

**Sunday, April 11, 2021**  
**Matthew 13:53-14:12 (The Kingdom Opposed)**  
**Pastor Eric Dubois**

**Intro**

I don't need to convince you that following Jesus makes life difficult at times.

Question asked last Sunday night: *why do you fail to engage in gospel conversations?*

Answers:

- 1) People don't want to talk about it...we have to bring it up
- 2) People only bring up God when bad things happen
- 3) Evangelism is something that isn't on our minds
- 4) Work policies
- 5) It's not going to work...no results
- 6) We don't want to antagonize people
- 7) We risk alienating ourselves from others
- 8) What was the first answer? – rejection!

I had a friend who about a year before I was converted wanted me to be his best man. Following Jesus put an end to that. We still spent time together. Worked at the same hotel, played basketball, played video games. But the days of getting drunk and partying were over. When it came time for his wedding, five years after he asked me, I couldn't be best man because I wouldn't be planning the bachelor party. I read Scripture and prayed at the wedding. I haven't seen him since 2007.

Following Jesus can be costly.

**READ PASSAGE**

**PRAY**

**Body**

**Passage Focus**

- kingdom parables highlighted both kingdom advance and kingdom opposition
- today's passage = kingdom opposition

FCF: rejection...suffering

Gospel connection: Jesus endured rejection and suffered to put an end to our suffering. Jesus' rejection was necessary for your salvation.

## Point 1: Kingdom ministry brings rejection (13:53-58)

### Explanation

After explaining the kingdom, Jesus departed from the Capernaum region (Northern Galilee) for Nazareth (Southern Galilee; 13:53-54). In his travels, Jesus had caused quite a stir:

**Matthew 4:23-25** And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. <sup>24</sup> So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. <sup>25</sup> And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

- Galilee = Northern Israel
- Syria = Northeast of Israel
- Decapolis = east, mostly southeast, of Galilee
- Jerusalem and Judea = Southern Israel
- beyond the Jordan = east of the Jordan River, the area below Decapolis

→ kind of like Gaspe, Quebec to Fort Kent to Presque Isle to New Brunswick to Bangor

Jesus has drawn the attention of northern Israel, southern Israel, eastern Israel, and the nation northeast of Israel. How will he be received in his hometown?

First, the town folk are astonished = shock or surprise.

*"Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?"* – 13:54

Evidently there was nothing special about Jesus while he lived in Nazareth. As a Jewish man, Jesus would have started working as a carpenter around the age of 13 (carpenter = builder skilled in the use of wood, stone, and possibly metal). Given that he began his traveling ministry around the age of 30 (Luke 3:23), Jesus spent approximately 20 years in Nazareth working as a carpenter. In those 20 years, Jesus did nothing that would commend him as the promised Messiah.

These people knew Jesus personally. They knew his father Joseph and his mother Mary. They knew his brothers: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (James authored the book of James and Judas authored the book of Jude). They knew his sisters. Their personal knowledge led them to ask: *"Where then did this man get all these things?"* Wisdom and mighty works coming from this carpenter's son was a total shock. He was nothing special. Who was he to make these claims?

Kind of like someone might say to you, “Who are you to make these claims about God, sin, and the afterlife? I grew up with you. I know who you are. I’ve seen your faults. There’s nothing special about you. Who are you to say you have access to God’s mind and I don’t?”

Second, *“they took offense at him.”* Jesus made some pretty serious claims. Like he had come to fulfill the Scriptures (Matt 5:17-18). He had authority to interpret the Scriptures (Matt 5:21-48). He had authority to forgive sin (Matt 9:2). He had authority to pronounce judgment on cities (Matt 11:20-24). And he had authority to reject the tradition of the Pharisees (Matt 12:1-14).

They were also offended that he healed the sick and cast out demons. Perhaps they attributed his power over demons to Satanic power like the Pharisees did (Matt 12:22-32)? Since they rejected him, they must have attributed his works to a source other than the Father.

Jesus was rejected: *“A prophet is not **without honor** except in his hometown and in his own household.”* Jesus was honored elsewhere, but not in his hometown, not even in his own household.

Jesus diagnoses their problem: unbelief.

*And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. – 13:58*

Mark says it this way:

**Mark 6:5** And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

Lack of miracles in Nazareth:

- 1) Not saying divine power is restricted by our lack of faith (man unable to walk healed in John 5:1-17 didn’t know who Jesus was when healed)
- 2) This is a judgment on unbelief, like when Jesus wouldn’t give signs on demand (Matt 12:38-39)
- 3) Jesus’ choice not Jesus’ inability (he was God in human flesh!)
- 4) Refrained because it wasn’t the Father’s will (Jesus always did the Father’s will = it was not the Father’s will to heal in Nazareth - John 4:34; 6:38)

What’s the end result? Despite his wisdom and mighty works, Jesus was rejected, even by his family. Surely Mary believed given her response to the angelic messenger (Luke 1:35-38, 46-55). But John 7:5 says of Jesus, *“For not even his brothers believed in him.”* Later, in Acts 1:14, it’s said that Mary and Jesus’ brothers were in the upper room praying with the apostles. Jesus appeared to his brother James after his resurrection (1 Cor 15:7) so it’s possible James believed after the cross. At this time Jesus’ brothers rejected him.

### **Application**

How does this speak to us? Jesus experienced rejection. His hometown. His own family. The religious establishment. The majority of the crowds. When we’re rejected, Jesus knows what we’re going through and he sympathizes:

**Hebrews 4:14-16** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Since Jesus has ascended to the Father's presence and granted us access to God's presence, endure in following Jesus. Additionally, Jesus is a high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses. After all, he experienced temptations just like us (e.g., Satan's temptations in the wilderness and agonizing over the cross). Yet Jesus never sinned. **Hebrews 2:18** says it this way: *"For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."* As one who experienced suffering, Jesus sympathizes with our suffering, so confidently approach God in prayer. Jesus wants to help sufferers! Jesus understands what you're going through. He's experienced temptation. He's experienced accusations. He's experienced rejection. He's experienced injustice. He's experienced physical suffering. Jesus sympathizes with your suffering.

One reason we don't share the gospel is we're afraid of rejection. None of us desires rejection. But if rejection comes, Jesus understands. Jesus cares.

Rejection, especially from those closest to us, stings! Likely we've all experienced rejection. A child that rejects your Christian faith or disowns you. A spouse who abandons you. A person you're dating ends the relationship when you thought marriage was around the corner. A person you wish to date has no interest in you. A close friend who breaks off contact. An employer who says you're not good enough.

Rejection stings. Rejection hurts.

This morning Jesus says I sympathize. I experienced it too. I understand your pain. I want to help! Bring your rejection to Jesus. Bring your suffering to Jesus.

What's my pastoral advice to the suffering? Read the Psalms. In the Psalms we find sufferers calling out to God. We see God's people wrestling with the pain they're experiencing. Pouring their hearts out to God. Expressing their anguish. Not pretending their pain doesn't exist. Admitting their pain. Admitting their weakness. Begging for God's help. Reminding themselves of God's character and promises. Expressing their confidence in God. Trusting God to help in their time of need. Finding hope and joy despite their circumstances.

Are you struggling with rejection? Are you struggling with suffering? Bring your cries to the one who understands. Who sympathizes. Who helps in our time of need.

When we're tempted to despair or act out sinfully, God dispenses help when we cry out to him. Internally he brings comfort and hope. Externally he sends his people to minister to us. He even sends those who don't believe to meet practical needs.

God has a way of comforting, relieving burdens, restoring hope, giving perspective, and dispatching help, while maturing us in the process.

Imagine a scenario where a 20 year old son has just had his girlfriend of two years break up with him. The son was planning on marriage. The son delighted in this girlfriend in ways bordering on unhealthy idolatry. The son is visually discouraged with great sorrow. Would a caring parent want their child to try to grit it out on his own? To be miserable by himself. To remain in despair. Or would a caring parent want to comfort and embrace their rejected child? God is a perfect Father who wants to comfort us and help us in our time of need!

## **Point 2: Kingdom ethics bring suffering (14:1-12)**

### **Explanation**

During Jesus' rejection, Herod the tetrarch was hearing about Jesus.

Herod the tetrarch: = Herod Antipas; one of three sons of Herod the Great; ruler over Galilee and Perea (east of the Jordan River = beyond the Jordan); ruled for over 40 years; divorced his wife in order to marry his niece Herodias, who was the wife of his half-brother Philip

Herod was aware of Jesus' fame. Herod responded with fear and confusion. Herod thinks Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead. John was known for his message, not miracles. But Jesus is different. He's performing miracles. Herod thinks being raised has equipped John with new miraculous powers. Mark adds this insight:

**Mark 6:20** for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

Jesus' ministry creates different reactions. The Pharisees were enraged. The crowds were curious. His hometown was offended. Herod is fearful. Herod believed that John was a holy man sent by God who's returned to life performing miracles. Herod fears what the risen John might do. Is revenge on the way? God has vindicated John by raising him. What will God do?

Matthew uses Herod's fear to provide a flashback of John the Baptist's death. John had challenged Herod over his marriage to his niece and brother's wife Herodias saying, "*It is not lawful for you to have her.*" Herod and Herodias fell in love while married to their spouses. Herod Antipas divorced his wife while Herodias divorced her husband Herod Philip. As a result, Herod imprisoned John for Herodias, but failed to put him to death because Herod feared the response of the people, who revered John as a prophet (14:5).

John's death occurred during Herod's birthday party. Though not stated, the immorality of Herod and his company makes it likely alcohol was a factor in Herod's decision-making here. Herodias' daughter (age 12-14) comes out dancing before Herod (likely sensual), pleasing him to the extent that he makes an oath to give her whatever she asks. Herodias, having a grudge against John, prompts her to ask for John's head. This isn't what Herod wants (he's afraid to kill John because the people love him), but he concedes given that going back on his oath would damage his reputation. It's "*because of his oaths and his guests*" (14:9) that Herod gives the command to

behead John. Think reputation and peer pressure. His immoral guests likely want the holy man dead. Herod goes through with it and John's head is brought by the girl to Herodias.

## **Application**

John the Baptist died because he brought kingdom ethics to bear on the life of an immoral ruler. Being a faithful messenger was costly for John. Being faithful can be costly for us.

The lesson isn't whenever you see a sinner, tell them their faults. Like if you were at a family Easter gathering or at the office at work faithfulness requires telling every non-Christian what unlawful sins they need to repent of. John was appointed to a very unique office as the prophet who would prepare the way for the Messiah. As a prophet, his mission was to preach repentance. Likely John was burdened by the Spirit to specifically confront Herod.

We're not John so we shouldn't have a prophet complex, thinking it's our job to point out everyone else's sins. We need to examine ourselves harshly before we point out the faults of our neighbor (Matt 7:1-5). But in the course of building relationships with non-Christians it's natural that kingdom ethics will come up in our conversations. Or that we'll refrain from certain behaviors that others consider normal. And when questions are asked we need to give honest, biblical answers wisely. Help them to see that God's ways are helpful and just.

When kingdom ethics come up, suffering may follow. Maybe it's avoidance. Maybe it's anger. Maybe it's mockery. Maybe it's unfavorable consequences at work. Loss of promotion because biblical integrity doesn't fit with company values. Awkwardness over sins you don't celebrate.

John suffered as a result of mission. Jesus suffered as a result of mission. He sympathizes with us when we suffer because of mission.

I'm not saying this is always the result. Some people will believe through our winsome lives and gospel conversations (see Matt 5:14-16; 10:11-13; 13:23). But when rejection comes, bring your pain to the one who sympathizes with you.

## **To unbelievers**

- Jesus understands your temptations...he understands your suffering
- Jesus, God the Son, took on human flesh and experienced suffering like you've experienced
- Jesus suffered and died to rescue us from suffering
- He says I understand your pain, trust me, follow me on my terms, and you'll find help in me

## **Conclusion**

**Kingdom ministry brings rejection. Kingdom ethics bring suffering.** When you experience rejection and suffering bring them to Jesus, the one who's experienced both in abundance. He sympathizes with you and he's ready to help in your time of need.