**“Ministry: Success or Failure?”**

## Mark 6:1-30

**Introductory Question**

**Option #1 –** If you’re parents or siblings were here, what story would they probably tell about what kind of kid you were or about what you did when you were young?

**Option #2** – What quality or ability do you have that your family does not fully appreciate?

**Discussion Questions**

1. **Read Mark 6:1-6a**. What kind of response did Jesus get when he went to his hometown of Nazareth? Why?
2. How does Jesus “success” here compare to his other ministry assignments and settings? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
3. In his book, The Jesus I Never Knew, Philip Yancey shares some of the ways that his upbringing prevented him from seeing who Jesus really is and experiences that challenged that perspective. What experiences of over familiarity *or* freshness have you experienced in your understanding of Jesus and what effect has it had on you?
4. **Mark 6:6b-13.**  What assignment and instructions does Jesus give to his disciples?
5. What kind of preparation did Jesus give them? Do you think it was sufficient? Why or why not?
6. **Mark 6:14-29.** What does Herod’s reaction tell us about the disciple’s ministry tour? Why might there be so much confusion or speculation over Jesus’ identity?
7. Why do you think Mark includes the flashback (vv.17-29) here between the sending out of the disciples (vv.6b-13) and their return (v.30)?[[1]](#footnote-1)
8. Why was John the Baptist put to death? Why do you think God allowed a faithful servant like John to die in this way (cf. Heb. 11:38)?
9. Which of the following people’s experience do you resonate with:
   * 1. Jesus – having to entrust others to carry on your work?
     2. The disciples – have to go out on a limb with a new assignment and responsibility?
     3. Herod – attracted to the truth, but afraid to follow through with it?
     4. John’s disciples – trying to coping with what seems like a senseless loss or tragedy?

Some gospel parallels

1Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. 3"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." 5He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

7Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. 8These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. 10Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11And 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." 12They went out and preached that people should repent. 13They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

14King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." 15Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." 16But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

17For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. 18For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, 20because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. 21Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. 23The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." 24She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. 25At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, 28and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. 29On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

30The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

###### *1358And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.*

###### Matthew 14

1At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, 2and he said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him." 3Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, 4for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." 5Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.   
6On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much 7that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. 8Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." 9The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted 10and had John beheaded in the prison. 11His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. 12John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

*13When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.*

Luke 9

1When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. 4Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." 6So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.   
7Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, 8others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. 9But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him.

*10When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida…*

New International Version

1. Compare Matthew’s placement of it (Matt. 14:1-12) and Luke’s (Luke 9:7-9). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)