

Preaching Through the Bible - Chapter 12 Mark 6b-29

The twelve are sent on a mission

As often in the work of Jesus, opposition leads to expansion. Just as the arrest of John had prompted Jesus to go to Galilee^{Ⓜ1}, and just as the plan to kill Him had prompted Him to appoint *the twelve*, so now rejection at Nazareth^{Ⓜ2} prompted Jesus to send the twelve on their first mission. It is the third stage, according to Mark, of their training. First they had been invited to work with Him; then they had been given a particular name, *apostle*. Now they are sent out on a mission but Jesus will not travel with them^{Ⓜ3}.

Ⓜ1 1:14

Ⓜ2 6:1-6

Ⓜ3 6:6b-7

1. Jesus' example

1. First, **He gives them an example**. He went round the villages teaching. He went on a mission with them before sending them on similar work on their own^{Ⓜ1}.

Ⓜ1 6:6b

2. Disciples sent'

2. **He sends them**^{Ⓜ1}. During this time they will know that they are doing the work of God and God's will. They have not been running ahead of God.

Ⓜ1 6:7

3. Two by two

3. **He sends them in a way that will not allow any worker to become isolated**. Mark mentions that they are sent out *two by two*^{Ⓜ1}.

Ⓜ1 6:7

4. Authority over demons

4. **He gives them authority over demons**^{Ⓜ1}.

Ⓜ1 6:7b

5. Hospitality

5. They are to trust in the hospitality of the people of Israel. They are to go in such a way that they will be dependent on those they preach to. They take no bread, no beggar's bag, no money, no spare shirt^{Ⓜ1}. They may take a staff (even the staff was to be provided for them: "**Don't acquire ... a staff, for the worker is worth his keep...**" says *Matthew 10:10*). The instructions here relate to the fact that Jesus is announcing Himself to **Israel**. When the work is pioneer evangelism among pagans, one does not expect support from them (see *3 John 7: '...receiving nothing from the pagans.'*), but when there is ministry to God's people the worker expects to be taken care of by the people of God. In modern church life the equivalent principle is, evangelists get support from **sending** churches; teachers get support from **receiving** churches.

Ⓜ1 6:8-9

When they find a home which would give them accommodation they are, if possible, to stay at one place during their time in that town. (It is exhausting to move too frequently.)

If they are rejected, they must simply move on, shaking the dust off their feet – a symbolic act signifying that the town is unclean and will come under God's judgement. The act will be '**...a testimony to them**', a sign before God that the town is fit for judgement.

6. Message of repentance

6. **Their message is a message of repentance**. The people will have to *change their minds* about many things, and renounce old ways, if they are to experience the blessings of the Kingdom of God which are coming through Jesus.

So they go out and they are given much spiritual power^{Ⓜ1}. The message they preach is confirmed by deliverances and healings.

Ⓜ1 6:14

Herod Antipas

One person who is unhappy to hear about what Jesus was doing was Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great who is well-known from the story of *Matthew 2:1-20*. When Herod the Great died in 4 BC his kingdom was divided and Herod Antipas became ruler of Galilee until AD 39.

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1. Sinned badly

1. **Herod was a man who knew he had sinned badly.** Herod Antipas had a brother, Herod Philip,² who was married to Herodias. Herod Antipas had persuaded Herodias to leave Philip and had married her¹. It was against the law of *Leviticus 18:16* and *20:21*.

1 6:17b

2. God's voice through John the Baptist

2. **Herod heard the voice of God through John.** John the Baptist had said bluntly that what Herod had done was wrong¹, and Herod had known that John was right in what he had said. He had taken his brother's wife. Herodias was furiously resentful².

1 6:18

2 6:19

3. Herod's confusion

3. **For a while Herod lived in a confused state.** Like many a sinner under conviction of his sinfulness, Herod was a mass of contradiction. He kept John in prison, yet he protected him from Herodias¹. He knew he was a good man and he liked to hear John preach². Yet he would not do anything about his own sin. He could have gone to Philip and Herodias, and to John the Baptist, and told them that he knew what he had done was wrong. But he was unwilling to swallow his pride.

1 6:20

2 6:20

4. Herod's pride

4. **Herod was trapped by his pride and led into greater sinfulness.** It takes sin to protect sin. Herod had sinned in taking his brother's wife. But then, John the Baptist came to him with a particular word from God. So he imprisoned John in resentment and hatred of the word which kept on coming to him. One sin took another sin to protect the first sin.

This is the trouble with the life of sin. It leads into ever deeper and deeper entanglement.

Then it got worse. Herod wanted to limit his wickedness. He did not wish to go any further in his downward course of persecuting John the Baptist. But then he was pushed further still by his new *wife*, Herodias. There is a large banquet for Herod's birthday. There is much feasting, laughter and celebrating. Lots of important people are there¹. Herodias gets her daughter, the princess, to come and dance² before the men in a way that normally only a prostitute would do. The men like the way she dances and Herod makes a foolish promise to do anything for her that she wants³. Prompted by Herodias, she asks for the head of John the Baptist immediately⁴. Herod is trapped. The same pride that will not let him confess his sin will not let him break his word. He would rather commit murder than look foolish before his guests. Pride leads us into strange ways. Herod is reluctant⁵ but John is executed⁶. John's disciples take the body for burial⁷.

1 6:21

2 6:22a

3 6:22b-23

4 6:24-25

5 6:26

6 6:27-28

7 6:29

Trapped by his wife into executing John the Baptist

5. Herod hears about Jesus

5. **Now Herod hears about Jesus.** The amazing thing is that God is giving Herod yet another opportunity. Herod is discovering that God's word to him will not go away. He had got rid of John but now God's word was coming back to him in the preaching of Jesus and His apostles.

Actually it was amazing mercy. It is great mercy when the Word of God keeps coming to us. It is God's wrath when the word is taken away and we hear no more from God. Today if you hear God's voice, do not harden your heart. You may not hear God's voice indefinitely.

Herod ignored God's voice through John

Herod had a chance to send for this *John-back-from-the-dead* and ask for mercy. He believed in John's preaching. He believed in the supernatural. He believed that God could raise the dead. But Herod will not do anything. He hears God's voice but he hardens his heart.

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A while later, Herod Antipas and Jesus meet each other^{☞1}. But Jesus would not say a word to him. Herod rejected Jesus utterly^{☞2}.

☞1 see Luke 23:7-12

Herod was a man who knew that God was speaking to him but would do nothing about it. Then He met the Son of God but it was too late. Since he had resisted God's voice, God's voice was no longer coming to him. Jesus had nothing to say to him. Jesus' mission to the world would continue. Herod had a chance to receive it but missed his opportunity. Herod was lost, but the Kingdom of God would continue to go forward through Jesus.

☞2 see Luke 23:11-12

Notes:

1 There is no contradiction between Matthew and Mark. Matthew does not forbid a staff; he makes the point that it should be provided by others for the worker is worthy of such support.

2 It seems Herod the Great had two sons with the name Philip (but they had different mothers). This one is Herod Philip, son of Mariamne and Herod the Great. See H. Hoehner, Herod Antipas (CUP, 1972, pp. 131-1 36).

Study 12

Expansion and Opposition

Read Mark Chapter 6 verses 6b to 29

Read: **Preaching Through the Bible: Mark**, Chapter 12

A. The twelve are sent on a mission

- Put the following 6 statements in the correct order: The first one has been done for you.
 - Jesus gave the disciples authority over demons.
 - He sent the disciples out in pairs avoiding the danger of isolation.
 - The disciples were to trust the hospitality of the people.
 - The disciples were to preach repentance.
 - Jesus gave the disciples an example.
 - He sent the disciples on their mission.
 - Jesus gave the disciples an example*.....
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- These principles relate to the fact that the gospel was being announced to G.....'s people.
- True or false?**
 - The disciples were provided with material support from God's people Israel.
 - When pioneering among pagans, different principles apply.
 - In modern situations evangelists are supported by sending churches.
 - In modern situations teachers are also supported by sending churches.
- If the disciples and their message was rejected, they should m..... o.....
- Shaking the dust off their feet* was a s..... a..... indicating that the town was u..... and deserving G..... j.....

6. To experience the blessings of the kingdom the hearers would have to ch..... their m..... about m things.
7. The message they preached was confirmed by d..... and he.....

B. Herod Antipas and John the Baptist

People were trying to work out who Jesus was . Some were saying that perhaps He was John the Baptist or even Elijah raised from the dead. Herod Antipas, who had by now heard of Jesus, was confused. He was thinking that He could be the very John the Baptist that he had executed raised to life. Mark records the story of John and Herod here for readers who would not be familiar with the background.

1. Herod Antipas was the ruler of G..... and the son of H..... the G.....
2. He had sinned b..... by stealing H....., his brother P.....'s w..... which was forbidden in the law of L.....
3. J..... the B..... spoke out b..... against this sin.
4. Herod Antipas was a c..... man. He knew John was a g..... man, yet he r..... to acknowledge his s..... He was a p..... man.
5. To protect himself he i..... John. One sin led to a.....
6. H..... enticed Herod to make a f..... promise to give her ' a..... s..... w.....' by getting her daughter to dance before him sensually at a b.....
7. She asked for
8. Herod was greatly d..... (verse 26), but rather than look foolish before his g..... he kept his promise.
9. John was ex..... and his d..... took his body to be buried.
10. It was Herod's p..... that was responsible for this sad chain of events.

C. Herod Antipas and Jesus

Questions 1 - 3 refer to the verses at the beginning of the passage (6:14-16)

1. Jesus' name had become w..... k..... (Mark 6:14)
2. God's word was reaching H..... through this 'J..... b.....- f.....-t.....-d.....'

- a. So H..... could have taken the opportunity to ask for m..... .
 - b. But he did n..... .
3. Herod h..... his h..... and refused God's m..... .

Question 4 refers to the occasion recorded by Luke in Luke 23:7-12

4. When Herod did meet Jesus, Jesus would not say a..... to him.
- a. It was too l..... .
 - b. Herod had r..... God's word u..... .
 - c. The Kingdom of God would g..... f..... .
 - d. But Herod who had had an o..... was l..... .

D. For further thought and discussion

1. If someone with whom you share the gospel is not interested and rejects what you share, how should you respond, and is that the end of the matter?
2. How would you summarise the principles of support for itinerant^g evangelists and teachers today?
3. Why would it be inappropriate for an evangelist working with an unevangelised group of people to expect support from them?
4. What do you think the story of Herod teaches us about hearing God's voice?
5. The verse **'Today if you hear His voice...'** quoted by Michael Eaton comes from *Psalm 95:7-8*. How does the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews use this verse?

E. Notes

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