

Mark 6:1-13, 30

Date: Sunday, 18 April 2021

Scripture: Mark 6:1-13, 30

Sermon: The Joy of Discipleship

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Passage

Mark 6:1 He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." 5 And 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.

And he went about among the villages teaching.

Mark 6:7 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— 9 but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. 10 And he said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. 11 And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." 12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

Mark 6:30 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.

Transcript

The Joy of Discipleship

What brings joy to your life? There's a whole number of things that can give us joy. For me, as you've heard me and as you've gotten to know me, you probably know it's coffee, it's hanging out with people, it's rock climbing. But what about following Jesus? Is there joy in following Jesus? This week, we're going to look at the joy of discipleship. And we're going to focus on three things, rejection, reliance and repentance. Maybe you're thinking, how can these things be part of the joy of discipleship? But let's have a look at this together....

Rejection

Firstly, rejection. Rejection is part of following Jesus and it's part of the joy of following. I want to show you what that looks like,

He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." Mark 6:1-4 (ESV)

Following Jesus means that we will be rejected. If Jesus himself, our Lord and saviour, is rejected then we too will be rejected. If he had to go to the cross, if he was despised by some of his closest friends and family, then we will be too.

You're probably thinking, Justin, how is there joy in rejection? Rejection is not a pleasant thing. I think about the times where I have experienced rejection. Finish-

ing my law degree, I applied for about 40 different law firms, and every single law firm rejected me. Talk about rejection. It's not pleasant. So how is there possibly joy in being rejected by others because we follow Jesus?

I'll try to give an example. Growing up, Rachel moved a number of times to different high schools. It was a very tumultuous time for her. But towards the end of high school, she moved to a really good school, and she was part of the popular group whilst she was there. But over time, she realised that her friends were not very nice. She'd call them out for bullying, they were doing drugs, they were skipping school. And it got to the point where she was rejected by the group because she was standing up for what was right. In the same way, as we stand up for Jesus, we are standing up for what is right. And there's a joy in doing that because we are doing it for the glory of God. I don't mean we are to condemn others, but I'm talking about following Jesus and being rejected for it. There's a joy in it because we are doing what is right.

And when I look at the Scriptures, I realise that there are many examples in the New Testament where the disciples are rejected, and yet they rejoice. In Acts 5, the apostles are put into prison by the high priest. They're released by an angel, and they continue teaching in the temple. Peter, having already denied Jesus before he was killed, boldly says to the High Priest that he must obey God and not men. Peter and the Apostles get beaten by the High Priest, and we're told,

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. Acts 5:41-42 (ESV)

I wonder whether we find ourselves rejoicing in the rejection we find ourselves in. I must admit that I don't at times. But New Testament writers talk about rejoicing in the rejection that we find ourselves in!

Remember these words from Peter

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 1 Peter 4:12-14 (ESV)

An author I read recently shared about how she had spoken to a pastor and his wife who had grown a church in the Middle East. The pastor and his wife shared about the difficulties and the rejection that they faced. One night, they had men come into their house, and beat them to an inch of their lives. The pastor's wife, she had to be airlifted back to the US. Recovery was long. But the one thing that was on her mind as she was recovering was to go back to the Middle East to serve them. A love and joy to serve the people there. This author then asks, "How did you get the strength to do that?" And she replied, "Because I was willing to die for Jesus." I hear that story, and I go wow. And I reflect on that, I think about that, and I wonder why don't I rejoice in suffering in Jesus? And I've come to the conclusion that maybe it's because Jesus isn't my ultimate treasure. Because if Jesus is my ultimate treasure, then I'd be willing to die for him.

Are you finding yourself rejected by those around you? Maybe it's not physical violence, maybe it's "low-grade rejection." The weird looks that people give you when they ask you what you're doing on the weekend and you tell them that you go to church. Whatever rejection you may be going through, my encouragement to you this morning is to remember that if Jesus himself was rejected by those closest to him, then we should not expect anything different. Rejoice in rejection because who we live and stand for is totally worth it.

Reliance

But the other aspect of the joy of discipleship is reliance.

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. Mark 6:7-9 (ESV)

I've been wondering, why does Jesus ask his disciples to not take anything with them on their journey? No bread, no bag, no money in their belts. No two tunics. One of the reasons that Jesus tells his disciples to do that is that they are to learn to rely on God to provide as they served Him. If the disciples follow Jesus, they need to do ministry his way. They are to learn to do ministry his way and his way alone. They are to depend completely on him. They are to be humble and rely on him.

When we follow Jesus, we don't rely on our own understanding. When we serve in the kingdom of God, we aren't self-reliant. One Christian writer, Marshall Segall, writes this

Those entrusted with the greatest news in the world and empowered to be lights where they live will always be tempted to be proud and self-reliant... One way to avoid the trap is to intentionally forego safety and comfort, even safety and comfort we can afford to provide for ourselves.

For those of you here who have really had to rely on Jesus, you know what I'm talking about. There's a joy in trusting in Jesus, and not relying on one's own understanding. There's a joy when God has to come through for you, because you know that his timing is perfect, his love is infinite, and nothing is impossible for him. Is there a situation that you find yourself in, where you're tempted to rely on your own strength to change a situation or a person? When you know that we are to rely on Jesus, on his perfect timing for things?

When you look at stories of missionaries. You see God's provision, and how it has increased people's faiths. Maybe you know the story of Brother Andrew? He drove one of those Volkswagen Beetles, It was in the 1950s where much of Europe was behind the Iron Curtain. He would drive his beetle through the USSR to share the good news of Jesus. There's a story of how he needed to pay for a visa, and he thought that one of his friends would provide him the money to pay for it. But his friend came to ask for money. Brother Andrew then sees enough money to provide for his friend but it was also the same amount for the visa application. He decides to give it to his friend. Would God provide? Minutes after seeing his friend, he received a letter in the mail with more than enough money for his visa application.

If God were to come through for us, would we give him the glory? Like the Israelites as they go through the wilderness into the promised land? Just as the disciples have to rely to God's provision, we need to rely on God's provision for us. This passage should remind us that if we follow Jesus, we do things his way. And we trust God to provide us. And when God comes through for us, in whatever way we need it, we give him the glory, we are filled with joy.

Repentance

Rejection, reliance and finally, repentance. There's a joy when we help others to repent. Let me show you,

And he said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. Mark 6:10-13 (ESV)

As followers of Jesus, one of the things that we are to do is to call others to repentance. And it's part of the joy that we have, part of the privilege we have to take part in. Let me ask you what do you do when you find out good news? What have your kids said when they have good news? Like they're going to have a child, or they found the job of their dreams? Do they hide it, do they have frowns on their faces and they say sadly, "I found a job." Or "we're going to have a baby"? Or do they tell you excitedly about the good news that they have? They ring you immediately to tell you the good news, and they're bursting with joy?

I wonder whether we are like that with the greatest news? I see it all through the New Testament. How the disciples tell of the good news with joy. To tell others that there is eternal life on offer, that they can have a living and true relationship with the true and living God? That people don't need to be condemned to hell because they have Jesus Christ in their lives. That is such a real privilege we have.

And do you know there is great joy in sharing the gospel with other people? What do the Scriptures say about when someone believes?

Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Luke 15:10 (ESV)

And let me ask, are we being disciples as we share the good news with others? Part of following Jesus is telling other people hear the good news of Jesus. That we as Jesus' disciples tell others about the good news, and call them to repentance. Because if don't, who else has words of eternal life? If we don't go to our friends, and our family and tell them about Jesus Christ and how they need to repent? Who else is going to pray for our family and our friends if we don't?

For some of us here, the message this morning is that we may not think that we need repentance. We say, I've never murdered, I've never stolen from anyone. I'm an outstanding Christian. But have we truly learnt to follow Christ? To be obedient to him? Taking up our cross and following Jesus. Repentance is a daily act, where we seek to follow Jesus. Can I ask, are we taking up our cross daily and following Him? To forsake our own interests and looking to glorify him in all that we do? It's not just that we abstain from doing bad things, it's the fact that we are to follow Jesus, to turn our backs on the world and fix our eyes on Jesus.

The Joy of the LORD

Let me close here, by encouraging you with the joy of the Lord. Because I want to encourage you this morning by reminding you that we can find joy in rejection, in our reliance on God and in calling others to repentance because of the joy of the LORD. I'm reminded of a conversation that I had with Julie and Ruth as we were heading down to morning tea one Sunday. They reminded me of a passage, Nehemiah 8:10,

Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10 (ESV)

There's a bit of context there, but basically, the people of Israel heard the law of God and were discouraged because they realised that they had not been abiding by God. You know, following Jesus is tough at times. It's easier to follow the ways of the world. It can be discouraging at times, but there can be strength as we follow Jesus, because of the joy of the LORD. Nehemiah encourages here and reminds us that the joy of the LORD is your strength. When we learn to follow Jesus, we can take joy in it, because he has first taken joy in us. The LORD takes joy in you, he delights in you, because of his Son Jesus Christ. Take comfort in that, delight in that, enjoy that.