LESSON *five*

REJECTED

Mark 6:1–56

GETTING STARTED

What is the worst rejection you've ever experienced? How did you get through that time?

Setting the Stage

The events of Mark 1–5 were centered in Capernaum, Jesus' adopted home during His Galilean ministry. In Mark 6, Jesus traveled to Nazareth, His hometown. He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach from the Scriptures. Gathered in the synagogue on that day were members of His family and those who had known Him as a little boy, running around the streets of Nazareth, and as a young man working in the carpentry business.

Jesus' popularity preceded Him. The news of His mighty works piqued people's curiosity. And as He began to teach in the synagogue, the people were astonished. They weren't prepared for the incredible wisdom and integrity that came from His mouth. They could not imagine how this man they had known had come to be what He was. They had watched Him grow up and had seen nothing that suggested He would turn out this way.

But it didn't take long for them to move from astonishment to anger. Their response quickly turned cynical and sarcastic. Their rejection of Jesus spilled out into their words. "Is this not *the carpenter*," they said to each other (Mark 6:3, emphasis added). The citizens of Nazareth viewed Him as nothing more than a common laborer.

"He is no better than we are," they might have objected. "What right does He have to be teaching us? Look at Him. He is just a handyman and nothing more." Furthermore, they added that Jesus was not only *just* a carpenter, but He was also "the Son of Mary" (verse 3). By referring only to Mary, and not to Joseph, they may have been suggesting that Jesus was her illegitimate offspring.

Exploring the Text

A Prophet Without Honor (Mark 6:1–13)

[1] Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. [2] And when the Sabbath had come, He began

to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, "Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! [3] Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him.

[4] But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house." [5] Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. [6] And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

[7] And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. [8] He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts—[9] but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics.

[10] Also He said to them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. [11] And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"

[12] So they went out and preached that people should repent. [13] And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.

---

1. How did people in Jesus' hometown respond to Him (see verses 2–3)? Why do you think strangers were more receptive to Jesus' message than were the people of His hometown?

2. What power did Jesus give to His disciples? What instructions did Jesus give them for their journey (see verses 7–11)?

John the Baptist Beheaded (Mark 6:14–29)

14 Now King Herod heard of Him, for His name had become well
known. And he said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and
therefore these powers are at work in him."
15 Others said, "It is Elijah."
And others said, "It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets."
16 But when Herod heard, he said, "This is John, whom I beheaded;
he has been raised from the dead!" 17 For Herod himself had sent and
laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias,
his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. 18 Because John had
said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."
19 Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him,
but she could not; 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a
just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him,
he did many things, and heard him gladly.
21 Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave
a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee.
22 And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and
pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl,
"Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you." 23 He also swore
to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom."
24 So she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?"
And she said, "The head of John the Baptist!"

[25] Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

[26] And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. [27] Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, [28] brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. [29] When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

3. How did Herod respond to John the Baptist? Why might Herod and Herodias have had different attitudes toward John (see verses 17–20)?

4. How was Herodias able to force Herod into executing John the Baptist (see verses 21–23)?

30 Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both
what they had done and what they had taught. 31 And He said to
them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a
while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not
even have time to eat. 32 So they departed to a deserted place in
the boat by themselves.

33 But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him
and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and
came together to Him. 34 And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great
multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they
were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them
many things. 35 When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to
Him and said, "This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late.
36 Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country
and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat."

37 But He answered and said to them, "You give them something
to eat."

And they said to Him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii
worth of bread and give them something to eat?"

38 But He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go
and see."

And when they found out they said, "Five, and two fish."

39 Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups
on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in
fifties. 41 And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish,
He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave
them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided
among them all. 42 So they all ate and were filled. 43 And they took up
twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. 44 Now those who
had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.

5. What do Jesus' instructions in verse 31 tell you about His concern for His disciples?

6. How would you describe the difference between the disciples' concern for the multitude and Jesus' concern for them (see verses 34–36)?

Jesus Walks on the Water (Mark 6:45–56)

[45] Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. [46] And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. [47] Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. [48] Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. [49] And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; [50] for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." [51] Then He went up

into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. [52] For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.

[53] When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. [54] And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, [55] ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. [56] Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.

7. Why do you think prayer was so important to Jesus (see verse 46)?

8. How might the disciples' hardened hearts have affected their understanding of Jesus' words (see verse 52)?

Reviewing the Story

Jesus' return to His hometown of Nazareth turned ugly when the people who had known Him all of His life rejected Him and His message. Shortly thereafter, Jesus learned that John the Baptist, His forerunner and brother in ministry, had been executed. Yet Jesus would not allow His circumstances to define His ministry. When a crowd of thousands of people grew hungry after following Jesus to a remote area, He fed them all with only five loaves of bread and two fish. Hours later, He stilled a raging storm at sea with a single command.

9. What advantages might there have been to sending out the disciples in pairs (see Mark 6:7)?

10. John the Baptist's execution marked a turning point in the relationship between the government and Jesus' followers (see Mark 6:27–28). What message did Herod send when he ordered John's beheading?

11. Why do you think Jesus insisted that His disciples rest (see Mark 6:31)? How is rest an essential component of serving the Lord?

12. Being a disciple of Jesus was a constant learning experience. What do you think the disciples learned when they experienced Jesus walking on the surface of the Sea of Galilee (see Mark 6:48–51)?

Applying the Message

13. The disciples had only five loaves of bread and two fish. What do you have to offer Jesus? What could He do with it?

14. Think of your greatest fear—something that terrifies you the way the ghostly figure walking on the water terrified the disciples. If you were to pray for Jesus to make His presence known to you, as He did for the disciples, what difference might it make?

Reflecting on the Meaning

There are at least three points to take away from Jesus' experience in Nazareth. The first is that if you face rejection, your immediate action should be to *go to the Lord Jesus Christ and tell Him what you are feeling.* He can and will empathize with you. He experienced rejection, too. His whole life was one episode of rejection after another, all the way to the cross. So don't think you are alone. The One who saved you from your sin knows rejection. You can talk to Him about it.

The second takeaway is that rejection is a *momentary and spontaneous decision by one person to show cruelty to another.* It does not define you. Rejection has little to do with the person being rejected and everything to do with the one doing the rejecting. You may ask, "What can I do so people won't reject me anymore?" The answer is probably nothing. You can't get others to be what they are not. You cannot change who they are or what they do.

However, while you are not responsible for what other people do to you, you *are* responsible for how you react to them. The ideal strategy is to follow Jesus' instructions. Shake the dust off your feet and remove yourself from those people's presence. When you resist the urge to exact revenge on those who rejected you, you nullify their power to hurt or diminish you.

The third takeaway is that if you are rejected because of your relationship with Christ, *you should rejoice.* Jesus said, "Blessed are you when men

hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake" (Luke 6:22). Being rejected for the sake of Christ is a badge of honor and an experience that will be richly rewarded. So don't be intimidated by the thought of rejection. The favor of people is always fickle. Take comfort in the fact the Lord you serve will never reject you.

Journaling Your Response

What can you do today to ease your fear of rejection?