

Mark Chapter 6

Verses 1-6: Here begins Jesus' final extended ministry to His native area. His rejection there sets the stage for the mission beginning (in verse 7).

Mark 6:1 "And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him."

"His own country" is doubtless Nazareth (1:9, 24).

"His disciples": This was not a private, family visit for Jesus, but a time for ministry.

We see here, that even though He had not been readily accepted by His family and friends at Nazareth, Jesus came back here from time to time to try to minister. His family in the flesh still lived in Nazareth. Now all of the disciples had joined Jesus, Peter, James, and John who were present at Jairus' house.

Mark 6:2 "And 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?"

"Sabbath" (see note on 2:23). This implies that no public teaching was done until the Sabbath.

"Teach in the synagogue" (see note on 1:21).

"Astonished": The same word as used in (1:22; see note there). However, here the people's initial reaction gave way to skepticism and a critical attitude toward Jesus.

We have mentioned before that whenever Jesus was near a synagogue on Sabbath, He always preached and taught. Here at Nazareth, all of the people think of Him as just a man like them, because they saw Him grow up in the house of Mary and Joseph. They could not visualize Him as God manifest in the flesh, because they knew Him too well.

I can see a little jealousy in the statement "from whence hath this man these things". You see, a prophet is without honor in his own home town. They surely could not believe these miracles they had been hearing about were done by this fellow they knew so well.

Mark 6:3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judah, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him."

"Carpenter": The people of Nazareth still thought of Jesus as one who carried on his father's trade (Matt. 13:55), as a craftsman who worked in wood and other hard materials (e.g., stones, bricks). The common earthly position of Jesus and His family caused the townspeople to stumble, they refused to see Him as higher than themselves and found it impossible to accept Him as the Son of God and Messiah.

"Son of Mary": Only here is Jesus called this. The normal Jewish practice was to identify a son by his father's (Joseph's), name. Perhaps that was not done here because Joseph was already dead.

Or because Christ's audience was recalling the rumors concerning Jesus' illegitimate birth (John 8:41; 9:29), a man was called the son of his mother if his father was unknown, and were purposely insulting Him with this title as a reference to illegitimacy.

“Brother of James, and Joses, and of Judah, and of Simon” (see note on Matt. 12:46). These were actual half-brothers of Jesus. “James” was later the leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12), and wrote the epistle of James. “Judas” (Hebrew name “Judah”), wrote the epistle of Jude. Nothing more is known of the other two.

“His sisters”: Actual half-sisters whose names are never given in the New Testament. Nothing is known of them, not even if they became believers as the other family members did.

“They were offended at him”: The English term “scandalize” comes from the Greek verb translated “were offended,” which essentially means “to stumble,” or “become ensnared,” and fall into a sin (see note on 4:7).

The residents of Nazareth were deeply offended at Jesus’ posturing Himself as some great teacher because of His ordinary background, His limited formal education, and His lack of an officially-sanctioned religious position.

Here they were saying, "Who does He think He is? This is the carpenter who worked right here with us." Again, they were saying, how could Jesus be anyone special? They knew His family.

Mark 6:4 "But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house."

(See note on Matt. 13:57). Jesus called Himself a prophet, in accord with one of His roles (verse 15; 8:28; Matt. 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 6:14; 7:40; 9:17).

“Own house”: His own family (John 7:5; Acts 1:14).

Not only Jesus had trouble with this, but every minister who ever lived. The problem is that the family and friends see you grow up around them.

Mark 6:5 "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed [them]."

“He could there do no mighty work” (Matt. 13:58). This is not to suggest that His power was somehow diminished by their unbelief. It may suggest that because of their unbelief people were not coming to Him for healing or miracles the way they did in Capernaum and Jerusalem.

Or more importantly, it may signify that Christ limited His ministry both as an act of mercy, so that the exposure to greater light would not result in a worse hardening that would only subject them to greater condemnation, and a judgment on their unbelief. He had the power to do more miracles, but not the will, because they rejected Him. Miracles belonged among those who were ready to believe.

The point is not that Jesus was suddenly lacking in ability to do miracles, He does perform a few. Rather He finds contempt and hardness of heart, which are the antitheses of receptivity and faith. Under such circumstances, further disclosure of God’s presence in His Messiah is denied.

Mark 6:6 "And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching."

“He marveled because of their unbelief”: “Marveled” means Jesus was completely astonished and amazed at Nazareth’s reaction to Him, His teaching, and His miracles. He was not surprised at the fact of the people’s unbelief, but at how they could reject Him while claiming to know all about Him. Faith should have been the response in that town in Galilee, the region where Christ did so many miracles and so much teaching.

“Round about the villages”: The outcome of Jesus’ visit to Nazareth was that He left there and made a teaching tour of other places in Galilee, concluding near where He started (Matt. 9:35).

Only here does Mark speak of Jesus as having “marveled.” Resistance to Him is tragically astounding.

God will not force Himself upon anyone. Our free will gets involved in anything we receive from God. Nearly every time someone was healed, Jesus would say, "Your faith has made you whole." Without faith, very little healing went on. He taught in their villages, and they could take it or leave it.

Verses 7-13: “The twelve” are sent out. From (here to 9:50), Jesus and His followers will minister in a wide area well north of Jerusalem.

Mark 6:7 "And he called [unto him] the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;"

“The twelve” (see notes on 3:16-19; Matt. 10:2-4). The 12 disciples were by then a divinely-commissioned, recognized group.

“Send them forth”: The form of the Greek verb indicates that Jesus individually commissioned each pair to go out as His representatives.

“Two by two”: This was a prudent practice (Eccl. 4:9-12), employed by Jewish alms collectors, by John the Baptist (Luke 7:19), by Jesus on other occasions (11:1; 14:3; Luke 10:1), and by the early church (Acts 13:2-3; 15:39-41; 19:22). The practice gave the disciples mutual help and encouragement and met the legal requirement for an authentic testimony (Deut. 19:15).

“Unclean spirits” (see notes on 1:23; 5:2).

This was the sending forth of the disciples to minister. Notice Jesus sent them by two's. There is ten times the power with two as with one. The important strength they needed was power to overcome Satan and his demons, and we see that Jesus endowed them with power over all evil spirits.

Mark 6:8 "And commanded them that they should take nothing for [their] journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in [their] purse:"

“Staff”: The walking stick, a universal companion of travelers in those days, which also provided potential protection from criminals and wild animals.

“Scrip” is a knapsack of some sort. “Purse” is a belt.

They were not to carry things with them to live on. They were to be dressed simply and go by two's.

Mark 6:9 "But [be] shod with sandals; and not put on two coats."

“Shod with sandals”: Ordinary footwear consisting of leather or wood soles bound on by straps around the ankle and instep. “Sandals” were necessary protection for the feet in view of the hot, rough terrain of Palestine.

“Not put on two coats”: “Tunics” were standard garments of clothing. Men of comparative wealth would wear two, but Jesus wanted the disciples to identify with common people and travel with just minimum clothing.

Jesus' commands make His disciples totally dependent on God. No bread, no bag, not even a coin or second "coat" (tunic), to ward off the night chill – all was calculated to make their initial preaching tour an exercise in radical faith.

Mark 6:10 "And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place."

The disciples were to carefully select where they stayed (Matt. 10:11), but once there, the sole focus was to be on ministry. Contentment with their first host and his accommodations would be a testimony to others while the disciples ministered (1 Tim. 6:6).

Mark 6:11 "And 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 Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city."

"Shake off the dust": A symbolic act that signified complete renunciation of further fellowship with those who rejected them (see note on Matt. 10:14). When the disciples made this gesture, it would show that the people had rejected Jesus and the gospel, and were hence rejected by the disciples and by the Lord.

We see that when the disciples entered into a city, they were to pick out a family and move into their home and stay there as long as they were ministering in that city. If the city did not receive the good news of the gospel, they were to shake the filth of the city (dust) off of their feet.

Sodom and Gomorrah were two evil cities destroyed by the Lord in Genesis because of their homosexual activities. We are familiar with the fire and brimstone that fell and destroyed them. Any city which rejected Jesus was in for a similar fate, as we saw in the above verse.

Verses 12-13: "Preacher ... cast out many devils" (compare verse 7). They were heralds of the gospel and had repeated success in expelling evil spirits from people. This demonstrated Christ's power over the supernatural world and confirmed His claim to being God.

Mark 6:12 "And they went out, and preached that men should repent."

"Repent" (see notes on 1:15; Matt. 3:2).

The message is that of Jesus Himself (1:15).

The most important message of any preacher or church is repent. It is wonderful to be healed and wonderful to be freed of demons; but if you don't repent and be saved, it is all for naught. The salvation for mankind is first and foremost, and then his physical well-being.

Mark 6:13 "And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed [them]."

"Anointed ... many that were sick": In Jesus' day olive oil was often used medicinally (Luke 10:34). But here it represented the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and was used symbolically in relation to supernatural healing (Isa. 11:2; Zech. 4:1-6; Matt. 25:2-4; Revelation 1:4, 12).

As a well-known healing agent, the oil was an appropriate, tangible medium the people could identify with as the disciples ministered to the sick among them.

Verses 14-29: This parenthetical section on “Herod” is inserted for the following reasons:

- (1) It elaborates on “John” the Baptist’s sudden disappearance from the public scene (briefly mentioned in 1:14), and his death.
- (2) The Baptist’s martyrdom foreshadows one sort of persecution awaiting Jesus and many of His servants.
- (3) The Baptist’s loss of ministry is one reason Jesus dispatches the Twelve in their mission (in verses 7-13).
- (4) It shows Jesus’ fame to be so widespread that it reaches Herod’s court.
- (5) It reveals the world’s blindness to Jesus: while many hold Him in high regard, identifying Him as “Elijah,” a “prophet,.” Or as the Baptist, they do not esteem Him highly enough; they fail to recognize Him as God’s Son.

Mark 6:14 "And 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 shew forth themselves in him."

“King Herod heard” (see note on Matt. 14:1). The context indicates Herod heard some exciting news centering on Jesus and resulting from the disciples’ recent preaching and miracle working in Galilee.

“John the Baptist”: The forerunner of Christ (see notes on 1:4-7; Matt. 3:1, 4, 6).

“Herod heard”, perhaps due to the disciples’ preaching.

The "Him" here was Jesus, and because Herod had John beheaded, he believed Jesus was John resurrected. Herod was afraid of John the Baptist while he was alive, but he was more afraid now that he felt he was risen again. Herodias and Herod were living in adultery in John's views, and this statement was why they had him beheaded.

Mark 6:15 "Others said, That it is Elijah. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets."

“It is Elijah”: This identification of Jesus, which probably had been discussed repeatedly among the Jews, was based on the Jewish expectation that the prophet Elijah would return prior to Messiah’s coming (see notes on Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14; Luke 1:17).

“A prophet, or as one of the prophets”: Some saw Jesus as the fulfillment of (Deut. 18:15), the messianic prophecy that looked to the One who, like Moses, would lead His people.

Others were willing to identify Jesus only as a great prophet, or one who was resuming the suspended line of Old Testament prophets. These and the other opinions, although misplaced, show that the people still thought Jesus was special or somehow supernatural.

This was the answer Peter gave Jesus, when Jesus asked him who people said that He was. This Jesus Christ was a man of such unusual characteristics that everyone was giving their opinion of who He was. The Jews were looking for Elijah, so they thought this might be him.

Some of these very names are the names put on Him today. Some believe He was a man, a prophet, or a teacher. But Peter had the answer when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". Immanuel, means God with us. God caught up in the body of man.

Mark 6:16 "But when Herod heard [thereof], he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead."

“John ... he is risen”: By this excited, guilt-laden confession, Herod showed that he could not forget the evil he had done in beheading John the Baptist and that his conscience had led him to the eerie fear that John was back from the dead (Matt. 14:1-2; Luke 9:7-9).

You see, Herod's conscience had gotten the best of him, and he just knew this was John who had risen from the grave and was here to take revenge on him for the terrible death he inflicted on John by cutting off his head.

Verses 17-29: Mark gives background for readers who might not be aware of the details behind Herod's and John's relationship, and John's eventual fate.

Mark 6:17 "For 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."

“John ... bound him in prison”: Herod kept him fettered while imprisoned, probably at Machaerus, near the northeast shore of the Dead Sea. Herod's intention was to protect John from the plots of Herodias (verse 20).

“Herodias”: Herod's niece, the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus.

“Philip”: Herod Philip II, another half-brother to Herod Antipas (the Herod in this passage). Therefore, Philip was also an uncle to Herodias (see note on Matt. 14:3).

Mark 6:18 "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

“John had said ... it is not lawful”: The tense of the Greek verb and Mark's wording imply that John had repeatedly rebuked Herod Antipas in private confrontation that his marriage to Herodias was contrary to Mosaic law (see note on Matt. 14:3; Matt. 3:7-10).

Mark 6:19-20 "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:" "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

We can see from this, that Herod had great admiration for John. He actually feared John. Possibly, Herod would have repented and been converted, had it not been for Herodias.

“He did many things”: This indicates that Herod's interaction with John left him in great internal conflict, a moral struggle between his lust for Herodias and the prodding of his guilty conscience.

Mark 6:21 "And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief [estates] of Galilee;"

“Lords”: This term may also be translated “nobles,” or “great ones.” These were men who held high civil offices under Herod.

“High captains”: High-ranking military officials (Greek chiliarchs), who each commanded 1,000 men.

“Chief estates of Galilee”: The key social leaders of the region.

Mark 6:22 "And 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."

“Daughter of the said Herodias”: Salome, her daughter by Philip (see note on Matt. 14:6).

“Danced”: Refers to a solo dance with highly suggestive hand and body movements, comparable to a modern striptease. It was unusual and almost unprecedented that Salome would have performed in this way before Herod’s guests (Est. 1:11-12).

Mark 6:23 "And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give [it] thee, unto the half of my kingdom."

“Unto the half of my kingdom”: This was an exaggeration designed to enhance his previous statement of generosity. As a Roman tetrarch, Herod actually had no “kingdom” to give.

Mark 6:24-25 "And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist." "And 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."

The use of a “charger” perhaps indicates Herodias’s warped humor on that festive day when she could get even with her husband and be rid of John

Mark 6:26 "And the king was exceeding sorry; [yet] for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her."

“For his oath’s sake”: Herod, as a monarch, felt bound because oaths were considered sacred and unbreakable (see notes on Matt. 5:34; 14:9).

Mark 6:27 "And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,"

“Executioner”: Originally meant spy or scout, but came to describe a staff member of a Roman tribune. They served as couriers and bodyguards as well as executioners. Herod had adopted the custom of surrounding himself with such men.

Mark 6:28 "And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother."

It is really not hard to understand why Herod would feel guilty. Not only did he have John the Baptist killed, but for no reason at all; just to save face with his friends. This Herodias was even more evil than Herod.

Loose promises can get a person in a terrible situation, and that was exactly what happened to Herod. There was no way to take it back, it was done, and Herod would have to live with his conscience. We dealt with this more fully in the 14th chapter of Matthew. You may desire to read more about it there.

Mark 6:29 "And when his disciples heard [of it], they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb."

These disciples (in verse 29), were John the Baptist's disciples that buried him in a tomb. Jesus' disciples that He had sent out came back and reported all the healings, deliverances, and preaching they had done. Whether John's death prompted an early return or not, the Scriptures do not say. This had to have stirred them up somewhat, however.

Verses 30-56: Jesus' influence broadens through additional miracles.

Mark 6:30 "And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught."

The "apostles" (here used, most likely, in a nontechnical sense, meaning "ones sent out" or "emissaries"), report to Jesus.

Mark Chapter 6 Questions

1. What was meant by Jesus' own country?
2. Why did Jesus come back several times to His own land to minister?
3. When did Jesus begin to teach in the synagogue?
4. What effect did this have on the local people?
5. Why did the people of Nazareth treat Him as if He is just a man?
6. The statement "from whence hath this man these things" showed they were what?
7. In verse 3, who do they call Jesus?
8. Where is a prophet without honor?
9. What did their unbelief keep Him from doing?
10. What were the only two things He did?
11. What is involved in everything we receive from God?
12. Who did Jesus send out two by two?
13. What power did Jesus give them?
14. What were they to take with them to live on?
15. Where were they to live?
16. What if the city didn't accept them?

17. What did these disciples preach?
18. What is the most important message for preachers even today?
19. Why had King Herod heard of Him?
20. Who did Herod think Jesus was?
21. Who did most believe Jesus was?
22. Who did Peter say He was?
23. Herod believed John the Baptist had _____.
24. What terrible thing had Herod done to John?
25. If Herod was afraid of John, why did he carry out this hideous crime against him?
26. Who came for John the Baptist's body?
27. When Jesus' apostles gathered to Him, what did they report?

Mark Chapter 6 Continued

Verses 31-32: Jesus recognizes their need for a break.

Mark 6:31 "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

“Ye yourselves”: Jesus’ invitation for a retreat into the desert was restricted to the 12. He knew they needed rest and privacy after their tiring ministry expedition and the continuing press of the people.

We see from this, that even ministers of God should find a time and go aside and rest. These disciples had been out ministering from village to village and this terrible thing with John the Baptist had just happened, as well. This was supposed to be a time of rest and relaxation.

Mark 6:32 "And they departed into a desert place by ship privately."

“They departed ... by ship privately”: The disciples obeyed Jesus’ proposal, departing from His headquarters in Capernaum using the same boat as in 5:2.

Mark 6:33 "And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him."

“Ran afoot”: The direction (toward the northeast shore of the lake) and speed of the boat, along with the immediate lack of other available boats, caused the crowd to follow by land.

“Came together unto him”: Contained only in Mark’s account, this does not necessarily mean everyone arrived before the boat, because the land distance was probably 8 miles, twice as far as the 4 miles the boat had to travel.

Rather, those young and eager in the crowd were able to outrun both the rest and the boat (probably because it encountered no wind or a contrary wind) and actually arrive at the shore before the boat (Matt. 14:13-14, Luke 9:11; John 6:3, 5).

We see, here, that the fame of Jesus had spread so widely that even in this hiding place the multitude had found Him and gathered to Him.

Mark 6:34 "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things."

“Moved with compassion”: See note on Matt. 9:36.

“Sheep not having a shepherd”: An Old Testament picture (Num. 27:17; 1 King 22:17; 2 Chron. 18:16; Ezek. 34:5) used to describe the people as helpless and starving, lacking in spiritual guidance and protection, and exposed to the perils of sin and spiritual destruction.

Even though Jesus was headed to the desert to rest and recuperate with the disciples, His heart was still moved by these people with such great needs. The scribes really could not have been called shepherds, because the good and welfare of the sheep was not their purpose.

Jesus was never too busy to help them, and He is never too busy to help us in our needs. Jesus is the great Shepherd. His concern is for His sheep.

This next part of Mark, right here, is so important that this same miracle is told in all four of the gospels. This really made an indelible picture in the minds of those who saw it. Now we will get into the story of the five loaves of bread and the two fishes.

Mark 6:35-36 "And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time [is] far passed:" "Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat."

Jesus had probably set the scene for this whole thing so that He could show this great miracle to the people and to the disciples. He knew it was a desert place. He had ministered late; so there would be no chance to go for food, and the people would be very hungry, as well.

The disciples had not yet learned that no situation was impossible to Jesus. The disciples could only think of the physical, so they suggested that Jesus send them away into the country round about to buy food.

Mark 6:37 "He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?"

“Two hundred pennyworth”: (Denarii) A single denarius (see note on Matt. 22:19) was equivalent to a day’s pay for the day laborer (Matt. 20:2). “Two hundred” would therefore equal 7 month’s wages and be quite beyond the disciples’ (or any average person’s) means.

The Roman denarius, a silver coin used in Palestine. A “pennyworth” amounted to the wage for one day of a rural worker’s labor.

Jesus, just matter of factly said, feed them. This "two hundred penny" was actually the wages of a man for 200 days, so it truly was a large amount of money. This crowd was so large, even this large amount might not even be enough.

Mark 6:38 "He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes."

“Loaves”: Literally “bread-cakes” or “rolls.”

Jesus already knew how much there was, but asked them to make a point. Their answer was five loaves. The number five, as we have said before, means "grace". This people would be fed by the grace of God.

Mark 6:39 "And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass."

“Green grass”: This detail indicates it was the spring rainy season, before the hot summer would have turned the grass dry and brown.

Mark 6:40 "And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties."

“In ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties”: A symmetrical seating arrangement, possibly 50 semi-circles of 100 people each, with the semi-circles one behind the other in ranks. Such an arrangement was familiar to the Jews during their festivals, and it made food distribution more convenient.

In the Matthew account, it seems that just the men were numbered. A rank here is, possibly, "one hundred".

Mark 6:41 "And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave [them] to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all."

“Looked up to heaven”: A typical prayer posture for Jesus (7:34; Luke 24:35; John 11:41; 17:1). Heaven was universally regarded as the Father’s dwelling place (Matt. 6:9).

Judaism forbade taking food without thanking God.

Mark 6:42 "And they did all eat, and were filled."

“All eat and were filled”: The hunger of everyone in the crowd was completely satisfied (John 6:11).

Jesus prayed over this food as He breaks it and distributed it. This reminds me so much of the widow who fed Elijah during the famine.

1 Kings 17:9-16 tells the story. Verse 14 pretty well tells how the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil kept replenishing itself, even though there was just enough meal and oil for one meal when they started going to the cupboard the first time. Each time they went back; God had placed enough for another meal, and this went on until the famine was over.

1 Kings 17:14 "For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day [that] the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth."

You see, in both instances, God multiplied the food until all the need was met.

Mark 6:43 "And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes."

“Twelve baskets full”: The “baskets,” apparently the same ones used to bring the food, were small wicker containers like the ones the Jews used to carry food.

Mark 6:44 "And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men."

Five thousand would be an immense crowd, towns like Capernaum and Bethsaida numbering perhaps only two to three thousand inhabitants. But they were all filled, and there was an excess of food remaining – and the number does not include women and children.

This means that there were actually over 10,000 people who ate counting the women and children. Whether the twelve baskets had something to do with the twelve disciples, I know not. We see from the amount of leftovers that all of these people were full with extra left over.

We might, also, realize from this that Jesus is the Bread of Life, and whosoever will can partake. There is always enough for more.

Verses 45-52: In the wake of the miraculous feeding, Jesus performs yet other wonders, namely walking on the lake and stilling a gale.

Mark 6:45 "And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people."

“The ship”: See note on verse 32.

“Bethsaida”: A town on the west side of the Sea of Galilee and south of Capernaum (Matt. 11:21).

We see from this, that the Lord had sent them out on the sea so that He could show them another type of miracle. They could learn more of His nature, and they could learn to have stronger faith in Him.

Mark 6:46 "And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray."

“A mountain”: The entire east side of the Sea of Galilee is mountainous with steep slopes leading up to a plateau. Upon one of the slopes was a good place to pray, away from the crowd (John 6:15).

We see from this, the necessity to get alone and talk to God. God wants us to have time alone with Him when there is no one there, but Him and you. In the hurry up life we live in, most people will just not take time to pray alone. This prayer is the most effective, because God knows you are praying just for His benefit (no one else hears).

If the Lord Jesus needed to pray, think how badly we need to pray.

Mark 6:47 "And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land."

“Midst of the sea”: Normally in traveling across the northern end of the lake they would have been within one or two miles of shore. But on that occasion, the wind had carried the boat several miles south, closer to the center of the lake (Matt. 14:24).

The scene was set for the great miracle. Jesus would show them and us (who are on the great sea of life struggling to make it), that our strength is not in ourselves, but in Him. They were paddling their hearts out trying to make it to the other side. We are struggling with the trials (sea) of this life trying to somehow make it to the other side (heaven).

Mark 6:48 "And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them."

The “fourth watch” was from 3 to 6 a.m.

“Walking upon the sea”: The verb’s tense depicts a steady progress, unhindered by the waves.

“Would have passed by them”: The more literal rendering “desired to come alongside of,” indicates Jesus’ intention here. He wanted to test the disciples’ faith, so He deliberately changed course and came parallel to the boat to see if they would recognize Him and His supernatural powers and invite Him aboard.

We see a very stressful situation; they were rowing as hard as they could, but the west wind was blowing so hard that they were making no headway at all. This fourth watch is the darkest of the night, just before the dawn. This, too, has great significance; because in our darkest hour, the Lord will come to our rescue.

Mark 6:49 "But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:"

“Spirit” here means an apparition or a ghost. A ghost or an apparition or imaginary creature. The Greek term gives us the English “phantom.” Because of the impossibility of such an act and their fatigue and fear in the stormy conditions, the 12, even though each one saw Him, did not at first believe the figure was actually Jesus.

They cried out for His help. This is exactly when the Lord will help us, as well. He will help us when we realize that we need Him and cannot do it by ourselves. We know that they had never seen a person walking on the water before. It frightened them.

Mark 6:50 "For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."

“Be of good cheer”: This command; always linked in the gospels to a situation of fear and apprehension (10:49; Matt. 9:2, 22; 14:27; Luke 8:48; John 16:33; Acts 23:11), urged the disciples to have a continuing attitude of courage.

“It is I”: Literally “I AM”. This statement clearly identified the figure as the Lord Jesus, not some phantom. It also echoed the Old Testament self-revelation of God (Exodus 3:14).

“Troubled” speaks of abject terror. Spirits of the night were thought to portend disaster.

He immediately told them not to fear. We studied in Matthew how at this same occasion, Peter walked on the water. He tells us, "Fear not, I am with thee even unto the end of the earth".

Mark 6:51 "And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered."

See the disciples’ earlier response (4:41).

Just as in this ship tossed by the sea, we will find when we are tossed by the sea of life and we ask Jesus to come aboard, it brings peace. A troubled life needs Jesus to step in and bring the peace which passes understanding.

Mark 6:52 "For they considered not [the miracle] of the loaves: for their heart was hardened."

“They considered not ... the loaves”: An explanation of the disciples’ overwhelming astonishment at what had just happened. Because they misunderstood the real significance of that afternoon’s miracle, they could not grasp Jesus’ supernatural character as displayed in His power over the lake.

“Their heart was hardened”: 8:17. The disciples’ minds were impenetrable, so that they could not perceive what Christ was saying (4:11-12). This phrase conveys or alludes to rebellion, not just ignorance (see note on 3:5).

The disciples’ terror and confusion were rooted in not perceiving the true significance of Jesus’ words and deeds. They were unable to grasp that He was the divine Son of God, the Lord incarnate.

It is amazing, to me, that these disciples so quickly had forgotten about the miracle of the feeding of the 5000. We, today in our church forget so fast the miracles; and we tend to say, "Jesus, what have you done for me in the last five minutes?"

Verses 53-56: This scene summarizes Jesus’ wondrous and compassionate activity.

Mark 6:53 "And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore."

They had wanted to land at Bethsaida (verse 45), but the wind blew them off course.

Gennesaret means a "fertile garden". This was on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. See note on Matt. 14:34.

Mark 6:54 "And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,"

By this time, Jesus had gained fame throughout the region.

When Jesus got off the boat, the people already knew Him.

Mark 6:55 "And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was."

It seems that His fame had already spread throughout this region; and now that He was here, people ran quickly and brought everyone who was sick or crippled to Him. They believed that even if they could touch His garment, they would be healed; and that was just what happened.

Mark 6:56 "And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole."

Open spaces, usually just inside city walls or near city centers where people congregated for various business and social purposes. Here the term might indicate its original meaning of any place where people generally assembled. The people brought the sick to such locations because Jesus was more likely to pass by.

“Border of his garment”: See note on 5:28.

Their faith was activated as they touched His garment, and He healed everyone who believed strong enough to reach out to Him. Their faith touched Him, and He healed them. All we must do is reach out to Jesus and believe, and He will help us, too.

Mark Chapter 6 Continued Questions

1. In verse 31, what can we learn about ministers of God?
2. When Jesus went to this desert place, what did the people do?
3. When Jesus saw the multitude, how did He feel toward them?
4. What did He see them as?
5. Why were the scribes not called shepherds?
6. Who is the great Shepherd?

7. What two things did the disciples tell Jesus was the condition of the people before the miracle of the bread and fishes?
8. How much money did the disciples have altogether?
9. How many days work was this amount?
10. How much food did they find among the people?
11. The number five is symbolic of what?
12. Why was the green grass mentioned?
13. How were the people grouped?
14. What did Jesus do before He distributed the food?
15. Who, in I Kings, saw the food miraculously multiplied?
16. How many men were fed?
17. How much food was left over?
18. Where did Jesus send the disciples after the miracle feed?
19. Why had Jesus sent them away?
20. Where did Jesus go and why?
21. Why is a prayer, when you are alone with God, so effective?
22. What does this ship in the midst of the sea symbolize in our lives?
23. When is the fourth watch of the night?
24. When they saw Jesus walking on the water, what did they think?
25. When they were frightened, what two things did Jesus tell them?
26. When Jesus got into the ship, what happened?

27. What had the disciples forgotten?

28. What does Gennesaret mean?

29. What happened when Jesus and the disciples got to the shore?

30. Who did Jesus heal?