

Mark 6:1-27
January 31, 2010
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

EXEGESIS

¹And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

It makes sense His disciples are following at this point. Jesus has been doing some amazing things. You think that they would absolutely get it by now. But they don't.

²And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, saying, From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

Jesus is always finding controversy on the Sabbath. He is Lord of the Sabbath. He is quite literally our Sabbath rest. But on the Sabbath, people keep finding a reason to be offended at Jesus.

The folks in the synagogue are quite amazed at Jesus. Partly, they are amazed that Jesus shows Himself as one educated. You would think they would be proud of Him. However, they take the exact opposite approach. They are not proud. They are envious. So, instead of honoring Him, they reproach Him. Instead of being glad that someone has risen above their upbringing, they assume that Jesus thinks too highly of Himself.

They acknowledge that He really has done great things but they conclude, "How does He think He is?" If you answer that, "Well, He thinks He is the Son of God. He thinks He is a King. He thinks He is the Messiah." That answer does not make it better for those asking the question. It makes it dramatically worse for them. They cannot imagine one of their own countrymen being honored in such a way and therefore reject Jesus.

They heap disdain on Joseph, Mary and Jesus's brothers and sisters. Not that any of them were dishonorable. The point is that they are no better than us, neither then can Jesus be better than us. This is Cain all over again.

⁴But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. ⁵And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*. ⁶And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Jesus knew that He had been honored. In the last chapter He does great things and many follow Him as a result. This is something we should pay special attention to. Do we give honor to those far from us in familiarity or distance but refuse to recognize those near to us who are due honor? Is this because we simply cannot allow those close to us to gain an advantage over us?

Jesus marveled at the unbelief of His townsfolk and family. This is particularly surprising as we know that Jesus was without sin. For us, it might not be too surprising that our family

members would know our failings and therefore not follow us. But Jesus was perfect, without sin and they still did not believe.

While you would think His perfection would cause them to see and understand, it probably created more envy. Again, think of Abel. What did Abel do wrong that provoked Cain? The answer is nothing. Cain was provoked because Abel did well.

This is also true of Jesus. Imagine Him as a child. I doubt He was a goody two shoes. God is much too unpredictable for that. Think about how He acted in Jerusalem and what He said to His mother as a result of that circumstance. I would not be surprised if Jesus got in a fight or two, made fun of people on certain occasions, teased His siblings, and other such childlike characteristics. All this, and yet without sin. He was always doing it in the right way and for the right reasons. Did His siblings and neighbors appreciate that? Apparently not.

⁷And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; ⁸And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse: ⁹But *be shod* with sandals; and not put on two coats.

Jesus is making explicit, the passing of His authority to His disciples. The people have been particularly amazed that Jesus has power of demons. Demon possession and activity was apparently quite common in and around Israel. It was recognized that there was not much that could be done about it. The demons did not respect the authority of the Scribes, Pharisees or even the priests. But Jesus had direct authority over them and the people were astonished by this.

So, we should get a grasp of what is going on here. Jesus is giving that same kind of amazing and powerful authority to His disciples.

We also see here a striking example of the need for faith in ministry. Jesus requires His ministers to put their explicit trust in God. They are not to store up for the journey or to make elaborate plans. No scrip, no bread, no money. Not even two coats. They would need two coats if they could not find a place to stay. But Jesus is promising that He will provide for their needs.

¹⁰And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. ¹¹And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. ¹²And they went out, and preached that men should repent. ¹³And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*.

It is interesting that Jesus expects certain faithful ones to provide for His ministers. They are not simply to receive a meal but lodging, meals, other necessities. It is unclear how long they stayed in any one place but we can assume that they stayed for at least days and probably weeks or even months.

Rejection of Christ as King, even as declared by His disciples, is a greater sin than the debaucheries of Sodom and Gomorrha.

It appears that God will hold cities accountable. Will these cities be judged in the day of judgment? How will they be remade? Perhaps some of them will be annihilated?

What did they preach? That men should repent.

They cast out devils and healed the sick.

What was the result of their ministry? That Herod heard of them and was stirred with fear. This brought opposition from high places. Interesting, isn't it? The officials should have been overjoyed that their subjects were being cleansed of evil demons and evil diseases. This would mean a much more healthy and productive populace. A conniving ruler could have seen more tax receipts and really tried to befriend the Christians. However, that is not what happens.

The good done to the people is seen as a threat to the rulers. Perhaps they wanted to maintain the authority over their health care?

¹⁴And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. ¹⁵Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. ¹⁶But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

This is an interesting aside and a strange place for Mark to put it unless he is trying to make a point. I will assume that he is making a point.

The point I assume Mark is making that the same sort of thing that happened to John the Baptist is going to happen to the disciples. John the Baptist preached repentance. He baptized men and women. He spoke the Word of God. This was all good and a benefit to the populace. But John the Baptist also spoke of obedience and righteousness. This came into conflict with the authorities and was a threat to the throne. As a result, he was arrested and eventually murdered.

The same things that happened to John are going to happen to all of the disciples.

Note that Herod speaks of rising from the dead.

It is also interesting about what the rumors were about Jesus. He is Elijah. He is Moses. He is that expected one. But even though these rumors were flying around, the rulers were not encouraged or hopeful. They were under threat. They were not concerned with the truth of the matter but what impact it would have upon their rule and authority.

¹⁷For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. ¹⁸For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. ¹⁹Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: ²⁰For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

One of the things we should notice in this narrative is the alternative motives surrounding those in power. Herod himself was not overly threatened by John. He could tolerate what John was saying as no doubt many others were saying the same thing. But Herodias, his wife, could not bear to hear herself accused of unlawful acts. She was willing to live with the king but she wanted to be considered lawful and righteous in doing so.

Herodias was not able to kill John by herself. She needed the help and authority of her husband to do so. So, she connived to trick him into getting her way. It is particularly despicable that she uses her daughter as a means to her end.

Herod knew John was just and holy and heard him gladly. That did not protect John.

²¹And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief *estates* of Galilee; ²²And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give *it* thee. ²³And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give *it* thee, unto the half of my kingdom. ²⁴And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

Herod had a huge birthday bash and invited all his important friends. His top advisors, the top generals of the army and the chief land owners were all in attendance. This is not unlike a great birthday bash for dignitaries today. They would invite all the same sorts of people.

Herodias had her daughter prepare a special dance for Herod and his guests. Legend has it that this was a great seductive dance, one that likely inflamed and pleased Herod very much. Whether this is true or not, we cannot say, but it is difficult to imagine him being so much moved by any other sort of dance.

Herod offers a great gift to Salome. He offers half his kingdom, not expecting Salome to actually take him up on the deal. This is a coming sort of braggadocio in such a situation. But we might we take a hinted flirtatious meaning? Something along the lines as I wish I had you as my queen.

Anyway, Herod offers her half the kingdom. As it turns out, he did not get the kingdom at all. He offers half and ends up in exile with none. Herodias joins him in the exile.

She was previously married to Herod II. He was the heir apparent to Herod the Great until he was implicated in a plot to kill the king. Herodias divorced him and married her uncle Herod Antipas.

²⁵And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. ²⁶And the king was exceeding sorry; *yet* for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

Salome was an obedient girl. Maybe she knew first hand that it was dangerous not to be. Can you imagine such a sordid plot on such a high occasion.

Herod is backed into a corner by Herodias. She knows him and knows that he will not go back on his public promise. In this case, he should have. We should always be willing to deny an unlawful promise or vow, especially when we are tricked into making it. But Herod would not go back on his vow.

He had made an oath. It turns out that this fulfillment of it was worse than marrying his brother's wife.

²⁷And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. ²⁹And when his disciples heard *of it*, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

This was a goulish dessert, the head of the righteous John. We should have some sense that such things occasionally occurred. This certainly is an extraordinary circumstance but such outlandish and wicked deeds were also being acted out in Rome among the debauched emperors.

To show exactly how the account played out, we see Salome deliver up the head of John the Baptist to her mother. In this sense, she, like Herod himself, tried to wipe his hands from the guilt of the situation but all parties present are implicated.

EXHORTATION