

## Jason Upchurch - Mark 6:7-13 - The Good News Is Worth Dying For

One of the things that gets missed when telling people about the gospel is the cost of following Jesus. Very often others forget - and frankly we forget - to tell our hearers about the cost of following Jesus. The cost is high.

When we tell someone about Jesus we often mention sin and the coming judgment of God. Our sins rightly store up God's wrath for us in the day of judgment. We are all sinners and all deserve the judgment of God in hell forever. God will not simply let us off the hook for our sins, we can't do enough good works to pay off our sins, we can't somehow bribe God to ignore our sins. He is a holy God, a just God and will hold every person to account on the day of judgment.

And that's where the good news comes in. That same God who is holy and righteous and judge is also merciful and loving and has sent his Son Jesus into the world to be the sacrifice for sin for all those who believe in him. Jesus died on the cross in the place of all those who believe in him. For those who repent and believe in Jesus, he takes our sin upon himself and at the same time God imputes to us the righteousness of Christ. We are forgiven and we are given eternal life.

This is the heart of the gospel: penal, substitutionary atonement. But that comes at a cost to us. You say "Wait, isn't the gift of salvation free?" Yes, it is free. There is no charge, there is nothing we do to earn it. We simply believe. But if you believe it, it will cost you everything, maybe even your life.

And that's the part we need to be reminded of from time to time. And it's the part we need to be sure to tell people when we call them to follow in Jesus.

"Hey, you're a sinner and need to repent and trust in Christ alone to be forgiven of your sins. But, by the way, your life might end like John the Baptist"

Jesus makes this very clear throughout his ministry. When we follow Jesus he becomes everything to us.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will what? Lose it. And whoever loses his life - meaning we might die - will find it. **Matt 10:37-39**

**John 12:25:** whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

**Rev. 12:11** commends our brothers and sisters in the faith who have conquered over satan even while they were martyred. How do you conquer someone when they kill you? John tells us: They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even to what? Death.

Martyrs who die for the cause of Jesus overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb. They conquer through Jesus's death and they are prepared to experience the same fate.

Are you prepared to suffer for Jesus? Are you prepared to lose your life for his name's sake?

And this is the big takeaway this morning: The Good News of Jesus is Worth Dying For.

Why would someone die for the cause of Jesus? What would cause someone to love Jesus so much that they would joyfully die for him? What gives us that motivation? How do you live a life knowing you could die for Jesus.

The answer is that the reward Jesus promises us in the next life is greater than our very lives. Think about that carefully. The reward for faithfully following Jesus is greater than the preciousness of our own life here on this earth.

Which means that whatever is in the life to come is pretty amazing. We see that motivation in John the Baptist. We see that in the disciples.

Now, we transition here from Jesus being rejected in Nazareth to him going around preaching and sending out his disciples to preach. But this is connected with John the Baptist. How is it connected? **Read 14**

What did King Herod hear of? He heard of Jesus preaching and the disciples preaching and these miracles being done. Then we look at **Vs. 30** which ties everything back to the disciples. **Read**

This whole passage is one big unit, one big pericope. **Vs. 31** is really the dividing point. And I think we're meant to see is that the life John lived is the life that the disciples are called to live. From how they dress and eat and talk - repent - they live a life like John.

And the death John died is the death the disciples will all die. There's more to this, but there's certain all not less.

Okay, let's dig in.

### 1) The imagery of the disciples. **Read 7-9**

If you remember earlier in Mark I mentioned that what the gospel writers do is highlight ways in which the ministry of Jesus is the beginning of the new people of God.

We see this all through the NT how the writers recast the people of God away from national Israel to followers of Jesus. And in Jesus believers are the new Israel. We see this plainly stated in so many passages.

Christians are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation a people of God's own possession (**1 Pet. 2:9-10**). We are the true circumcision made by the Spirit (**Rom. 2:29**). We are the Israel of God (**Gal. 6:16**). We are the 12 tribes of the dispersion (**Jas. 1:1-2**), the elect exiles (**1 Pet. 1:1-2**). Children of Abraham (**Gal. 3:7**).

Those are all titles given to national Israel in the OT and the authors of the NT take all those titles and apply them to believers in Jesus: both Jew and Gentile.

In the gospels that reality is not so much spelled out as lived out. We saw that connection between the tribes and the apostles a few chapters ago. The 12 apostles have replaced the 12 tribes as the leaders of the people of God.

But now it's taken a step further. Now we have the 12 apostles who are invading the promised land just like the 12 tribes of Israel invaded the Promised Land. But unlike the tribes of Israel, they aren't fighting physical wars. There's no surrounding of Jericho, marching around and slaughtering all the inhabitants. There's no campaigns to slay all the Philistines.

No, what the apostles are doing is waging *spiritual* warfare against the spiritual enemies of God.

Interestingly, notice how the apostles are described here. **Read 8**

Does their dress remind you of a time in Israel's history? The night before the Exodus God commanded Israel using almost these very same words in regards to the Passover:

In this manner you shall eat [the Passover]: with you belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat in haste..."

**Exo 12:11**

They were to be ready to go because God was delivering them out of Egypt and into a new land, a promised land. They'd receive a new covenant, a new law, a new life. This is the language of the 12 apostles now going to preach the gospel.

Now, on the one hand God is using these guys to recast the new people of God. There's the imagery.

But there's also the reality of what they're doing. What's happening? What's happening is that Jesus is calling these guys to trust in God's provision as they preach. God will provide their food, their clothes, their place to stay. God will give them provision just as he has given Jesus provision during his preaching.

They are taking up the mantle of Jesus in ministry. Now this doesn't mean that every missionary or person in full time ministry just "lets go and lets God." We see later in the NT coordinated financial support of missionaries and those who preach the gospel. But this is a beautiful transition of imagery to the New Covenant.

## 2) Reaction to the Disciples. Read 11

So as the disciples go about preaching the gospel they'd enter towns - some are going to like them, some not so much.

Towns in ancient Israel were much different than ours now. They were much smaller, only 10 to 50 acres, usually in a walled city. Cities in ancient times were very tight knit. The whole town would know if a couple of itinerant preachers showed up and began talking about Jesus because Jesus was the talk of the whole land. Everyone knew about Jesus, crowds waited expectantly for Jesus. And if you were in some town in that time and 2 disciples of Jesus showed up at the gate of the city to tell people about him you'd probably want to hear more.

And the disciples could do all the same things as Jesus. They could heal and cast out demons - huge displays of power. And although we don't have this recorded, they might even be asked to teach in the synagogue like Jesus was asked to teach in the synagogue.

The reputation of Jesus and these disciples was spreading. In the next section we see that even the Roman governors hear about Jesus. Jesus and his miracles are the buzz of the whole region of Galilee in the north.

So Jesus prepares them for basically 2 reactions. First reaction was a town might accept the apostles. When you enter a house stay there until you depart from there. Middle eastern hospitality is radically different than in the West.

Even now, if you're a Bedouin shepherd in Israel you can seek a place to live from other Bedouins. You can go to their camp and ask for lodging for anywhere from days to months at a time, even if you're a total stranger. And in their culture they will take you in and treat you like family.

In ancient times travelers relied on the hospitality and mercy of people in a walled city to keep them safe from robbers on the road. If you had to go from Jerusalem to Dan way up north you'd stop inside walled cities along the way to stay safe. And hopefully someone would bring you into their house to feed you and give you a bed. It's just what everyone did.

And so Jesus is telling his disciples to rely on that hospitality.

But there's an interesting catch: if a person in the city accepts you, he says, just stay in the same house the whole time you're there. Why? Because while the disciples were in a city that accepted their teaching, there might be wealthier people who would offer them a better place to stay. Maybe nicer furnishings, better food, more comfort. The disciples might be tempted to leave a poor person's house who had been very generous to go stay with someone who was rich and could provide a nicer spread.

But that would actually be a huge insult to the first person. To leave a poorer person's house to stay in a rich person's house in the same city would be a huge insult. That's not what the gospel is about. The gospel isn't about comfort and social advancement. That's not why these guys are out preaching.

It's funny about 10 years ago when the really big flat screen TVs were first coming out they were really expensive. I was reading about this social phenomenon around Super Bowl time where people would be

invited to someone's party but they wouldn't accept right away. They'd would be like "what kind of TV you got?" because maybe someone with a better TV and sound system would invite them to their party.

Imagine someone was kind enough to invite you over for a few hours, feed you, hang out with you and your big concern is how many inches their TV is? That's offensive. That's what Jesus is getting at. Don't judge people on their means, just accept the generosity. Stay where you're at until you go on to the next town. By the way, that would only have been a couple days.

But not everyone accepts the message. **Read 11**

Just like Jesus, the disciples can expect that some people will refuse to believe. They'll see the miracles, they'll hear the teaching and they'll still reject.

In **Matt. 10** Jesus denounces many cities - Chorazim, Capernaum, Bethsaida - because Jesus came there and preached and did miracles and the people refused to believe.

In fact, Jesus says it will be better for Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for those cities. Really? Better for Sodom and Gomorrah?

Yeah. Why? Because Sodom and Gomorrah didn't see the glory of Spirit of God working through miracles and preaching of the Jesus. They were wicked towns and they'll be in hell, but the punishment for rejecting Jesus is much worse.

And so if they go to a town and the town rejects, clean the dust off your sandals. What does that mean? It means that you are visually showing them that they are under judgement. They are so cursed that you don't even want their dirt that's stuck to the bottom of your feet.

This actually happens a couple times in the book of Acts. **Look over at Acts 13:44-52** for a minute.

This is Paul and his missionary crew in Modern-day Turkey, in a city called Pisidian Antioch. They go into the synagogue and preach Jesus. People are ecstatic. The whole town then hears about it and they want the missionary team to come back the next Saturday to tell more. Here's what happens. **Read 44-52**

This little synagogue was packed - the whole city came out to listen. We could do a whole sermon just on this passage. But the Jews rejected the Messiah God sent to them. Those who were appointed to eternal life believed. But the rest rejected.

In fact, it was a harsh rejection. The people stirred up the whole town against the missionary team. They got all the movers and shakers. The people of influence and political power to shut this team down and persecute them.

This wasn't an honest, "You know we need to look at the Scriptures some more" like the Bereans. No, this was wholesale rejection and condemnation of the gospel. This was the type of rejection that Jesus experienced in his hometown of Nazareth. This was the rejection the people of Chorazim and other towns had toward Jesus.

And so they shake the dust off their feet. This is a sign of visual judgment. **Look at 18:1-6.**

This is Paul in Corinth. And there are some similar elements here. **Read**

So Paul's MO, like Jesus and the disciples, was to go to the synagogue to preach. He would have an open opportunity there. But at some point things reach a head and the Jews in the synagogue are just done with him. And they begin reviling him. Insulting him. And opposing him.

And so he shakes out his garments. This is even more than the dusting off feet. He's ridding all dirt of their defiance that might even be touching his body.

But he explains the picture. Their blood is now on their heads. I am innocent. That's the picture. "I tried to warn you, I tried to tell you. But you wouldn't listen. So this is an act of judgement. I am clean of you."

That's what the dust thing is. I've tried to warn you, you've rejected the warning, now I'm handing you over to God's judgement.

You guys, do you realize it's okay to hand someone over to God's judgement? That doesn't mean God is done with them forever, it just means there's no more we can do. When we're preaching the gospel there comes a point of opposition where we just say "I'm all done."

That's okay. Jesus says that's okay, too. When Jesus says don't give to the dogs what is holy or cast your pearls before swine...what he means is don't give the gospel to those who are going to tear you up about it.

By the way, I love **Vs. 7** where does Paul go now that he's done with the Jews who are reviling him? **Read 7-8**

He goes next door to the synagogue and the synagogue leader believes. By the way, we find out in **1 Cor.** that the other synagogue leader also believed later on.

But this shaking out of dirt is the part of the judgment the disciples are to show as a response to rejection. It's a clear and obvious response. **Turn** back to **Mark 6.**

So we see the imagery of the disciples and the reaction to the disciples.

3) The Message of the Disciples. What were the disciples preaching? Jesus sends them out to preach. What's the message? If you could summarize all the preaching of Jesus and all the preaching of the disciples, how would you do it?

Believe? Jesus? Love? Bible? **Read 12**

The gospel message that the disciples preached in just one word is repent. μετανοέω - it means to change one's mind or purpose in life. Throughout the gospel it means to give up our sin and our love for our sin and to turn and follow God and his ways.

This is what Jesus preached. If you remember from **Mark 1:4:** John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. That was John's message: repent from your sins.

And those who did believe John and repented from their sins, were baptized to show that that's what they had done. Just 11 verses later Jesus comes on the scene and his first sermon is summarized in a single sentence: The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel." **Mark 1:15**

"Turn from your sin!" You say, wait a minute, I thought salvation was by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus. That there are no works to be saved. That's true. Salvation is not of works at all. There's nothing we do - not even baptism - that saves us.

So, when we call someone to repent we are not calling them to do works or to work to be saved. What are we calling them to? μετανοέω - we are calling them to a change of mind about their sin.

See belief and repentance are flip side of the same exact coin. That's why we see in the Bible it'll say "God granted that they believe" and other times "God granted them repentance." God's not granting salvation by works in one area and salvation by faith in another. No - these are 2 ways of saying the same thing.

This is actually the gospel. The gospel, as summarized by Mark and Jesus and John and the disciples is: repent. Turn from your sinful way, turn from your love of sin, turn from your secret sins that only you and God know about, and follow Jesus. It's a changing of our mind to forsake our sin and follow after Jesus.

You guys, this is essential for us when we are preaching the gospel. A lot of people say they “believe in Jesus.” Goodness, with Easter next week, who doesn’t believe in Jesus? Everyone believes in Jesus. Yeah, even demons believe - and they shudder. Just simple intellectual acknowledgment of Jesus is not the same thing as saving faith.

No, we are to call people to believe in Jesus as Lord - as Master. And because he is the sovereign Lord and judge of all we are to call them to repent from their sins. And not just once, not just at salvation. No, the repentance that we call people to is an entire lifetime of repentance. It is a continual dying to self, it is waking up every day, picking up our cross and crucifying our sin. Changing our mind about our sinful and selfish ways and following the way of Jesus instead.

Repentance is synonymous with the free gift of the gospel. It’s a change of mind and heart brought about by the Holy Spirit. If there’s no preaching of repentance there is no salvation. And it’s message that the disciples preached.

#### 4) The work of the disciples. Read 13

Jesus gave the 12 the same ability he had: to cast out demons and heal sick people. Apparently they didn’t have this before, but now they do. And they did it!

Imagine you could do this. One day you just have the ability to heal people completely and cast out evil spirits. That’d be amazing.

Not everyone had this ability. This ability from the Holy Spirit was only given to some. But all the apostles had it: **2 Cor. 12:12** (ESV): The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

They had the same ability as Jesus and it was this ability that initially confirmed their authority to preach the gospel. Jesus’s ministry had become so big and people are flocking to him so much that he passes not only the message, but the miraculous power as well.

It’s interesting that they anointed people with oil. Anointing with oil in the Bible is often associated with healing, whether miraculously or just praying to God for the healing. But they did it and God answered them. They’ll come back later and report all the amazing things that happened.

At the beginning I said this ties into John. How does this tie into John?

#### 5) What was the outcome of the apostles?

This is something we need to consider. At this point in the apostles’ ministry things were going really well. People were believing, people were being healed. The message of Jesus was being proclaimed. It was great. John died - that’s tragic - but these guys’ stars were on the rise.

But can I tell you something? They all died just like John the Baptist died: as martyrs. It’s not too far into the book of Acts that James is slaughtered for preaching the gospel. Peter is arrested. But they all die a martyrs’ death of some kind. Beheaded, crucified, Peter was crucified upside down.

It’s amazing how quickly things can change in a place, or country, from seemingly all is well and there’s gospel acceptance to stark opposition.

You know why they stood strong? It’s not because of some earthly reward. No, it’s a heavenly reward. It’s because: “they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. **Hebrews 11:16**

Our call is the same as the disciples. To go preach repentance from sin and faith in Jesus. Sometimes that’ll be amazing, sometimes we’ll shake the dust off our feet. Sometimes we’ll be martyred. But the good news is worth dying for. **Pray**