mission. The chapter includes a big detour with the back story of how John the Baptist is killed (6:14-29). The decision to put that story in Chapter 6 is consistent with the theme of toxic (no pun intended) family/community dynamics – and the way that those most familiar to us can distract and even destroy our faith. The chapter invites us to consider how our familiarity with Jesus is a roadblock to truly understanding his power to heal and transform our lives.

Rejection by his own people (Mark 6:1-6)

Jesus is rejected by the very people who knew him best. Their knowledge was fixed and could not adapt. This section is the conclusion of the second section of Mark (3:13-6:6a). Having begun with the attempt of his family to take him home as a deranged person, the section concludes with Jesus being rejected by friends and family when he does come home. The power of the teachings and healings we have just witnessed is rejected because of preconceived notions that will not be relinquished.

How do you see the church rejecting Jesus now?

Have you been invited to fearlessly step out of a tradition or safe place and do something new? What was it? What happened? Would you do it again?

The Sending of the Disciples (Chapter 6: 7- 13)

Chapter 6: 7 – 8:21 is the next section of Mark in which the Twelve are sent out. This section helps unpack the developing, evolving realizations (and consistent stumbles) of the disciples. The charge to travel light and accept whatever others give is an abiding call to Christians to simplify our lives and trust God completely. We carry so much baggage that keeps us from true relationship and deep trust. Jesus invites us to better.

What baggage do you carry? Why? What keeps you from traveling light? What first step might you take toward doing better?

John's Death (Chapter 6:14-29)

The account of John the Baptizer's death, with its flashback to Herod's birthday feast and subsequent beheading of John is intentionally placed in conversation with

the sending of the twelve. The death of John foreshadows the death of Jesus. In both cases, the disciples are sent out to shine the light of hope amid death.

How does the power of politics and culture overshadow the power of the gospel in your life? How far does the shadow of cultural concern and formation form your daily life, routines and decisions? What would you change if you could?

The Feeding of the Five Thousand Plus (Mark 6:30-44)

This is the only miracle story found in all four gospels. The early church cherished and repeated this story – both of an account of God’s provision, and as a marker of the power of the communion feast. In it we hear the beginnings of the Eucharistic liturgy: Jesus took, gave thanks, broke, and gave – and a miracle resulted.

*Where do you find hope in this story?
In what ways does Jesus act like a good shepherd?*

Walking on water and the healing at Gennesaret (Mark 6:45- 56)

Jesus sends the disciples ahead in the boat and stays on the hillside to pray. The multitudes have dispersed because it’s dark. Jesus stays hidden in the darkness and at some point, Mark describes him walking across the lake on the water. Hellenistic miracle stories depicted gods and heroes walking on the seas but this text is more specifically tied to the Old Testament manifestations of God who “trampled the waves of the sea” etc. (Job 9:8, 11; Psalm 77:19, isa 43:16). The divine presence is at first unrecognized and then inspires tremendous fear. The disciples are terrified, but again, Jesus calms them by presence and the reassurances of his full humanity.

Are you surprised that the disciples failed to realize it was Jesus on the water? They had just been with Jesus on the water during that terrible storm(4:35-41). What was different this time?

When Jesus comes to Gennesaret, the people know who he is immediately. This is a stark contrast to his own disciples (and family and friends) who seem to struggle repeatedly with understanding and believing in him. The faith of the citizens is so great that they believe his shadow and the hem of his garment can heal. The contrast is show by the power of the healings they experience.

Is the power of Jesus to heal and transform any weaker now? How do you understand God’s power to heal and make whole? What keeps you from greater faith?