



Pastor Kyle Mercer
Jesus & Unbelief

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Series: Unknown
Mark 6:1-29

BIG IDEA – ARE YOU GOING TO BE FULL OF BELIEF OR UNBELIEF?

Good morning, Two Cities Church. How is everybody doing? It has been a busy weekend here for many reasons. By the way, type or turn to Mark, chapter 6. That's where we're going to be. If you're new, we are in a series on the gospel of Mark. We've been in that series for a little over a month now. We're going to be in this series for almost five months. We're going to be in this series until Christmas.

Here's what I want to tell you. If you are new and you've been coming around for a while and I met you... I met you outside before or after service, and you told me, "Hey, we started coming around during the Mark series," and I said, "That's great," or you said, "I started coming around during the David series," and I said, "That's great."

Let me just tell you this. I want to be honest. I want you to understand our church. You won't get everything you could out of our series if you're not in a Community Group. We have, like, a hundred Community Groups that meet all over our city. Our Community Groups, by the way, are where we work it all out. It's about alignment. We're all doing this together. It's also about application. We're all trying to apply these texts, apply these sermons, apply these Scriptures to our lives more faithfully.

If you're not in a Community Group... You may say, "How do I get in a Community Group?" You have to go through our Weekender. You go, "Kyle, when is the next Weekender?" I'm so glad you asked. The next Weekender is this coming weekend, September 16 and 17. That's a Friday and Saturday. Last night we had 11 spots left. Now we have 83 people, so we have 7 spots left.

Here's why we have only 90 spots: because now when we do our Weekenders, we actually put round tables in here. What we found out is that with serving and staff and everything else, we can only fit about 90 new people in here. So, we have seven

spots left. You came to the 9:00 service instead of the 11:00 so you have a chance to get in. Whether you want to go online to our website or outside to our welcome tent, you can sign up there.

So, that's exciting, but I'm excited about even something more than that. Normally, I'm excited because of who's here or what's happening here, but I'm actually excited this weekend because of who's *not* here this weekend, which is all of our middle schoolers and all of our high schoolers and all of our college students. Yes, we planned two retreats at the same time. It's kind of crazy, because almost all of our staff is gone this weekend as well.

Let me show you a couple of pictures. We have a middle school retreat. Look at *that*. That's our main man Tyler teaching all of the students there. That's really exciting. I'll show you another picture here. We have another one of some middle schoolers sitting outside, middle schoolers and high schoolers. There are some things they do together and separate. Then one more.

So, we have *that* going on. That's really exciting. I mean, what were *you* doing when you were 11 or 12? We know that from 12 to 18, those are unbelievably formative years. We also believe in moments, we believe in milestones, we believe in mountaintop experiences, and we think God uniquely uses camps and conferences and retreats in special ways. So, they are there right now.

Also there's a college retreat. Let me show you a few pictures from that. Here's one. That's Johnson, one of our staff, teaching them. Then check *this* out. One more picture here. They gave them a lot of free time, but they said, "Hey, guys, during the free time, if you want to, Johnson is also going to be teaching an apologetics class," and that's who showed up during their free time. Yeah, that's Wake Forest students for you.

Listen. We are going to pray for them right now because they're still there. As you know, we need to pray for the student leaders, because these student leaders... I mean, they probably got four hours of sleep. Here's one of the last encouraging things, especially in our student ministry. We have 43 leaders, members of our church, who are serving in students.

Here's what that means: we have a 3:1 ratio in our student ministry, which means we can give the care and the investment and the discipleship these students from sixth grade to twelfth grade desperately need. So, let's pray for them, and then we're going to dive into the gospel of Mark. Let's pray.

Lord, right now we lift up all of these students, over 200 students across our middle school, high school, and college ministry. We thank you. We know that some of them, especially these middle schoolers, are probably nervous. They're making their own

decisions about whether they're going to embrace the values and the faith of their family. We pray for every person to make it personal this weekend.

We pray for so many college students. There are so many freshmen. We know this from our own experience and from the experience of our kids that the first six to eight weeks of college, the cement is very wet, but it's hardening very quickly. We pray that this would be, for both our middle school and high schoolers and our college students, a weekend they look back to and say, "We drew a line in the sand. We made some commitments. We made some decisions, and we're changed because of it." We pray this in your name, amen.

All right. Type to or turn to Mark, chapter 6. I can't catch us up on the last five chapters. Spencer did a fantastic job last week. Go back and listen to that sermon or any of the sermons if you want to catch up. Let me tell you where we are. We're looking at Jesus' life, the most famous person in all of human history. We're looking at the man, the message, the mission, and the ministry of Jesus.

Kind of the big theme, if you haven't picked it up... Because it's hard. There are a lot of things. Sometimes it's hard to see. You don't want to get lost in the trees. You want to see the whole forest. So, let me kind of tell you the forest of chapters 1-6. It's all about Jesus' authority. Have you noticed that? He teaches, and people are like, "He has authority."

Sometimes it's his authority over the natural realm. He calms the storm. That was in chapter 4. Sometimes it's his authority over the spiritual realm. He could cast out demons. It's either his authority in the seen realm (that's what we can see) or the unseen realm. Even his ability to call disciples to leave everything to follow him shows his authority. The big question in Mark so far (you can see this with different people) is...*How are you going to respond to authority?*

Now, first of all, you might go, "What is authority?" It's kind of hard to describe. What *is* authority? It's something like the ability to get things done. Have you ever been at a restaurant and were upset or at a hotel and were upset or at a business and were upset, and you went and tried to talk to somebody?

You're talking to them for a few minutes, and then you have this thought in your head, and maybe you say it to them: "You're not in authority." You realize, "This person has no ability to change anything. This person has no power." Jesus has all power in heaven and on earth, so the question is going to be...*What should you do in response?* You should worship. Right?

Even on the human level, when you meet a great person (no one is perfect) and they also have a lot of authority, maybe just in one domain or one sphere, if you're a

normal human being, you would like to get to know that person. You would like to follow that person. You would like to learn from that person in appropriate ways that you would do in a human relationship. How much more with Jesus?

What we've seen so far is Jesus has done in five chapters at least 10 miracles (it depends on how you count them), not to also go over all of his great teaching. So far, we've seen people either respond in faith or lack of faith. We've seen people either be full of belief or full of unbelief.

Last week, Spencer did a great job. He told us two stories of belief. The woman who had been bleeding saw the authority of Christ. She ran to him, and she believed. We saw Jairus and his daughter, and he was full of faith. Here's the question today (we're going to ask this question in the whole series): *What are you going to believe Jesus for?*

Do you know how important faith is? *Faith* is the eyesight of the soul. Theologians say that faith is the instrument (they like words like that) that connects us to Christ. What does the Bible say? "Without faith it's impossible to please God." What does Jesus say at one point to one person? He says, "Let it be done according to your faith." What does the Bible say? "The righteous will live by faith."

So, in one sense, what we've been looking at is faith in this whole series in the life of Jesus, but today we're going to see three stories of a lack of faith. We're going to see three stories of unbelief. Sometimes you have to see the opposite of something to understand what it really is.

So, we're going to see Jesus go home, and they don't believe. We're going to see Jesus send out his disciples, and they don't believe. We're going to see John the Baptist at an elite party with Herod, and they don't believe. So, let's look at these together.

01 UNBELIEF & JESUS' HOMETOWN

First, turn with me to chapter 6, verse 1. "**He [Jesus] *went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.***" So, Jesus goes home. We know it's roughly about a 25-mile journey, which would be pretty far back then. He goes home to... If you know where he's from, he's from Nazareth. Now, that's not where he was born. He was born in Bethlehem. We know that. We celebrate that every Christmas.

He was born in Bethlehem, but he was raised in Nazareth. Some of you have that experience. You were born somewhere, but you're like, "I'm not really from there." You're from where the vast majority of your childhood was. Let me ask you *this*

question: What's it like for *you* to go home? Some of you go, "I never left." Some of you are like, "I grew up in Winston, I went to Wake Forest, and I got a job here. I never left." Okay. That's its own experience.

A lot of us, especially in a transient culture... What we have happen is that we leave for a season, and then we come back. We left for college. We left for career. We had some kids. We came back. It's a weird experience to come back home, especially the smaller your town is. Jesus is from a town (we know by the size of the well) of about 100 people. It's a very religious context.

Things change a lot now, but back then things didn't change very quickly. So, Jesus comes home, and a lot has changed in his life. He's no longer the carpenter. He's now an itinerant preacher. He now has followers, and we're going to see how people respond. Now, what I want you to see at the end of verse 1... I don't want us to skip over some of the most basic things in the text.

The verse says Jesus went home, and his disciples followed him. Well, what do disciples do? They follow Jesus. See, what we're trying to do here... We say this all the time. I say it until I'm sick of saying it and you're sick of me saying it, which is probably right about now. A Christian is somebody who's following Jesus and helping others find and follow Jesus.

That's why it's even good to think of yourself not so much as a Christian. Of course, if you're a Christian, you're a Christian. I'm a Christian, but when I find myself in a very secular space... Some of you know this. I spent four years at Duke doing ministry. I didn't find it super helpful at Duke to tell people I was a Christian. They've heard that. They've seen that. They have their own ideas of what that is.

It was more helpful for me to say, "I'm a follower of Jesus." I never heard anyone say *that*. Or "I'm a disciple of Jesus." It's the same thing. The same thing happens in very religious contexts, which is at least the old Winston...a very religious context where everybody says they're a Christian in name. Here's what most people think Christianity is, especially in Winston-Salem.

They think it's "I show up, I listen to sermons, I sing songs that make me feel a certain way on the inside, and I get one hour of childcare free." We thank God for the kids' ministry, and we are so unbelievably grateful for such a great worship team, and I hope you get a decent sermon, but I just want to be very, very clear that Christianity is not "I listen to sermons, I sing songs, I have feelings inside, I get some free childcare, and I have some friends who are nice."

Christianity is "I'm following Jesus, and I'm helping others find and follow Jesus." If you're not following Jesus and helping others find and follow Jesus (I don't know how

else to say this...as nicely as I can, as Spirit-filled, Christ-centered, and winsomely as I can), I don't know what you mean when you say you're a Christian, because that's what a Christian does.

So, verse 1, that's what they're doing. The disciples are following Jesus. Now let's look at verse 2. Look at where Jesus leads them. **"And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue..."** Jesus leads them to church. What an amazing idea. **"...and many who heard him were astonished, saying..."**

This is Jesus' hometown. They start asking questions. They ask three questions: **"Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands?"** So, he shows up, and things have changed, and people don't understand. They're trying to figure it out. "Why is he such a great teacher?"

Look at what they do. Here's how they try to describe it. We're going to camp out here for a little bit. Verse 3: **"Is not this the carpenter..."** So, they think about him only in terms of his occupation. **"...the son of Mary and brother of..."** It seems like Mary and Joseph loved names that started with *J*. Do you see this? Jesus, Joses, Judas, James, and then finally Simon. We ran out of *J* names.

"And are not his sisters..." This is helpful to know. Sometimes we have a view of Jesus that we don't understand he had a very human experience. Here's what we know: Jesus had four brothers (they're named), and Jesus had at least two sisters. We don't know how many. Could it be three or four or five sisters? It could.

"And are not his sisters here with us?" So, here's what we know. Jesus shows up. He's teaching in the local synagogue. We don't know if his brothers are there, but his sisters are sitting there. It says, **"And they took offense at him."** Here's what happens. Jesus goes home, and people cannot understand his divinity. They only understand his humanity.

Part of being a Christian, and part of what we're doing each week... Like, why are we walking through whole books of the Bible? Why do I preach for 40 or 50 minutes? Why do we ask you to keep coming back? It's because there are a lot of things to learn. Part of what we're doing together... We're just kind of building a city in our minds and hearts of all the truth of Scripture.

One of the things we have to do is realize, "Wait a second. Sometimes I'm believing one thing, and I also need to believe something else at the same time." I'll give you an example. A couple of weeks ago, I was up here, and I was talking about the baptism of Jesus. I just took about 5 or 10 minutes, and I said, "Hey, guys, hold on. Let's just talk about how the life of Jesus is as important as the death of Jesus."

The reason I said that is... Well, if you've been in church for a while, we're always singing about the cross. We're singing about the resurrection. "All hail King Jesus." I get it. I love it. Or we're thinking about Christmas. We're talking about the birth of Jesus. The only thing we're forgetting is his entire life. So, we spent some time saying, "Okay. We have to hold together the life and the death of Jesus Christ." Okay. We're not going to return to that. We have to hold together his humanity and his divinity.

Now, here's what happens in churches that are theologically liberal, which is most churches you're going to see today. All of the old, big buildings, usually, when you drive around different cities, are all what we call the *mainline churches*, and most of them (I'm not thinking of any one church) have left the gospel. They've left the divinity of Christ, but they've tried to just hold on to the humanity of Christ.

They see Jesus as a good example. They see Jesus as a poor Galilean peasant who was a good teacher. They see Jesus as a religious leader. They only see his humanity. Now, here's what I think our problem is, often, in more what we would call *evangelical churches*...this team, tribe, tradition, whatever we're in here. We tend to think of the divinity of Jesus and forget his humanity.

Okay. Two things here. First, it says he's the carpenter. Do you notice the definite article *the*? Here's what we have to understand. Back then, there weren't carpenters. There was a carpenter. We're kind of spoiled. It's like, "What lawyer do I want to go to?" No, no, no. Not back then.

There wasn't *a* lawyer; there was *the* lawyer. There wasn't *a* butcher; there was *the* butcher. There wasn't *a* barber; there was *the* barber, if there were even barbers back then. I don't know how it worked. You get the point and principle I'm trying to say.

Here's why this is interesting. Here's what we know about Jesus. He dignifies work, by the way. Some of you don't like your jobs. Work is hard. Here's what we know: Jesus, by somewhere between age 12 and age 15 (we're getting this from just what happened in culture), would begin to work for his dad. He doesn't enter full-time ministry until he's 30, so we have 15 to 18 years of him being the carpenter.

That phrase *the carpenter* is actually only used two times in the New Testament. It is probably best translated *builder*. He probably didn't work with wood. There wasn't much wood around there. He was probably more of a stonemason. But here he is. He dignifies work. He's working with his stepdad.

Then we see family. Those are two things that are going to define your human experience. That's why you want to try to get those right by the time you're about 30 or 35 years old. You want to figure out family, and you want to figure out work, because you're going to be doing those two things for a long time.

Here's what I want us to understand about Jesus. We cannot forget the humanity of Jesus. Here's, I think, the big thing about that we don't need to let go of the divinity of Christ; we need to hold them both in our minds...fully God, fully man. Here's what the humanity of Christ means for you practically: Jesus gets you. Jesus understands you. This is why the Bible talks about him being our Great High Priest who's acquainted with our weaknesses.

Think about this. Jesus lost a stepdad. We don't know exactly when. Sometime between age 12 and age 30, Jesus' stepdad is no longer there. Have you ever lost someone close to you? Jesus understands. He also lost a good friend, Lazarus. Do you have close friendships? Jesus understands that. He had 12 good friends. Have they ever betrayed you? Jesus understands *that*.

Have you ever been misunderstood? Jesus understands that. Have you ever been single in your 30s? Jesus understands that. So, it's a really important thing to understand. When you're tempted, you have to understand Jesus understands that. The Bible says Jesus was tempted, because temptation and sin are not the same things.

Here's what C.S. Lewis said about temptation, which is an interesting thought. He said Jesus understands temptation even better than us, because here's what happens with us: we give in to temptation, and then that temptation is over for that season. If you don't give in to temptation, it only increases in your life. So Jesus actually understands temptation better than *you* understand temptation.

Jesus had a fully human experience and suffered to the point of death, dying the most emotionally and physically painful death you can die. The word *excruciating* means from the cross. This is what's so powerful. When you're dealing with some temptation in your life, you can both call on the divinity of Christ to help you say, "No," and you can say, "You know what this is like."

It's really powerful, because there are two ways to know something. You can know something by explanation, which is really helpful. That's how we have to know a lot of things. "Read this book. Listen to this podcast. Watch this YouTube video. Take this class." You learn it by explanation, but what you really need to do is learn it by experience.

This is what the medical community has figured out. It's like, "Okay. Take your organic chemistry and take your medical school, and all that, but by the time you get into residency, it's time. And if you need fellowship, you're going to need to learn these things by experience."

So, there's the humanity of Christ. There's also the divinity of Christ. People have struggled with the divinity of Christ. There was something that came out years ago in the 70s called the *Jesus Seminar*. It was very interesting. Basically, it was a bunch of... I know I keep talking about the theologically liberal Protestants, but that's what they were. You know, professors who teach religion at universities.

Well, they got together and said, "Let's figure out the historical Jesus." Have you ever heard of the historical Jesus? If you take one religion class, you'll hear about the historical Jesus. He's different than the Jesus of faith, they tell us. All you have to do is watch one Discovery channel documentary at Easter, and you'll hear about the historical Jesus.

Anyway, what they did... It was kind of interesting. This really happened. It sounds like a joke. They got a bunch of guys in a room, and they had four different color pebbles. They read all of the red letters of the New Testament. I can't remember the colors. They threw one pebble in if they said, "Jesus definitely said that." They threw a different pebble in if they said, "Jesus maybe said that."

They threw another pebble in if Jesus probably did not say that, and then they had a different color pebble for "Jesus definitely did not say that." What they found at the end (unbelievable), based on their research, was that only 18 percent of the red letters Jesus really said.

Here's what's interesting. A critic of the Jesus Seminar said, "Well, you know what's really interesting? When you tell me that 18 percent, he sounds like a theologically liberal Protestant professor." This is our temptation. Right? Our temptation is to domesticate Jesus. Our temptation is to manage Jesus. See, God created us in his image, and we've been trying to return the favor ever since.

Then we have to hold on to the divinity of Jesus. It's interesting. Christians have been defending the divinity of Jesus. Actually, early on (I'm giving you a lot of background this morning), there were these gnostic gospels written by Christians. They're not in our New Testament. They're not the Word of God. They're not even probably fully true, or *any* true maybe. They were written in the 200s and the 300s, and there are these things called *infancy gospels*.

You can understand this. People became very interested in Jesus from age 2 to 30, because all we get is one thing about him in the New Testament at age 12. So, they start telling these infancy gospel stories. One of the stories says that Jesus, when he's a little kid, does all of these magic things, and he turns a clay dove into a real dove, and it flies away.

My favorite story says some kid was making fun of him (this was when he was in third or fourth grade), and he turned him into a donkey, which is what you and I would do if we were the Son of God in third grade. I show you this to say people have wrestled with "How do we hold on to the divinity of Christ (he's real, risen, reigning, and returning) and the humanity of Christ?"

What you see, by the way, is greatness. I've been reading about this lately. When they look at the greatest people, the greatest people hold two extremes at one time. The greatest leaders are unbelievably kind but unbelievably direct. Great leaders are unbelievably optimistic and unbelievably realistic. Jesus is the ultimate example. He's fully God, and he's fully man. Now, Jesus is going to interpret what he and the disciples are experiencing. Look here at verse 4.

"And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.' And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching."

Jesus basically tells something that we know. He's quoting a prophet of the day. He says, "A prophet is honored everywhere except his own house and his own hometown." You have to ask a few questions. What is honor? Honor is an interesting thing. We don't really understand honor today. We live in a super casual culture.

No one even wants to be called... Like, "Don't call me Mr. Mercer. That was my dad's name. Call me Kyle." That's the casual culture. We don't respect parents. We don't respect pastors. We don't respect professors. We don't respect the government. We don't respect bosses. We don't understand honor.

What's happening right now after Queen Elizabeth passed... What you're seeing is honor. That's what we're seeing there. When everybody is crying, and King Charles steps up, and they say, "Long live the king!" what they're recognizing is that there's an office here. What they're recognizing is there's a history here. What they're recognizing is there's a weight here.

So, what Jesus is saying... It's interesting. If you look, it says that where Jesus is not honored, he's not able to do any miracles. Theologically, if you're like me, you're trying to put it together. "Well, he's sovereign. He can do whatever he wants." Yes, that's true.

We don't always understand how God's sovereignty and man's responsibility work together, but here's what we know, at least according to this passage: a lack of

honoring Jesus (which, by the way, we see at the end of verse 6 is a form of unbelief) hinders Jesus' ability to work in your life.

Now, here's what I want to talk about. Here's the principle of honor that I want us to get. I don't know where else... I mean, it'll be taught in other churches, but I don't know that you'll learn this anywhere else, because this isn't taught today. The principle of honor is this: *honor goes up, and blessing flows down*. God says, "If you honor me, I will honor you."

When you honor Jesus, you get blessed. I don't mean the "Name it, claim it, gab it, grab it" blessings of health, wealth, and prosperity. I mean the good, biblical blessings of life. Some of you know this. Let's move on just for a second from Jesus' experience. Some of *you* have experienced this. Right?

Maybe you're the guy or the girl who feels like, "I am honored everywhere except my home. I go to work, and they call me 'Sir' or 'Ma'am.' I get bonuses, and I get promotions. I ask someone to do something, and they do it. I have a role, I have status, and I have influence. I go home, and I'm the village idiot. I go home, and my husband doesn't respect me. I go home, and my wife doesn't respect me."

I've seen this before. I think, as a general rule... Everybody needs to honor everybody. Everybody needs to love everybody. I think, as a general rule, kids learn love by watching their dad love their mom, and they learn honor by watching their mom honor their dad.

Every once in a while, if I hear an 8-year-old, 9-year-old, 10-year-old, or 11-year-old kid complain about his dad... "My dad is lazy. My dad watches too much TV. My dad travels too much." Here's what I know: he learned that from Mom. Kids don't think that way. Kids learn to think that way because of how Mom talks about Dad or how Dad talks about Mom.

Here's the principle: if you don't honor somebody (Jesus is the ultimate example of this), you can no longer receive from them. Let me tell you how this happened in the church world. During COVID, in all different churches, pastors had to make decisions about what to do with COVID. I don't want to talk about it, but I'm talking about it just for a second.

This is what happened at churches. A pastor did not make a sinful decision but made a prudent decision (I don't even care which way) to do something with COVID, and some of the people in the church didn't like it. They didn't like *it*, so guess what they don't like. They don't like *him*. Watch this. This is what happens. I've seen this so many times. All of a sudden, that pastor becomes a terrible preacher. Really? His sermons are probably getting better across time.

Here's the principle: You can no longer receive from him. You have a root of bitterness toward him. This can happen with a wife with her husband, a husband with his wife, a church member with a pastor, a student with a teacher. Jesus says, "Because you will not honor me, you cannot receive from me." He calls it in verse 6... If you look, it says he marveled. We only get two times in Scripture where we're told Jesus marvels. He marvels at unbelief.

A good way to think about unbelief is it's the sin under every other sin. We're all struggling with sins. We're all struggling with besetting sins, but if you're trying to get to the heart of "Why do I do what I do?" or "Why don't I do what I want to do?" one of the questions you might ask is "What am I believing or what am I not believing that's causing me to do what I'm doing?"

Let me be clear here. Unbelief is different than doubt. Unbelief is a sin. Unbelief is the opposite of faith. Doubt is often a sign of faith. If you've never doubted your Christian faith, you may not be a Christian, because doubt is like, "Hey, I really believe this. I'm kind of leveraging my whole life on this. I believe in heaven and hell, and I'm raising my kids this way, and I'm giving money to this, so I'd better make sure this is real."

Unbelief is a settled state (this is what Jesus is condemning); doubt comes and goes during different seasons...maybe during a trial, maybe during suffering, maybe something happens in your life. Unbelief challenges Jesus; doubt asks Jesus. "Help me understand." Unbelief wants an answer to everything; doubt says, "I believe there's mystery. I believe God is bigger than me. I believe just because I don't understand it doesn't mean there isn't a reason."

What we see with the disciples is the disciples doubt. They have different seasons. You're going to have different seasons of doubt. Here's what I want us to finally think about. Jesus goes home, and it's the people who are most familiar with Jesus who are most filled with unbelief. It makes me worry particularly about the church. It's like, "Where would Jesus be most familiar to people?" The answer would be "In *here*." Or, if you want to go one more level, our kids.

One of the roles of parents is... How do we take what is familiar and make it fresh for our kids? Here's what I found out with my kids. I have a 10-year-old, an 8-year-old, and a 6-year-old. Especially my 10-year-old and my 8-year-old... They can answer almost any basic question about the Bible, but what they're lacking (it's probably because *I'm* lacking in it) is awe.

They can answer, "Yeah, Jesus walked on water. Yep, Jesus died for our sins. Yep, Jesus is returning," but there's no excitement. There's no wonder. Paul David Tripp said the job of a parent is to pass on to their kid awe. "Isn't God awesome? Isn't God

great?" This is what we need to pray for for our kids, that they don't become so familiar with Jesus that they no longer honor him and no longer can receive from him.

02 UNBELIEF & THE HARVEST (DISCIPLES GO OUT)

So, verse 6 ends with unbelief in Jesus' hometown. Now Jesus is going to send out the disciples. Look with me at verse 7. ***"And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics."***

"And he said to them, 'Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them."

If you take notes in your Bible, you might want to write in this section, what I just read, "The first short-term mission trip ever." Some of you go, "Why is Two Cities so big on short-term mission trips? Why are they always asking me to go on a short-term mission trip? Why are we sending our middle schoolers and our high schoolers and our college students on short-term mission trips?" Because it's biblical.

By the way, this is a huge transition. Verse 7... All of the commentators note this. This is the transition in the book from one person does all the ministry to many people do ministry. Up until this point... The first five chapters, one person teaches. The first five chapters, one person heals. The first five chapters, one person does all of the discipling.

From this point on in the book, Jesus moves to a season of preparation because he's getting his disciples ready to do ministry without him physically there. Jesus here has a multiplication mindset, and it starts with a short-term mission trip. Why are short-term mission trips so important? Well, we don't know all of the answers, but they tend to be a discipleship microwave for our faith.

When people talk about the church in general, not just our church... When they talk about the American church (probably *any* church), they point out something very interesting. They say, "You know, the people who tend to be most committed in any church, who tend to be most all in in any church..."

They say there are two categories of people. First, it's usually the people who serve in the kids' ministry. We all say, "Amen." We don't know why. Is it they're committed so

they serve there or they serve there, they see the kids, God works in their heart, and they're super committed? We don't know.

They say the second thing after kids' ministry is it's anybody who has ever been on a short-term mission trip anywhere. I don't know why. Does it just reorient your finances? It reorients your heart? It lets you see genuine spiritual poverty? I don't know, but I want you to know that our heart is to send out more and more short-term mission trips. We are going to have four new short-term mission trips in the first six months of 2023.

Our goal here is (and this is a logistical nightmare) for everybody here to eventually go on a short-term mission trip and, ideally, to take your family. We have this partnership with Compassion. I've already told the head of Compassion, "Hey, as soon as trips open up to Uganda, I want to take my whole family." We want to go. Yes, I have a 6-year-old, but we want them to see the world. We want them to see real poverty. We want them to see real ministry.

Now, here's the goal of short-term mission trips. By implication and application, I want to talk about this really quickly. Short-term mission trips have one main purpose. This is it: to serve the people there who live there full-time ministering to those people. Does that make sense? So, the point of a short-term mission trip is not to see the world, although you'll get to do that.

The point of a short-term mission trip is not to hang out with your friends, although you'll get to do that. The point of a short-term mission trip is there are people living there long term who have given their lives and learned the language and crossed an ocean and said "Goodbye" to parents, and I'm here for one week, and my job is to serve them, whatever I can do.

What we're going to see is, also (we'll see this next week), Jesus calls them back from the short-term mission trip, and they have evaluated experiences where he helps them evaluate what they just saw. Watch this. So, he sends them out. Oh, one more thing I want to say. You see this final transition (I think this is worth noting) of how discipleship works. I want to give us different ways to think about discipleship.

Discipleship is what Jesus is doing. He's getting people ready to do ministry without him physically there. Dave Ferguson, who pastors a church in Chicago, Illinois, says there are five steps to discipleship. This is really good. Actually, my wife has taken all of these five steps, and this is how we do parenting now. *Parenting* is just another word for discipling. So this can work with parenting.

Here are the five steps. It's *I do; you watch; we talk*. (I know that sounds like caveman.) *I do; you help; we talk. You do; I help; we talk. You do; I watch; we talk. You*

do; someone else watches; you guys talk. What we're seeing here is so far it has been "I do and you watch" and "I do and you help," and now it's going to move to they do, and Jesus is going to watch, and Jesus is going to help, and Jesus is going to talk to them about it.

Look at what he tells them to take. This is interesting. Look with me at verse 8. In verse 8, he says something interesting. ***"He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics."*** What's the point of this?

Some people look back and go, "This is the same language as back when Moses got the Passover ready, and they were leaving Egypt to leave the Egyptians and head into the Promised Land." Fair enough. That's true. But you're like, "What's the application?" Is the application that the reason you're not doing ministry well enough is you don't have a staff and you're not wearing sandals when you're doing it? No.

Here's the principle that people have seen in this text. It's a call to a simple lifestyle. Do you see that? "Don't take two tunics. Don't take all this extra stuff." It's a call to simplicity, which I don't think I've ever talked about. Simplicity is a component of stewardship, obviously. Simplicity is the sister of contentment.

A good summary of what Jesus is telling them is "Hey, here's an idea: trust the Lord and travel light." I think a lot of us know we could live more simple lives than we do. It's not just the things we own. It's the schedules we have. It's everything. Why are some of us not as effective as we could be in ministry than other people? Well, first, our lives are too much about possessing and consuming. I mean, come on. We're Americans.

"How many things can I possess? How many things can I consume?" Whenever you talk about simplicity, it gets weird. We're not laying down laws. "You have to buy this car. You have to wear these clothes." Blah, blah, blah. But I think it's something worth thinking about. The Bible teaches this principle in Ecclesiastes: the more you have, the more you have to take care of.

What you want to be as a Christian is... I want to be as light and as flexible and as nimble and as malleable as I possibly could be. It kind of works like *this*. The Christian should have an inward simplicity. I think we can all agree on that. There should be an inward simplicity about your life, and it should feel something like this: my life is not about a lot of things. How could it be? My life is about knowing Christ and making him known. My life is about making disciples.

"I have a job." I know. It fits under that. "I have a family." It fits under that. "I have a hobby." It fits under that. But the inward simplicity should lead to an outward

simplicity. I don't know how to work all this out. I will tell you, Richard Foster wrote a book called *Celebration of Discipline*. He puts down as one of the spiritual disciplines of Christians, which no one practices anymore... He calls it the *discipline of simplicity*.

He gives you 10 things you should do. I won't give you all 10. I'll give you two that I thought were really helpful. He said, first, what if you started to buy things not for status but for function? Maybe you need the five-bedroom house or the six-bedroom house, or whatever, but you buy it for function. You don't buy it for status. Buy the jacket. Maybe you want leather seats because your kid spills. I get it.

It's a transition. You don't have the high school mindset. "I'm not buying this for status. I'm buying this for function." If we wrestled with that a little bit more, that's a good principle. The second principle he said (I thought this was really helpful) is learn to give things away. I buy a shirt; I give away a shirt. I buy a pair of pants; I give away a pair of pants. I buy a device; I give away a device. I don't need a ton of gadgets and gizmos. I want to travel light and trust the Lord.

Now, he tells them the right expectations they should have. Look here. ***"And he said to them, 'Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.'"***

He gives them the right expectations for what they're going to receive in the world as Christians. "People are going to like you, and people are going to not like you. You're going to experience persecution and people of peace. You're going to experience opportunity and open doors on one end, and you're going to experience opposition on the other end."

So, he says, here's what you should look for. When you go to a place, you should look for people of peace. People of peace are people who are uniquely open to you, to having a relationship and friendship with you, and are open to the gospel. So, when you go to your business or you go to your neighborhood or you're trying to do ministry anywhere, you just go...

When I did ministry at Duke, I'd go into a fraternity house and was like, "I'm looking for one person who will like me. I'm looking for one relationship. I'm looking for one person who's spiritually interested, and I will focus on that person. They have all of the networks, and they will open up the rest of the world to me."

You go, "Is this a biblical principle?" Well, how about the woman at the well? The woman at the well was the person of peace Jesus found in Samaria. She was open, she had conversation, and from there the gospel went into Samaria. So, Jesus says there

are people of peace, but at the same time, he goes, "Dust your feet off." In other words, you have to know when you're done with certain people.

You go, "That sounds kind of rough. Doesn't Jesus love everybody? Doesn't Jesus want everyone to be saved?" This is an important principle. Here's the principle: *we do not create spiritual interest; we discover it*. You can't create spiritual interest in people. You have to discover, "Where is God already at work?" So, what you have to do is you have to keep moving on from people, and that's good for those people. I'll explain. Watch.

A couple of years ago, I went to India. It's far away. I'll tell you that. If you've never been to India, it's far. It's a 15-hour flight, Newark to Mumbai. We land in Mumbai. I'm there for a few days. It was a vision trip. I was seeing all of these different areas of ministry. This one couple said, "We want you to come to the bush with us tomorrow." I thought, "The bush? I'm already far away from everything."

They said, "Pack your lunch because there's nowhere to eat there." I'm like, "I'm in India. I don't have a lunch." We figured it out. I packed a lunch. I go on this trip, and we drive about an hour and a half. They stop at something that looked like a McDonald's, but it wasn't a McDonald's. It looked like it. It had the arches, but it was not a McDonald's.

They said, "This is the last Western toilet." I was like, "Oh my." So, then we drive another hour and a half. We get out into the bush, and they say to us, "Hey, you're going to walk out in the bush, and you're going to be the first white people these people have ever seen." I thought, "Where *am* I?"

So, we go out into the bush, and the guy, this missionary, is walking around again and again and again, sharing the gospel. He would go to one house, and he would share the gospel. He did the same thing. He would share the gospel, he would share his testimony, and he would want to tell a biblical story. Those are kind of the three things he would do.

He'd go to a house and they wouldn't be interested, and he'd go, "Okay. I'm leaving." I was like, "You're leaving?" I knew he wasn't coming back to this village. I'm like, "That was their one chance?" He'd go to another house. I didn't get it. I actually kind of thought at first, to be honest with you, "This feels kind of 'businessy.' It kind of feels like 'If you don't respond right away, I leave.'"

I felt that until about two hours in when we were in this house with this one lady and her family, and she gave her life to Christ. I still didn't get it, but I thought, "Okay. We moved on from all of these people, and we finally found someone who believes." It

wasn't until about a month later... I'm in my office, and I get an email from this missionary.

He said, "I want to tell you that lady we led to Christ in that house... We've now led her whole family to Christ. They've all been baptized. We've started a church in that house to reach that whole village." I thought, "I get it." You have to move on from certain people because you want to find the person who might, long term, be able to minister to all of those people.

03 UNBELIEF & THE HEART (PLEASURE)

So, what we've seen is unbelief in Jesus' hometown, and we've seen unbelief as he sends out the disciples. Let me summarize quickly. We won't get to read it all. If you look in verses 14-29, it's a strange story of a guy named Herod and a woman named Herodias. Herod is actually the son of King Herod who tries to kill Jesus when he's 2 years old. Herod marries Herodias, who is actually his brother's wife. I know. You're like, "Is this West Virginia?" No. It was strange.

Basically, what happens is John the Baptist shows back up and confronts those two about their lifestyle. If you read the end of chapter 6 (I would encourage you to do that this afternoon or this week), you see that at the end of the day, John the Baptist confronts the immorality of that day, particularly the sexual immorality of the elite culture. Interesting thought.

He ends up getting his head cut off because of it. It's this strange story where, at the end, his head is brought in on a platter and given to Herodias, and everybody rejoices...except for Herod, because he was kind of torn on whether he should do it or not. What that final story shows us is where unbelief ultimately leads sometimes.

Sometimes unbelief is "I'm just not familiar, and I can't see the divinity of Christ." Sometimes unbelief is you have to dust your feet off and leave. Sometimes unbelief gets to the point (we see this mostly in other places) where they actually kill the very messengers of the gospel.

The death of John the Baptist is really, as it ends in chapter 6, foreshadowing the death of Jesus. Both John the Baptist and Jesus were innocent, righteous men. Both John the Baptist and Jesus were killed by politicians and political people who didn't really want to kill them (Pontius Pilate didn't, Herod didn't) but did anyway because of fear of man, and they were both killed because of what they taught.

It's kind of a weighty end to our morning together, but I just want us to understand the culture we live in today and how they viewed Christianity. Here's what they say.

From 1950 until around 1990... We don't know exactly why things changed around 1990, but from 1950 to 1990, in America, how the average person viewed Christians and Christianity was positively.

We think it's because we just fought a world war against communism and atheism, and World War II was over, and people were rebuilding their families, and Billy Graham was filling stadiums. If you said you were a Christian, they were like, "Good for you." Being a Christian was helpful in society. Being a Christian was a good thing and part of being a good citizen. Christian morality was seen as the norm.

Then somewhere in the early 90s, partly because of the results of the sexual revolution and other things like that, right around 1992, 1993, and 1994, the view of Christians moved from a positive view to a neutral view. From 1994 until about 2010 to 2015, there was a very neutral view of Christians. "You want to be a Christian? Fine. It's one potential way to live your life in a pluralistic, relativistic society. We'll still take some of your norms, but not all of them."

Then in 2013, 2014, and 2015, there was a huge change in our culture. We don't fully know why. You're looking back on things in the rearview mirror trying to figure it out. Somewhere in 2012 to 2015, there became a negative view of Christianity (part of it was the Obergefell decision) to where now Christians...

Maybe not as much in Winston. We may still be in the neutral view, but the closer you get to a city, the closer you get to a college campus, and the closer you get to a coast, the more people have a negative view of Christianity. This isn't a doomsday sermon. This is just a sermon for us to wake up and say, "Here's what we're going to do. We are going to continue to honor Jesus Christ."

I want to close by asking you: Where do you need to honor Jesus so he can work in your life? Where do you need more of a life of simplicity? As soon as I said it, you knew what it was. It was something with what you own. It was something with your schedule. It was something with your work, whatever it was.

Then, finally, let me encourage us one last time to live a life of faith. I believe that both faith and fear are contagious, and I think there's nothing more exciting than living a life of faith, seeing the doors God opens and seeing where it takes you. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for this clear teaching of Jesus, the clear teaching that we should honor you, Lord. We want to honor you with our lives. We want to put you first in our finances. We want to put you first in our marriages. We want to put you first in our work life. We want to honor you and experience blessing, Lord.

I pray for anyone in here who just needs to start honoring somebody in their life...for kids to start respecting parents, for spouses to start respecting one another, and for the home to be a place of honor. Lord, help us, as we go out, to go out and live lives of clarity and simplicity. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.