

Sending the Twelve

Ignorance and Insight: Part 2

Mark 6:7-13 (Mt.10:1-14, Lk.9:1-6) 9/16/2018

Summary: After many months of training, Jesus finally sends out the 12 to preach. He empowers them with the same miracles he did to show they were doing his work by his authority and power. Rejection of them meant forfeiting Jewishness. They were to take nothing, showing dependence and trust like the children of Israel at the Exodus. They went in teams of two as an example for us. And when rejected, they were to move on (like Jesus—don't get discouraged!)

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Mark 6:7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. 8 These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9 Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. 10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them." 12 They went out and preached that people should repent. 13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Jesus the Prophet

We left off last time with Jesus being rejected by his own hometown—Nazareth. And when that happened, this is what Jesus said:

Mark 6:4 Jesus said to them, "Only in his home town, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."

Jesus classified himself as a prophet. Now, we know that Jesus was much more than a prophet, but he wasn't less than a prophet. He is the ultimate prophet that was promised way back in Deuteronomy 18:18. And when I say "ultimate," what I mean is, he is God's last word.

Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.

All through the OT God used to speak through lots of different prophets in lots of different ways, but not anymore. Now God speaks to us in only one way: through Jesus, the ultimate Prophet. And in today's passage, we're going to see exactly how that works. And this is going to be a great study for us because as we go through these verses we're going to see Christ's glory from a half dozen different angles. We're going to see six different facets of his glory, and the first one is the one I just described: Jesus the prophet.

A prophet is someone who speaks the word of God to people, and calls them to repentance. Jesus' job is to do that to the whole world. He came to reveal God to the entire world and call all men and women to repentance. But how does one man do that—especially given the fact that Jesus never wrote anything? He's going to do it through his Apostles.

When Jesus called these men Jesus told the disciples **I will make you fishers of men** (Mark 1:17). Three chapters later he was a little more specific.

Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles-- that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons.¹

That was why Jesus called them. But what have they done since then? Crowd control and boat rigging—that's about it. Up to now, all the preaching, all the healing, all the talking, all the ministry has been done by Jesus. The Twelve have just been watching and learning. But now, after all that training, it's finally time. Mark 6:7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out. Finally, he's sending them out on a mission. What mission? Exactly what he had told them back in ch.3—preaching and miracles.

6:12 They went out and preached that people should repent. 13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil² and healed them.

Now, if that sounds familiar, it should because it's exactly the same thing Jesus has been doing the entire book so far: preaching, driving out demons, and healing people. It's the exact same ministry described with the exact same terminology so that we understand—Jesus is sending them out to do his work by his authority with his power.

Authoritative Message

And if you want to see how far that authority goes, just look at v.11.

11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.”

That's a bigger deal than it sounds like. To us, it doesn't sound like much. You're there with your partner, you knock on a door: “Hello, we're here to talk to you about Jesus of Nazareth.” “Get lost!” SLAM! You look at each other. “Ok, well, I guess that's a dust shaker,” and you take your sandals off, knock off all the dirt, and move on to the next place. Why does Jesus tell them to do that?

Shaking the dust off your feet was something Jews did after they had been in Gentile territory. Those Gentiles are so unclean that we don't want any of their unclean, defiled, dirty dirt to contaminate our clean, pure, holy dirt here in the holy land. That was their normal practice. So can you imagine what the people in these Jewish villages? These two guys blow into town, start telling us about this Jesus guy and saying we need to repent or we'll be shut out of the kingdom of God. So we told them to take a hike. And now, wait, what are they doing? Did he just...? Tell me they didn't just shake the dust off their feet! That's what you do when you leave a Gentile town. Are they calling us unclean Gentiles? Yes, that's exactly what they were doing.

It's a very, very strong statement. They were saying, “By rejecting our message, you just lost your status as one of God's chosen people.” Remember when Jesus picked 12 Apostles, the reason it was 12

¹ See appendix for the significance of the three callings of the Apostles.

² The one difference between their healings and those of Jesus was the anointing with oil. Perhaps the oil is a symbol that this is mediated healing—setting it apart from Jesus' healing.

was to show that Jesus was creating a new Israel. Now, instead of Israel being the physical descendants of the 12 patriarchs, it would be the spiritual descendants of the 12 Apostles.

Romans 9:6 ... not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

Reject the Apostles' message and you reject Christ. And when you do that, you've just forfeited all the benefits of Jewishness.³

Authenticated by Miracles

So all that to show just how much authority these men had. And how do we know for sure that they really had that authority? That's the purpose of the miracles.

7 ... he gave them authority over evil spirits.

13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

God never expects us to believe anything on blind faith, so when he sent his Son into the world, he gave the most astonishing display of miracles the world has ever seen so we can know without question that he's from God. And then, when Jesus sent out his Apostles, he gave them that same power so that we would know for sure that their words carry the same authority as Jesus' words. He sent them out to do his work with his power to show that they carry his authority. *So what the Apostles say is every bit as authoritative and accurate and binding as what Jesus himself said.*

And that's so important for us today because it was those men who wrote the NT. As I said, Jesus didn't write anything. He whispered it all into the Apostles' ears and told them to shout it from the mountaintops. And that's what they did. The Apostles never preached their own message. They never preached their own ideas, they never preached their own wisdom. The only things they ever preached are the things they received from Jesus. So really, the whole NT could be in red letters. It's all from Jesus. And how do we know that for sure?

Hebrews 2:3 ... This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles...

Jesus the Power Source

Power to Give Power

And by the way, this says a lot about Jesus' power as well. It's one thing to be able to perform the greatest miracles in the history of the world, but it's something else to be able to just give that same power to whomever he wanted at will. He could just walk up to 12 random guys and say, "There, now you can do miracles." And we're not talking about junior varsity miracles here. They weren't curing people of the sniffles. In Matthew's account, he gives us a little more detail. When Jesus sent them out he told them:

Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.

How's that for an assignment? "Go out there and raise the dead." Can you imagine the first miracle they tried? You're there with your partner, you start trying to preach (even though you've never preached before), and they people want proof that you're really from God. So you walk up to a guy with only one leg, and you say, "Watch this," and you put your hand on him. And boom—he's got two legs, and it

³ There's an example of this later on, in the book of Acts. **Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ... 51 So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.**

startles you. “Woah—it worked!” So you start laying your hands on all the sick people, and they are all instantly healed—you’re raising dead people.

Only Jesus can give that kind of power. Moses, Elijah, Elisha—none of them had the ability to give the power to whomever they wanted. They had power, but they got that power from another source—from God. Jesus was not enabled to do miracles; it was a power he possessed in himself, so much so that he could give it to others at will. Only God can give other people miraculous abilities. And that’s what Jesus does here. So now we’ve seen two facets of his glory: Jesus the prophet, and Jesus the power source. Now let’s look at a third one: Jesus the Preacher.

Jesus the Preacher

Primacy of Preaching

This passage shows us how important preaching is to Jesus. Preaching has been the primary activity of Jesus,⁴ and now he sends the 12 out to preach.

12 They went out and preached⁵

There are a lot of other methods for ministry—books, videos, one-on-one conversations at the coffee shop, small groups, letters, blogs—all kinds of ways to minister to people, but the method God designed to be most effective in bringing people to repentance and changing the heart is preaching. If you have a spiritual struggle in your life, seek out good, biblical preaching on that subject. That’s one of the most important ways God will bring grace into your life.

The Message: Repent

Okay, so Jesus sends them out to preach—but preach what? What was their message? Jesus’ death and resurrection haven’t happened yet, so they can’t preach about that. But they can preach the message designed to get people ready for that—John the Baptist’s message: repent. They can preach the same thing they have heard Jesus preaching ever since they started following him: repent and believe, because the kingdom of God is near.⁶

12 They went out and preached that people should repent.

Salvation is a gift; it’s free. There is nothing you can do to earn it or deserve it. You can’t work for it. However, if you want the gift of salvation, you do have to receive it. You have to open up your empty hands and receive it. And the way to do that is in the posture of faith. Only a heart that trusts God can

⁴ Jesus didn’t spend his time doing community service projects. He went around preaching, he told the Apostles to go out preaching, and the Apostles passed that down to us today. When Paul was about to die, and he gave one final charge to his protégé, Timothy, he said this: **2 Timothy 4:1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word.** Timothy needed to hear that because it’s so easy for a preacher to get discouraged and quit—especially when the people reject the message. But Jesus is our example. When the synagogue officials decided to kill him, he just went out to the lake and preached there. He didn’t just wait around for someone to ask him to preach. He preached anywhere and everywhere—in season and out of season. Just in the first three chapters of Mark we’ve seen him preach and teach in synagogues, by the sea, in a boat, on a mountain, in a house, out in the wilderness, in a wheat field, on the road. And he wasn’t picky about who he preached to either. He wasn’t like certain big name preachers in our day who require a big crowd. Jesus preached to huge crowds, or to a handful in a house, or to an individual out in the desert.

⁵ Hendricksen: “c. For “they preached” the original uses one tense; for “they were casting out” and “were anointing” another. This may well indicate that the main task of these disciples was preaching. But from time to time, in connection with the preaching and as a divinely approved and ordered (see verse Mar_6:7) confirmation of the truthfulness of their message and the genuine character of their calling, these men performed miracles of healing.”

⁶ See Matthew 10:7.

receive the gift. And the #1 thing faith always does is repent of sin. Where there is no repentance there is no faith, which means there is no salvation. So they preached that people should repent.

Repentance

Repentance is turning from sin back to God. You can't receive the gift of salvation while your arms are still wrapped around sin. And you can't receive it while you still have your back turned to God. To receive the gift of salvation, you have to let go of your life of sin and turn to God. And if you do that, God will forgive you. One writer said, "It is not falling in the water that drowns but staying in it. And it is not falling into sin that damns the soul; but staying in it."⁷ God will forgive any sin, but only if we repent.

We don't have time this morning for a full study of the subject of repentance in Scripture, so I'll just give you a quick summary. Six ingredients of true repentance.

1) Awareness of sin.

This comes from the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, which is a beautiful picture of repentance. And the first step of his repentance was that he **came to his senses**. Repentance begins when you come out of the fog of deception so you can clearly see the sinfulness of your lifestyle.

2) Sorrow for sin.

James 4 8 ... Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts ... 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Repentance is painful.

Psalm 38:4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.

Thomas Watson commented on this in his book, *The Doctrine of Repentance*. He said, "The truly repentant person finds more bitterness in repenting of sin and he ever found sweetness in committing it." But then he goes on to say: The more bitterness we taste in sin, the more sweetness we will taste in Christ. We would be far happier in life if we wept more over our sin.

Deep sorrow is important because it results in deep love when you're forgiven. He who has been forgiven much, loves much (Luke 7:47). But that increased love for God doesn't come until he has lifted us out of the agony of true repentance.

When a person's repentance is shallow, he might confess his sin, but that confession has no impact on him. It runs out of his mouth like water through a pipe. True confession leaves heart-wounding impressions that change you.

3) Confession of sin.

Part of true repentance means articulating exactly what your sin was and acknowledging the severity of it. Repentance is a strong internal force and it will come out. It will vent itself at the eyes by weeping and at the mouth by confessing. Watson said confession is the vomit of the soul. It expels the poison taken in a way so repulsive that you won't be likely to consume it again. The prodigal son came to his father and said:

Luke 15:21 ... Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

The humble sinner passes judgment on himself through confession.

⁷ These points come from Thomas Watson's outstanding book, *The Doctrine of Repentance*. This is the most helpful work I've found on the subject of repentance.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he ... will forgive us our sins and purify us

But he goes on to say that if we don't confess, we deceive ourselves and we make God out to be a liar (vv.8,10). The repentant heart confesses—both to God and, where appropriate, to people.

James 5:16 confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

Confession gives glory to God, it humbles the soul, gives release to a troubled heart, purges sin, endears Christ to the soul that needs atonement, and makes way for forgiveness and mercy.

4) Shame for sin.

The color of repentance is blushing red.

Ezra 9:6 O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.

If Jesus suffered shame when he took our sin upon him, shouldn't the true guilt of it shame us?

5) Hatred of sin.

Psalm 36:2 In his own eyes [the wicked man] flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin.

Until sin be bitter Christ will not be sweet.

6) Turning from sin back to God with all your heart.

This is the most important part of repentance. As I said before, you can't receive the gift of salvation or forgiveness of sins with your back to God. And this is so important to understand, because most people think repentance is all about stopping some sinful behavior. But that's not the most important part. If all you do is stop the behavior, but you don't turn toward God, you haven't repented at all.

Unpopular Message

Okay, so all of that is a summary of what repentance is, and that was the Apostles' message: "You must repent." That is not a popular message. Calling people to repentance implies they are in sin. It implies they are doing something wrong and that they are not right with God. And telling people that they are in sin and that they aren't right with God and that God is angry with them and that they need to make serious changes and let go of cherished sins in their life—that's not a message that will be welcomed by very many people. So this is a hard assignment Jesus gave these men.

Jesus the Potter

One of the things we learn in passages like this is how Jesus trained leaders. He is the potter who shapes his people like pottery, making us into what he wants us to be. And the methods he used are an example for us. And there's so much we could say about this,⁸ but for the sake of time, let me just

⁸ One reason I believe Jesus' methods with the disciples are meant as examples for us is that the great commission, the marching orders for the entire church, is to make disciples. That's our task, and it's hard to imagine that Jesus would charge us with that task, and then expect us to do it differently than the way he did make disciples.

All of it is for our example. We do it exactly like he did it. He started by calling crowds as well as specific individuals to follow him. We do the same thing – we call crowds and specific individuals around us to follow Christ. He proved who he was by constantly pointing people to his miracles. We prove who he is by pointing people to his miracles, especially his resurrection.

He trained people with varying levels of intensity. The crowds got his sermons, the seventy got more specific instruction and training, the Twelve got even more, and the inner three (Peter, James, and John) got even more.

He began by just having them watch him. Now he moves to letting them do the work, and then reporting to him. And then eventually, they went out on their own. That's the progression for training leaders. First show by example, then supervised

mention a couple things. And the thing that stands out to me is how quick Jesus was to give them ministry responsibility. These men weren't ready. Even after this mission trip we read about them being dull to understand Jesus' teaching because of having hard hearts, and not even understanding who Jesus was or why he came (6:14–16; 8:10–21). And yet Jesus still sends them out to preach. He takes men who have never been in leadership, never been involved in ministry, never preached, and he sends them out on their own to preach after a matter of months.

But then they came back and reported to him and got a lot more training for a long time after that. We tend to be way too slow to put young men into ministry, and way too quick to end mentoring and oversight once we do get them started. We don't want guys to start preaching until they have had years of training and they are fully prepared. Then once we decide they are ready, we throw them out there on their own without any ongoing mentoring. That doesn't work well. Jesus model is far better.

Two by Two

The other thing Mark tells us is that Jesus *began* sending them out **two by two**.⁹ Nobody got sent out alone—they were all teams. And I think that's intended as a pattern for us, because you see them following it in the book of Acts (Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, Barnabas and Mark, etc.) For one thing, this provides multiple witnesses to the message. Scripture says that every matter must be established by the testimony of at least two witnesses.

And beyond that, teams are just more effective than individuals. I think we would do well to do ministry in teams more often. We always want to do things on our own. And churches usually put one individual in charge of a ministry. Then we expect that person to have every spiritual gift. That's not God's design. Doing ministry in teams is more sustainable, you have more gifts in operation, and the work is more effective.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no-one to help him up! ... 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Alexander Maclaren said, "One-and-one are more than twice one." You get two people working together in ministry, and you get more results than two people working separately.

Jesus the Provider

ministry, then unsupervised, but with reporting, then unsupervised on their own.

Also, we can learn from the fact that Jesus took so much of his precious time to do this. Not just *how* Jesus trained leaders, but *that* he trained leaders. Very few pastors spend much time training the next generation of pastors. Why? The list of reasons is as long as your arm. It's hard work. It's slow work. It's time consuming work. It's hard to find good candidates. That's probably the biggest reason.

But if anyone would be justified in not delegating because no one else could do it like he could, it would be Jesus. Yet he still trained others and delegated. In fact, he didn't just delegate parts of the ministry to them; he entrusted the whole thing to them. Could these men do the work as well as Jesus? Were they as knowledgeable as him, as gifted as him, as empowered by the Spirit as he was? Nowhere close. But it was Jesus' will to delegate the work to them. And God was pleased to do a far greater work through their preaching than through his. Jesus reached several thousand in the tiny little area around Israel; the Apostles reached the world. Jesus was far better at it than they were, but God is pleased to use weak vessels to do great things, isn't he? And we'll see in the case of these twelve, especially weak vessels, to accomplish the greatest of all his works.

⁹ The fact that it says "he *began* sending them out implies he didn't send them all out at once. He got two of them ready, sent them out, then another pair, then another, and so ..." That is also implied by the phrase, **gave them authority**. Usually that phrase takes the aorist ("he gave them authority"—Mark 11:28; 13:34; Matt 9:8; 10:1; 28:18; John 1:12; 5:27; 17:12). But here it is in the imperfect ("he was giving them authority"). That may suggest a granting of authority to each individual or to each pair, one after another.

8 These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9 Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.”¹⁰¹¹

That’s pretty rough. They are going on an extended mission trip, and they aren’t allowed to bring any food or money, no change of clothes—not even a bag. So not only can they not pack any stuff, they can’t even bring a bag to put stuff in later, which means they aren’t going to get any stuff on the journey. The only thing they can bring is what they were wearing and a staff. Basically a walking stick—maybe something they could use to fend off wild animals.

That’s a pretty scary assignment. “I want you guys to go out and preach (even though you’ve never preached before), and I want you to preach the same message that has been so thoroughly rejected when I preached it. I want you to indict people for their sin and call them to repentance. And you get to bring a stick—nothing else.” Why can’t they bring anything? If they don’t have any food or money, how are they going to survive?

10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.

Hospitality was different in that culture. Travelers didn’t usually stay in hotels. They stayed in people’s homes.¹² If someone was travelling through town, people would typically offer to let them stay in their homes. And if no one offered, then you could use a hotel as a backup plan. Jesus sent these men out with no backup plan. They were 100% dependent on God providing for them in each town they visited. So here we see a fifth view of Christ’s glory: Jesus the provider. He’s teaching them that they can trust him to meet their needs while they are carrying out his work.

And when they did find a house, they were to stick with that house the whole time they were in that town. If someone else came along with a bigger, nicer house, they weren’t to move over to that house. This mission was not about being comfortable.

They Did It!

And do you want to hear something really cool? They did it! It’s easy to miss that, because Mark doesn’t say anything to draw our attention to it. But it’s remarkable because up to now, what have these guys done right? We’ve seen their lack of faith, lack of understanding, wrong priorities, they seem like hopeless bumbling. And now Jesus gives them this terrifying assignment—go out on a mission trip, you get a stick and nothing else, and preach the same offensive message that made the Scribes plot to kill me. And they do it. No indication of any complaints or questioning or reluctance. They just obey.

Sometimes obedience can carry you even when your faith is weak and your understanding is limited. When your faith falters, do everything you can to strengthen it, but in the meantime, just keep obeying. No matter what Jesus calls you to do, just obey.

¹⁰ Matthew and Luke are very difficult to harmonize with Mark because they both say that they were not to bring a staff or sandals. Evidently, the point in Matthew and Luke is that they were not to bring an *extra* staff or sandals, but that is not the most natural way to read those texts Hendricksen: “This seems all the more probable in view of the fact that in his Gospel the reference to sandals follows immediately upon the injunction against taking along two tunics. Therefore the warning against taking along extras probably carries over to the next item sandals, and to the next a staff.”

¹¹ This is exactly the same instruction given to the Israelites when they fled Egypt. **Exodus 12:11 This is how you are to eat [the Passover]: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste.** So the idea is, just like back in the Exodus, I don’t want anything slowing you down. You’ll be on the move, sometimes without notice, you need to be ready to just up and go, and trust me to provide for you just like I did for the children of Israel when they left Egypt.

¹² This was a big issue in the early church, because allowing a travelling preacher to stay in your home was a participation in that person’s ministry. In Matthew 10:40-41 Jesus said that those who welcome his prophets welcome him. On the other hand, **2 John 1:10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. 11 Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.**

Only for This Mission

Is this directly applicable to us? Should we all get rid of all our stuff, find a stick and hit the road? No, in fact, it wasn't even directly applicable to the 12 later on.

Luke 22:35 Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered. 36 He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.

So that first trip was a one-time lesson Jesus wanted to teach them about trusting him to provide for them. But that wasn't to be their normal practice going forward. The normal practice for missionaries and preachers will be to bring some supplies, and make some arrangements, and all the rest. But one of the things they needed to learn was how to trust him in those times when you don't know where your next meal is coming from, and you don't know how you're going to get by. Those times come, and when they come, it's important that we don't panic and put ministry on hold until we can get back on our feet. No, you keep right on doing what God has called you to do. Where God guides, God provides. Always remember: You are more in danger from having too much baggage than from having too little.

Jesus the Rejected

Ok, so if the people listen, stay there. If they don't listen, shake the dust off and move on (v.11). I want to come back to that, because rejection is a theme in this chapter. Jesus was just rejected in Nazareth, now the disciples are going to experience rejection, and in the next paragraph, John the Baptist gets imprisoned and then decapitated. Rejection is a major part of the ministry, and we need to understand that so when it happens, we don't get discouraged.

One thing that's remarkable about Jesus is he never got discouraged. Think about how often he was rejected—everywhere he went. We can call this last one, "Jesus the Rejected." (Or if you want another P, Jesus the Persevering Pariah). He was a pariah—an outcast. He delivers a whole region from the plague of thousands of demons, and they ask him to leave. He goes to his home town where he grew up, and his own relatives reject him. Rejection after rejection after rejection. And if you don't think that affected him emotionally, think again. Our natural response is to think, "Of course Jesus didn't get discouraged, but I'm not Jesus. I'm a weak, frail person." Don't ever distance Jesus from the human race like that.

Hebrews 12:1 ... let us run with perseverance ... 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus ... who endured the cross ... 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

If we place Jesus in some special category that doesn't relate to our struggle, we miss that whole grace of gaining perseverance by watching how Jesus persevered, and we lose the comfort that we should get from knowing that he can sympathize with us in our struggles because he went through them too.

Jesus was a human being with normal human emotions. And if you're a human being, even a sinless human being, still, rejection is painful and discouraging, especially when it comes from family, and especially when it happens again and again and again. There is no question in my mind that Jesus, in times like this, felt like quitting. He didn't have any special protection against discouragement. He had to fight discouragement exactly the same way we do. And if anything, it was harder for him, not easier (because he suffered greater injustice than we ever will, and he understood the spiritual consequences of rejecting the gospel more than we ever will). But he never gave up because he kept his eyes on the joy set before him. And we can persevere like that too if we keep our eyes on him instead of the people rejecting us.

Appendix: Structure of the First Half of Mark

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Section 1 (1:16–3:12)</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Call of the disciples— fishers of men (1:16–20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus preaches, casts out demons, and other miracles. - The crowds pursue him - Conflict with the religious authorities <p style="text-align: center;">Negative Response to Jesus—plot to kill Jesus (3:1–6)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Summary description of Jesus’ ministry (3:7–12)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Section 2 (3:13–6:6)</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Call of the disciples—that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach (3:1–19)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus preaches, casts out demons, and other miracles. - The crowds pursue him - Conflict with the religious authorities <p style="text-align: center;">Negative Response to Jesus—rejection at Nazareth (6:1–6a)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Summary description of Jesus’ ministry (6:6b)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Section 3 (6:7–8:26)</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Call of the disciples—sends them out to preach (6:7–13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus preaches, casts out demons, and other miracles. - The crowds pursue him - Conflict with the religious authorities <p style="text-align: center;">Negative Response to Jesus—blindness to Jesus’ message (8:14–21)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Summary description of Jesus’ ministry (8:22–26)</p>
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