

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

By the Rev. Dr. Harry Wendt, Founder of Crossways International
(Sola Publishing, Edited Version © 2023 H. Wendt)



Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Mark 6:1-13

Year B - Proper 9, Text: Mark 6:1-13
Year B - Proper 9, Text: Mark 6:1-13

Verses 6:1–2: The place from which Jesus leaves most likely refers to Capernaum. His “hometown” is Nazareth (see Matthew 13:54 and Luke 4:16). As we might expect, Jesus’ disciples accompany Him. The events that follow are parallel to those described in Matthew 13:53–58 and Luke 4:16–30.

In the Matthew and Mark narratives, Jesus’ hearers respond to His teaching with sarcasm and ridicule. Some read into Luke 4:16–30 a suggestion that the initial reaction of Jesus’ audience is approval.

However, scholars suggest that Luke’s Greek text actually refers to a very negative reaction on the part of Jesus’ hearers. The word commonly translated as “amazed” would be more accurately rendered as “astonished,” or, better still, “appalled.” After all, eventually Jesus’ hearers plot to throw Him off a cliff! (Note also John 7:5, “For not even His brothers believed in Him.”)

The things that shock Jesus’ hearers are “all this” — His knowledge and authority, His wisdom, and His deeds of power. Where did Jesus get all these things?

Verse 6:3: The disparagement increases, and Jesus’ hearers take offense at Him. “How it possible that One with links to Nazareth is achieving such prominence?”

Verse 6:4: Jesus admits that He is a prophet — a title that will be ascribed to Him rather frequently. In this verse, Jesus is referred to as “the carpenter” and “the son of Mary.” (Matthew 13:55 refers to Jesus as “the carpenter’s son.”) Reference is also made to the names of four of Jesus’ brothers, and to the presence of His sisters (who are not named).

Verses 6:5–6: Jesus responds to the negative attitude and unbelief prevailing in Nazareth by performing no deeds of power; He merely lays His hands on a few sick people and heals them.

Verse 6:6b: Jesus now leaves Nazareth and visits other villages in the region where He teaches. It is helpful

to bear in mind that Jewish leaders referred to Galilee as “Galilee of the Gentiles.” Nazareth was a first-century version of present-day Jewish settlements in the West Bank region. The hope was that the Jews might eventually force the Gentiles to move out of Galilee so that the region might become exclusively Jewish.

Little wonder, then, that when in Luke’s narrative Jesus reminds His Jewish hearers of the compassion that Elijah and Elisha showed toward Gentiles, they are furious!

Verse 6:7: Jesus now sends His disciples out, two by two. He does not instruct them to teach but gives them divine authority to cast out demons.

Verses 6:8–9: The parallel passages in Matthew 10:5–15 and Luke 9:1–6 forbid the disciples to take with them staff or sandals. In Mark, Jesus allows them to take both, but only one tunic. However, the emphasis on living very simply is clear: no bread, no bag, no money in their belts.

The ideal of chosen poverty would have been new to the Jews, although the concept of a wandering mendicant philosopher who had no possessions was a familiar figure in the Greek world.

Verse 6:10: Jesus’ guidelines concerning hospitality find mention in early Christian documents that refer to itinerant evangelists (see the Didache 11:4f).

Verse 6:11: The disciples are to witness to the faithless in a symbolic Jewish manner: they are to empty their shoes or sandals of dust when re-entering the Holy Land from Gentile territory.

Verses 6:12–13: Although v. 7 refers to Jesus giving the disciples authority over unclean spirits, it also proclaims the need to repent. No doubt, exorcisms and healings authenticate the disciples’ ministry.

In the parallel accounts, and in Luke’s missionary charge to the 70 disciples, they are to preach about

the Kingdom of God that broke in with Jesus' ministry (see Matthew 10:7; Luke 9:2). They will not have gone through all the towns of Israel "before the Son of Man comes" — a statement that stresses the urgency of the disciples' mandate (Matthew 10:23).

Worth noting is the fact that when the disciples return from their mission, they return as "apostles" or "those sent" (6:30). Their missionary journey was to initiate them into the nature of apostleship.