

WHO IS THIS MAN?

Mark 6:1-52

Introduction:

(Acknowledgement: Preaching idea – Sermons I Wish I'd Written – a way of preaching other people's sermons without being accused of plagiarism. This morning's message may not quite fit that description, but it is heavily influenced by and in places quoted from a sermon preached by Ray Stedman more than 40 years ago. However, the Word of God is always new and I hope it will impact us in a fresh way this morning.)

We are nearing the end of the first half of Mark's gospel. Back at the beginning of this study, we talked about the division of the book of Mark – 8:27-33 is a turning point in this account of Jesus' life. It is the point where Jesus turns his face toward Jerusalem, knowing that the journey there is leading him to the cross.

The events of our passage today take place very near the end of the second year of Jesus' ministry. This is the year of popularity. Although he was never popular with the Pharisees and others in the religious establishment, he was very popular with the people. They were enamored with the miracles he performed. People came from everywhere with diseases, illnesses, physical deformities and handicaps, to be healed and made well again.

For the most part, the people loved him. But, they also weren't quite sure what to make of him. People were puzzled and confused, overwhelmed and amazed by what he did and said. Over and over, we come across the question, either stated or implied, **"Who is this man?"**

- 1:22 – astonished at his teaching – authority, unlike the scribes
- 1:27 – new teaching, authority, even the unclean spirits obey him
- 2:7 – why does this man speak like that?
- 2:12 – amazement – we never saw anything like this?
- 3:21 – his family – he's out of his mind – this is crazy, who is he? What is the matter with him?
- 4:41 – calming the storm – who then is this...?

- 5:42 – raising of Jairus' daughter – they were overcome with amazement – they couldn't figure out how he could do these things

Today we are going to look at several incidents from the 6th chapter of Mark. It is evident that our Lord seems to feel it is now necessary for the disciples to begin to answer the question that has been troubling them – "Who then is this?"

Throughout this section, he engages in a deliberate campaign to teach them who he is. When the disciples come to the end of the section, they will have arrived at the answer to this question.

Because of the amount of material we are covering this morning, we are going to be quite brief and will be focusing more on a couple of the incidents in this chapter. But I am including the whole chapter, because it really all works together to deal with the question, "Who is this man?"

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth vv. 1-6

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain) is credited with saying that "an expert is just someone from out of town." Will Rogers described an expert as "A man fifty miles from home with a briefcase."

The idea behind these definitions is that a person's expertise and accomplishments is often not recognized by those who know him well. If you want to attract a crowd or make an impact you need to bring in somebody from outside rather than looking to the local person.

That is exactly what Jesus faced when he returned to Nazareth. This was the second time he had come back to Nazareth and both times he faced rejection by the people of his home town. *Go through verses:*

- Jesus teaching in the synagogue
- The people questioning – where did he get all this knowledge? How can he do all these things? **Who is this man?"**
- We know him – he's just a carpenter's son – we know the family – he's nothing special...
- Jesus response ...
- Jesus **could not** do any mighty works there...

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

Here Jesus begins the process of teaching the disciples who he really is, by sending them out under his authority and with his power, so they can experience for themselves the power of God that He possessed. Matthew gives a much more detailed account of this commissioning but in this brief survey Mark give us three important facts related to Christian ministry. (*Mention material from Ray Stedman*)

First, Mark emphasizes the power these disciples exercised. Jesus sent them out, and he gave them authority over all unclean spirits. It is not clear how this was done but it is evident that our Lord was able to impart to them power which he himself possessed, and they were able to exercise that power when they were apart from him. He himself supplied the power and authority they needed for this ministry. Much later, in the Upper Room, as he is about to leave them he says, "Another Comforter, another Strengtheners, will come," {John 14:16}. That, of course, was the Holy Spirit, who is with us and in us today.

Second, Mark brings out the fact that this power was expressed in unity. They did not go out all by themselves; our Lord never sent anyone out to do something alone -- he sent them out two by two. Matthew actually gives us the list of who went with whom. Andrew went with Peter, his brother. James went with John, his brother. And so on down through the list. But the point is, they went out two by two, in the unity of fellowship together, and this power was expressed through them.

The third fact to note is that they were given authority over all forms of evil. They did not need to fear anything they came up against. This suggests to me that those of us who still go out to minister in the name of Jesus are to recognize that authority is given to us, and that we do not need to be afraid to tackle anything. There is no entrenchment of evil which is too difficult for Christians to take on. That is what this account suggests, and that is what these disciples discovered when they went out.

There are many things that could be said about the ministry they carried on. We don't have time to go into detail, but let me just mention a couple of things that happened because of this ministry – vv. 14-15.

First, the name of Jesus was magnified. These men did not magnify themselves. Nowhere did people raise the question, "Who are these men, that they do these mighty things?" The question raised was always, "Who is this Jesus, by whose name these men are casting out demons and healing the sick?" So, the name of Jesus was spread abroad throughout that region. Everywhere people were talking about Jesus and what he could do.

The second result is that Herod was frightened out of his wits. When he heard all these reports, he suddenly realized that the fire he thought he had put out by putting John the Baptist to death had suddenly broken out in a dozen new places. And that scared him. That's kind of the way God works. When someone raises opposition to the gospel message and squelches it in one place, this serves only to scatter it, like pouring water on burning oil. When Herod realized this, he was very frightened.

It's amazing that Herod actually thought that John the Baptist had come back from the dead. The Scriptures tell us specifically that John the Baptist did no miracles! Yet when Herod hears of all these miracles he says, "This is John, come back from the dead." It was his guilty conscience at work. Shakespeare said, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." Herod is a very vivid example of that truth.

What follows is a flashback to what had happened to John the Baptist at the hands of Herod. We don't have time to go into that – you'll have to read it for yourselves.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

When the disciples returned from their ministry tour, Jesus tried to take them aside for a time of rest and rejuvenation – vv. 30-32. But it was impossible to get away from the crowds. *Go through the miracle:*

- The crowds – isolated, far from any place to get a meal
- The interaction between Jesus and the disciples
- The disciples' involvement in the miracle – they were called on to serve the food to the crowd of people
- The amazing miracle – an abundance of food – plenty for everyone with lots left over.

Well, they have had quite the time of learning. By now, they should have the answer to the question, "Who is this man?" They have not only seen but they have experienced for themselves the power and authority of Jesus over sickness and disease, over evil and demonic spirits. Jesus has shown them, through hands-on ministry, that He is the almighty, all-powerful divine Son of God. He has shown them that He is the one who can provide everything they need. But, have they learned the lesson?

Jesus Walks on the Water

There is one more miracle we want to look at this morning. And the best way to understand this incident is to see it as a kind of examination. It's a test for these disciples after the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus had sent them out, had given them power. They had seen their ministry confirmed and authenticated by the hand of God working through them. They had come back excited about all they had seen and done. They had now been taught that Jesus was the One who was coming to fulfill the expectation of a Messiah to be given to Israel, promised throughout all the prophetic centuries. But somehow they seemed to miss it all.

So, he gives them an examination, a test, to see how they are doing. He sends them out into a storm. *Read vv. 45-46.* This time is different than the last time. This time He is not with them in the boat. He sends them out alone, deliberately, and he goes up into the hills to pray.

Application - How many of the storms of our life are made up of these two elements -- trouble which comes to us and seems to be overwhelming us, and the seeming absence of the Lord? But never forget, there is One up on the hillside praying for us. Jesus is our intercessor.

Read vv. 47-52 – After the storm has blown for several hours, and the disciples are in deep distress, Jesus comes to them walking upon the water. When they see him they are scared out of their wits. They think it is a ghost. He reassures them, saying, "It -- that thing you see which scares you to death -- it is I; don't be afraid." He got into the boat, and Mark says they were utterly astounded (as Ray Stedman says ... absolutely flabbergasted!) He suggested their grade on this test was an "F" — F for fear, and F for flabbergasted.

But they are forced once again to face the question, "Who then is this? Who is this man?" This opens the door for some of our Lord's greatest teaching to his disciples regarding why he came. By the end of this section in chapter 8, they have begun to find the answer to their question.

Conclusion

As the Lord works in our lives, even as we ask Him to do His work in us, He brings us to this same question, who is this man? I close with a quote from Ray Stedman:

"Who is it that sends the storms into our lives? Who tests us? Who makes provision for our needs and then tests us on it? Who gives us a promise and then sends us out to see if we believe what we teach or what we say? It is the Lord himself. This is what he is doing with us, as he did with his disciples. He is training us, teaching us, preparing us, building into our lives, as he built into their lives, so that we might be men and women of faith, confident and calm and able to cope with life."

Prayer