



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. Mark

Chapter 6

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The Lord Jesus Christ had proclaimed His authority on the unseen unclean spirits, and on death
- But man remained ignorant of His identity
- In this Chapter Herod thought of Him as John the Baptist; and even His own disciples asked Him to send the multitude away, that they might buy themselves bread to eat
- So, He continues His mission and slowly revealing to them the mystery that He is their promised Redeemer-Messiah
- He entered with them through the affliction of the fierce wind and sea waves in the middle of the horrifying night; in order to proclaim Himself to them



Introduction

Chapter Outline

- Jesus Rejected at Nazareth 6:1-6
- Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13
- John the Baptist Beheaded 6:14-29
- Feeding the Five Thousand 6:30-44
- Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52
- Many Touch Him and Are Made Well 6:53-56

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

6:1-6



- We have already seen, how His relatives came to lay hold of Him, for they said, "*He is out of His mind*", Mark 3:21
- Yet, He came to them despite knowing that they despised Him and attacked Him
- As for Him, He opens His heart even to those who reject Him, even though He does not force anyone to receive Him against his will!
- Our Lord now left Capernaum, and *came to His own country*, the district of Nazareth, where He had been brought up
- The town of Nazareth was considered to be insignificant in Jesus' day, John 1:45-46

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

6:1-6



- As usual, He made the Sabbath the special time for His teaching
- They were astonished at the ability, the heavenly, and the holiness of His teaching, as well as at the signs and wonders by which He confirmed it
- Some listened with faith, but many were envious of Him
- There is a condescending tone about the expression, "*this Man*,"
- They stumbled in Him and did not take Him seriously for two reasons, namely, for His family origin, and His profession as a carpenter or a laborer

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

6:1-6



- It is interesting that they call Jesus the "*Son of Mary*" instead of the "son of Joseph"
- It is customary to name a man or woman through their father and not their mother
- They mention Mary may be because Joseph has been dead for a long time
- The four "brothers" here mentioned, and "the sisters," whose names are nowhere recorded, were of close relation

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

6:1-6



- The expression “brother,” had been used in the Holy Bible for designating brothers according to blood, to nationality, to close relation, or to friendship
- The Jews used to call cousins “brothers,” as, in most cases, they probably lived under one roof
- According to the Aramaic language, the word “brother” designated all these relations
- That is why, according to St. Jerome, Jesus’ brothers are the sons of His aunt, St. Mary, the wife of Clopas, sister of St. Mary, the Holy Virgin

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

6:1-6



- Knowing Jesus in His ordinary life became a "stumbling stone" to them Isaiah 8:14; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Peter 2:7-8
- Jesus lived such an ordinary life among the people of His community that they found it incredible that He should be anything special
- The prophet Isaiah foretold that the "Suffering Servant" of God, prior to His great work of atonement, would grow up unrecognized by His own people, Isaiah 53:2
- Jesus uses what must have been a common proverb in verse 4 to explain His rejection, Luke 4:24; John 4:44

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

6:1-6



- Jesus is amazed at their lack of faith that actually hinders Him in working miracles on their behalf
- The statement in verse 5 highlights the necessity of faith for God's work in our lives and is why Jesus warns people to "have faith" before He heals, Mark 5:36
- *except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them*, Quite minor cures, not to be compared with those reported in the previous chapter
- It must be remembered that God's method in His dealings with His creatures is not to force conviction upon them

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

6:1-6



- For men's actions must be free if they are to be made the test of judgment, and they would not be free if God constrained men to obey His will
- The men of Nazareth had sufficient evidence had they not chosen to be blinded, and a greater amount of evidence would only have increased their condemnation
- So their unbelief prevented His purposes of mercy, and He went in and out amongst them like one hindered and disabled, marveling at their unbelief, or rather marveling because of their unbelief



Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13

- The Lord appointed His disciples, Mark 3, and let them see His amazing works, Mark 4:35-6:6, as they lived with Him and partaken of His life
- And now, as He sends them out, He is giving them power over unclean spirits
- It is not sufficient to let them listen to His words, to behold His works, or to live with Him, but the need is great to grant them power to destroy the kingdom of evil, and to establish that of light
- The reason of His sending them by pairs, was partly for the sake of company, and that they might be useful and assisting to one another

Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13



- And partly to show their agreement in doctrine; and that they might be proper and sufficient witnesses of it
- Some believe that number 2 is a symbol of love
- So this mission is one of love presented from God to mankind
- Pope Gregory (the Great) says: “The Lord sent out His disciples to preach, two by two, according to two commandments concerning love: Love for God and love for our neighbor. Moreover, love cannot hold between less than two parties. By that, He proclaimed to us, that whoever has no love for his neighbor should definitely refrain from the task of preaching.”

Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13



- *gave them power over unclean spirits*, Because the evil one has reigned over the heart of man, there is a great need for an authority against that enemy
- In other words, the real battle would be located in the heart; and its two parties would be God and Satan
- They were not to make any special provision for their journey, but to go forth just as they were, depending upon God
- *take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts*, The list of items is slightly different in the account of similar missions in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke



Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13

- Some believe that, forbidding His disciples to carry anything, even a staff, the Lord intended it for the sake of perfection
- But when He allowed it, He did that for the sake of weakness; as for example, in case of sickness or old age
- Travelers used to put their bread, or any other sort of food into their bags, and their money in their belt
- But the disciples were not allowed to carry neither, because provision was to be made for them wherever they came at free cost, it being what their labor was worthy of; Matthew 10:9-10

Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13



- *to wear sandals*, It describes obviously the shoes worn by the poor as distinguished from those of the more wealthy class
- Our Lord Jesus Christ forbids us to put on two tunics; for it is not fitting, for whoever wears Christ, to put on the tunic of the world
- Whoever is hidden in the Lord, our sanctuary, is not to wear, anymore, the love of worldliness



Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13

- The command was a plain practical rule
- The habits of Eastern hospitality would throw many houses open to the preachers which would keep them away from their main goal
- They may have no time for prayer and study and teaching
- The sentimental emotions and brotherly love, should not distract them from the seriousness of their missionary task
- Jesus forbids the apostles to indulge in a fickle and frequent shifting of their lodging which will interfere with the steady progress of their labors



Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13

- He may have given them this direction, lest, if they did, they might appear to be fickle and restless; or lest they might hurt the feelings of those with whom they had first lodged
- Also, they are to stay in the same house in order to avoid causing jealousy within a community by having villagers compete in offering them hospitality
- Shaking the dust, means that the preacher has suffered the trouble of the long way, whose dust is a testimony against those who rejected the word

Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13



- It is an act of denial as well as a solemn warning that those who reject the message of Jesus carried by the Apostles reject Jesus Christ, Acts 13:51
- It could also mean, that they do not look forward for any material benefit; even the dust that clung to their feet on their way to that house, they shake off at the threshold of their door; they leave everything as a testimony against them
- The dust witnessed that they had entered the city and had delivered message, and that their message had been refused

Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13



- The work of the Apostles appears from this to have been a continuation of that of the Baptist
- They announced the nearness of the kingdom of God, and repentance as the one adequate preparation for it and the only way that leads to it
- The soul is healed through casting out of demons, and the body is healed through the anointing with oil
- The Church offers the same healing according to the will of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Holy Myron

John the Baptist Beheaded

6:14-29



- The evangelist St. Mark presents us with different views and reactions of various people, as far as the identity of the Person of the Lord is concerned
- One is that of those in fear, as for instance Herod, who thought that the one he killed, was raised from the dead
- Despite his fear, he did not repent
- Other Jews thought He is Elijah
- They expected that Elijah the Tishbite would come in person, before the coming of the Messiah; and thought by the appearance and wonderful works of Jesus, that he has now come

John the Baptist Beheaded

6:14-29



- The opinion of others of them was that Jesus is "the prophet", that was to come, whom Moses had spoken of, and the Jews expected
- The variety of human opinions on Divine subjects is astonishing
- They could not grasp the true identity of the Person of the Messiah

John the Baptist Beheaded

6:14-29



- St. Mark now proceeds more fully to relate the circumstances of the murder of the Baptist
- Hearing of the miracles that were done by Jesus, Herod's guilt of beheading the Baptist lay upon his conscience and he believed that the Baptist must be risen
- This sentiment distressed him so much, fearing the Baptist has come to life to take revenge on him
- During one of his journeys to Rome, Herod Antipas had fallen in with Herodias the wife of his brother Herod Philip, a son of Herod the Great

John the Baptist Beheaded

6:14-29



- Herodias was not only the sister-in-law, but the niece of Antipas, and already had a daughter who was grown up
- Herod Antipas' own wife was the daughter of Aretas, king of Arab
- But he prevailed on Herodias to forsake her husband and live with him, on condition, says Josephus, that he should put away his own wife
- This involved him afterwards in war with Aretas, who totally defeated him and destroyed his army, from the effects of which he was never able to recover himself

John the Baptist Beheaded

6:14-29



- The Baptist proved himself no “reed shaken by the wind”, Luke 7:24, but boldly denounced the royal crimes, Luke 3:19, and declared the marriage is unlawful
- He had plainly and freely told him of his sin, and faithfully reproved him for it declaring what he had done was contrary to the law of God
- For this outspoken faithfulness he was thrown into prison, probably in the castle of Machærus which Herod’s father had built

John the Baptist Beheaded

6:14-29



- Herodias kept in mind what John had said, piled up against him, with fixed hate and purpose of revenge and was not able for a while
- *for Herod feared John*, The full description of Herod's feelings towards the Baptist is peculiar to St. Mark
- He gave the reason of not being able to kill him
- *he was a just and holy man*, Holiness makes a man an object of reverential awe; John did not fear Herod
- Herod had great respect toward the Baptist but did not obey his teachings

John the Baptist Beheaded

6:14-29



- He was an inconsistent man, and was continually the victim of a conflict between the good and the evil within him, in which evil triumphed
- Herodias, on the other hand, had always wished to get rid of John
- Some scholars say that she persuaded Herod to give way because she feared lest Herod should at length repent, and yield to the exhortations of John, and dissolve this unreal marriage, and restore Herodias to her lawful husband

John the Baptist Beheaded

6:14-29



- *Then an opportune day came*, Convenient for Herodias' purpose
- It is the opportunity for this dangerous woman, who hoped, through wine and lust to be able easily to overcome the wavering mind of her husband
- St. Mark alone gives the account of the guests
- *the high officers*, The words here used denote servants of the state, civil and military
- *the chief men*, This term denotes men of high rank, and includes the Galileans' nobles generally

John the Baptist Beheaded 6:14-29



- Her daughter's name was Salome, by her proper husband, Herod Philip
- *Herodias' daughter herself*, The intention of the evangelist is to point out that it was Herodias' own daughter who danced, and not a mere professional dancing-girl
- *He also swore to her*, He added an oath to what he had before said, the more to confirm it, and to encourage her in her request, and which he repeated in stronger language
- She goes out to ask advice of her mother

John the Baptist Beheaded 6:14-29



- Herodias saw that her hour was come
- Without taking any further time to think of it, she was prepared for it, and determined in her mind, whenever she had an opportunity of asking a favor of the king, what it should be
- No expensive jewelries, no royal palace, no splendid cloths, should be the reward of her daughter's achievement but, *The head of John the Baptist!*

John the Baptist Beheaded 6:14-29



- *Immediately*, Without delay as of one whose heart was in the business
- There had been no reluctance then on the girl's part, no need for much educating to bring her to the point
- On the spot, at once request, *the head of John the Baptist on a platter*
- St. Mark's narrative emphasizes the eager haste with which the murder was pushed
- She came in straightway and demanded the reward at once
- *was exceedingly sorry*, We cannot suppose that this was a pretended grief

John the Baptist Beheaded

6:14-29



- Herod must have known well that he could not be bound by his oath in reference to a petition so unreasonable and so wicked
- Nevertheless he thought that "the words of a king were law"
- St. Augustine says, "The girl dances; the mother rages. A rash oath is made amidst the excitement and the indulgence of the feast; and the savage desires of Herodias are fulfilled."
- St. John Chrysostom warns us against oath-swearing, saying: "Recall, how much the tribes of Israel have suffered as a result of their oath-swearing, concerning the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 21:5-10); and how much Saul did, as a result of his oath (1 Samuel 14: 24)."

John the Baptist Beheaded 6:14-29



- *an executioner*, Soldier of his guard and one of his body-guard, in constant attendance as messenger or executioner
- The Baptist head was brought to the daughter of Herodias, as she had requested
- The girl then gave it to her mother who had instigated her to it
- The taking up of *the corpse* by the disciples would seem to intimate that it lay uncared for and unburied until the disciples showed their respect for it
- Josephus says that after the beheading, the remains were east out of the prison and left neglected

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- St. Mark now returns to the story of the Apostles and their return from their mission
- Notice how St. Mark has inserted the story of the Apostles being sent out to proclaim repentance in preparation for the coming of the promised Kingdom of God between the story of John the Baptist's death and the corrupt kingdom of Herod Antipas
- St. Mark is the only Gospel writer who consistently mentions the personal sacrifice Jesus and the disciples experience during Jesus' ministry

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- Once again St. Mark notes that they had no opportunity to even take a meal without being interrupted by people seeking Jesus
- Knowing that His Apostles are exhausted after their mission, He invites them to come away with Him and rest both physically and spiritually, but this is not possible because the crowds of people found them
- We learn from St. Luke, 9:10 that this desert place was near to "a city called Bethsaida
- It seems that there were two places called Bethsaida; one in Galilee proper, and the other to the north-east of the Sea of Galilee

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- They saw them departing, and observed what direction the boat took, and then hastened toward that direction on foot
- *They arrived before them*, and so were ready to meet them again on the opposite shore when they landed
- The distance by land from the place where they started would be about twenty miles
- At the sight of the multitudes who had followed Him by land and even got before Him, He was so moved, as was His custom in such cases, with compassion, because they were like shepherdless sheep, as to sacrificed both privacy and rest that He might minister to them

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- Christ observed, that they were hungry and thirsty after the word of righteousness, and had no faithful, spiritual leaders to feed them with knowledge and understanding
- For the Scribes and Pharisees were blind guides, and shepherds that could not understand
- Hence they followed Christ, wherever He went, with great zeal and fervency, earnestly desiring the bread of life
- This moved His compassion and He kindly and tenderly received them
- Notice that in verse 34 that Jesus will feed their souls with His teaching before He feeds their bodies

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- Our Lord prepared the way for His miracle
- He detained the multitude till the day was *far spent*, so that the disciples might be induced to ask Him to dismiss them
- This would open the way for Him to direct the disciples to feed them
- And thus the miracle would appear all the more evident in proportion as they found themselves in a difficult situation, and totally lacking all resources and money and the needful supplies of food for such a multitude in the desert

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- They asked Jesus to send them the houses which were here and there in the fields into the little country towns that were near at hand
- They brought no provisions with them, and there was nothing in that desert place
- How strange, that even the disciples, had not yet realized, that He, who was in their midst is the “Bread of Life,” who is capable of fulfilling the whole world!

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- *You give them something to eat*, He said this to try their faith, and make way for the following miracle
- *two hundred denarii*, This might be just the sum of money they now had in the bag
- They asked if He wanted them to go and buy them bread
- And if they should do so, as Philip suggests, John 6:7, it would not be enough to give every one a little
- Wherefore they say this, as amazed that He should propose such a thing unto them: or the reason of mentioning such a sum

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- *How many loaves do you have?*, This He said, not as ignorant, but as willing to try their faith yet more, and that the after miracle might be more manifest and illustrious
- When they had made inquiry what provisions there were, and the most that could be got at any rate, they tell Him that there was a boy among the multitude that had five barley loaves, and two small fishes
- And, at the same time, suggests, that they were nothing for so great a company

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- Christ ordered His disciples to cause the whole multitude, men, women, and children, to sit
- St. Mark alone mentions the green grass
- It is an example of St. Mark's vividness, and serves as an indirect note of time pointing to the same season as that specified by St. John, 6:10
- *in groups*, That there might be some order among them, as at a meal
- And that their number might be the more easily known

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- And that all of them might more plainly see the miracle that was to be done and the provision be more orderly distributed to them
- *in ranks*, Or "beds": in such form as little beds are placed in a garden, or as rows of vines in a vineyard
- *in hundreds and in fifties*, This arrangement was probably made, partly that the numbers might be better known, partly that all things might be done in an orderly manner, and that each might have his portion
- St. Matthew's account, Matthew 14:21 seems to imply that the "men" were separated from the "women and children"

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- The feeding of the 5 thousand is one of the few miracles of Jesus that is recorded in all four Gospels, Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13
- Some scholars believe that St. Mark presents the miracle of feeding the multitude in a way close to the 'Last Supper,' or to the sacrament of the 'Eucharist'
- He said the prayer of blessing over the bread, He broke the bread, and He gave the food to His disciples to distribute to the people

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- *to His disciples to set before them*, The disciples who were the ministers and servants of Christ, employed by Him in this manner
- And which was a symbol of their spiritual work and office
- The leftover bread signifies the abundance of the grace of God in a miracle that is only a foreshadowing of an even greater granting of divine grace that is to come
- *And they took up*, In obedience to our Lord's command, John 6:12, Who would teach them that wastefulness even of miraculous power was wholly alien to the Divine economy

Feeding the Five Thousand

6:30-44



- *twelve baskets* , In accordance with the number of the disciples
- So each of them would be a witness of this miracle as we see in the gospel according to St. John that the Lord asked them to collect the leftover, John 6:12
- One of many lessons we learn from this miracle is to put whatever we have in God's hands and He will bless it

Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52



- *Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat, The reasons of this is mentioned by St. John*
- *St. John narrates more fully the impression made by the miracle*
- *It led those who witnessed it to the conclusion that *this was the Prophet that should come into the world**
- *They sought to seize Him and make Him a king against His will, John 6:14-15, and He withdrew from His disciples, dismissed the multitude, and on the mountain height passed the night in prayer*

Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52



- The disciples at His bidding were crossing to the other side to Bethsaida, Mark 6:45 to the town of that name on the western shore of the lake near Capernaum, John 6:17
- *He departed to the mountain to pray*, A lesson for every servant to spend some time alone in prayers free from any distraction
- *He was alone on the land*, This is observed probably to show that there was no way, humanly speaking, of Christ getting to the ship, in order to go over; and is an illustration of the following miracle, of walking a long distance, as He must, upon the water, in a stormy, blustering night, to get to it

Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52



- *He saw*, Either with His bodily eyes from the mountain on which He was; or He perceived in His Spirit
- He knew, by His omniscience as God, what distress His disciples were in
- His heart was all with them, yet He would not go to their relief till His own time came
- The wind blew from the other side they were making to, hard against them; so that it was with great toil and difficulty, that they got any thing forward

Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52



- The Master has forsaken them till the fourth watch of the night - that is to say, up till about 3 o'clock at dawn
- The Jews used to divide the night into 4 parts, calling each of them a watch
- He did that, not out of neglect, but in order to confirm their faith in Him
- *would have passed them by*, It looked as though He intended to have gone by them, and said nothing to them, though this was far from His real design

Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52



- Some scholars say that the divine mercy often seems to desert the faithful in the height of tribulation, but God only acts thus, that He may try their patience, and reward them more abundantly
- *they all saw Him and were troubled*, Explains how they came to think it was a *ghost*
- All saw what looked like Jesus, yet they could not believe it was Him, a real man, walking on the water
- Therefore they took fright and rushed to the conclusion that *it was a ghost*

Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52



- As soon as they saw Him, "that very moment", that so by hearing His voice their fears might be calmed
- St. John Chrysostom says, "Christ did not proclaim Himself, before they cried out; so that, with the growth of their fear, so also their welcome for His advent would increase accordingly."
- As if the goal of affliction, is for us to enter into a life of prayer; crying out to the Lord, and entering into a communion with Him



Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52

- The Apostles had only come so far in understanding Jesus' true identity
- They could acknowledge that He was a prophet and perhaps even the Davidic Messiah, but they had not yet been able to accept His divine nature
- They can accept that the miracle of the loaves was like the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, but not that it was like the manna sent from God
- It was a leap of faith they were not ready to take



Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52

- *amazed in themselves beyond measure*, Observe the strong expressions here employed
- Not only were they *greatly amazed*, but *beyond measure*
- Never had the disciples been so impressed by the majesty of Christ as they were now in consequence of this miracle
- St. Matthew 14:33, tells us that not only did they approach Him with an outward gesture of worship, but declared that, *Truly You are the Son of God*

Many Touch Him and Are Made Well 6:53-56



- Gennesaret was a village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, south west of Capernaum
- *the people recognized Him*, No doubt, they had known Him before, He was now the general object of interest and attraction wherever He went
- The people continue to respond positively to Jesus and come to Him for healing
- Their faith in Him to heal them is so strong that they believe is the simply touch the tassel on His cloak that they will be healed

Many Touch Him and Are Made Well 6:53-56



- They began to lay the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the border of His garment
- *Wherever He entered*, He did not restrict or limit His ministry and miracles to any place
- Wherever He went, they stood in need of His help
- And whenever they required His assistance, they had it granted immediately
- Our Lord's conduct, in these respects, is a perfect pattern for every servant of His Gospel



Discussion

- List ways Jesus' instructions to the disciples were limited when He sent them out, in contrast to the Great Commission given later
- What did Jesus instruct the apostles to do if people refused to hear their message? How did He describe the consequences to such a city? Explain the meaning.
- Who did King Herod think Jesus was? Why did he think this?
- Why had Herod imprisoned John?



Discussion

- Why did the disciples suggest that Jesus send away the crowd? Was this a wrong request? Why?
- If you were one of the Twelve, how would you have responded when Jesus told you to feed over 5000 people?
- What does the disciples' response reveal about the difficulty of Jesus' request (1 denarii = one day's wage)?
- What types of things does Jesus ask you to do that you either respond to, or are tempted to respond to, in this manner?



Discussion

- What is the significance of Jesus giving the multiplied loaves to the apostles to distribute?
- What is the significance of the leftovers filling “twelve baskets full?”
- What was Jesus’ reaction when He saw that His plans to take the apostles to a lonely spot for a rest were ruined by the crowds? What would be your reaction under similar circumstances? What does Jesus teach you here?