

MARK 6:1-13

6 He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. **2** On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! **3** Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary^[a] and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence^[b] at him. **4** Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honor, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' **5** And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. **6** And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching.

7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. **8** He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; **9** but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. **10** He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. **11** If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' **12** So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. **13** They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

TODAY IS JULY 4TH, A SPECIAL DAY IN THE HISTORY OF OUR NATION AND HER HOPES AND DREAMS AS A COUNTRY.

THERE ARE MANY SYMBOLS FOR THE U.S.A.- THE AMERICAN FLAG, THE BALD EAGLE, UNCLE SAM, THE STATUE OF LIBERTY, AND THE LIBERTY BELL.

THE LIBERTY BELL IS NOW ONE OF THE ICONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, AND BECAME ONE OF THE SYMBOLS FOR ABOLITIONISTS IN THE 1830'S.

TRADITION SAYS THE BELL WAS RUNG ON JULY 4TH WHILE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS BEING SIGNED, HOWEVER HISTORICAL RECORDS TELL A DIFFERENT STORY.

THE BELL WAS NOT RUNG ON JULY 4TH BUT ON JULY 8TH TO ANNOUNCE THE FIRST PUBLIC READING OF THE DECLARATION.

THE ORIGINAL BELL WAS MADE IN ENGLAND AND SHIPPED TO PHILADELPHIA IN THE 1750'S, BUT IT CRACKED THE FIRST TIME IT WAS RUNG.

THE BELL WAS MELTED DOWN TWICE WITH DIFFERENT METALS ADDED.

THE NEW BELL IS INSCRIBED NOT ONLY WITH THE NAMES OF ITS MAKERS FROM PENNSYLVANIA, BUT ALSO WITH A PORTION OF A BIBLE VERSE FROM LEVITICUS 25:10.

IT SAYS, "PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGHOUT THE LAND AND TO ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF."

THIS BELL, THAT WEIGHS OVER 2000 POUNDS, WAS RUNG OFTEN. AND THE LAST TIME IT RANG WAS IN 1846 ON GEORGE WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY.

UNFORTUNATELY THE BELL WAS NOT STABLE. YOU SEE, A SMALL CRACK HAD OPENED IN THIS BELL, SO BEFORE ITS LAST RINGING IT WAS PURPOSELY ENLARGED AND SOMEHOW SECURED SO THE BELL WOULD NOT CRACK FURTHER.

THE NOW FAMOUS CRACK MAKES THE LIBERTY BELL EASILY RECOGNIZABLE.

THE CRACK CAN BE VIEWED AS SYMBOLIC OF THE IMPERFECT AND INCOMPLETE NATURE OF OUR FREEDOM.

IN A WAY, WE CONTINUE TO METAPHORICALLY REPAIR THE CRACK, AS WE CONTINUE TO STRIVE TO FULFILL THE GOAL OF OUR FOUNDERS OF TRUE LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL.

SPIRITUALLY THE CRACK IN THE BELL IS ALSO A REMINDER OF THE REALITY OF SIN, WHICH MADE IMPERFECT THE MUSIC OF GOD'S GOOD CREATION.

IF WE THINK ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF SIN IN THE WORLD, WE MAY RECALL THAT THE ROOT CAUSE OF SIN IS FREEDOM-OR MORE SPECIFICALLY FREE WILL.

GOD CHOSE TO LIMIT HIS OWN POWER AND AUTHORITY OVER MAN AND WOMAN BY ALLOWING US THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE.

WE ARE FREE TO LOVE AND OBEY GOD OR NOT. YES GOD FREES US, BUT THEN CALLS US TO CHOOSE TO ABIDE BY HIS WILL.

THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE TO THE GALATIANS ABOUT THE FREEDOM WE HAVE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, SAYING:

“FOR FREEDOM CHRIST HAS SET US FREE. STAND FIRM THEREFORE AND DO NOT SUBMIT AGAIN TO THE YOKE OF SLAVERY.”

HERE THE APOSTLE IS REFERRING TO SLAVERY TO SIN VERSES CHOOSING TO LIVE UNDER THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST.

SADLY, ONE OF THE PROBLEMS OF BEING SINNERS IN A SINFUL WORLD IS THAT WE DO NOT ALWAYS MAKE A GOOD OR WISE CHOICE.

SOMETIMES, IN FACT, WE REJECT WHAT WE SHOULD HONOR OR WHAT WE NEED THE MOST.

THIS THOUGHT BRINGS US BACK TO THE LIBERTY BELL AND ITS HISTORY.

THIS BELOVED SYMBOL OF OUR NATION, GUARDED TODAY AGAINST THOSE WHO MIGHT SEEK TO DESTROY IT, WAS ALMOST LOST TO US IN 1828.

IT WAS IN THAT YEAR THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA CHOSE TO REPLACE THE BELL WITH A NEW AND BETTER ONE.

THEY COMMISSIONED A BELL MAKER NAMED JOHN WILBANK TO CAST AND HANG THE NEW BELL.

AS PART OF HIS COMPENSATION HE WAS GIVEN THE LIBERTY BELL, WHICH THEY ASSUMED HE WOULD MELT DOWN FOR THE METAL.

BUT AFTER COMPLETING HIS TASK, WILBANK DECIDED THE LIBERTY BELL WAS TOO MUCH TROUBLE TO HAUL AWAY AND MELT DOWN, SO HE LEFT IT.

THE PHILADELPHIA CITY LEADERS, HOWEVER DID NOT WANT THE BELL AND SO THEY SUED WILBANK TO FORCE HIM TO TAKE IT AWAY.

HE DID SO, BUT A WHILE LATER HE DONATED THE BELL BACK TO THE CITY, SO THEY WERE STUCK WITH IT-WHICH TODAY IS A GOOD THING.

THE STORY IS VALUABLE IN THAT IT REMINDS US THAT PEOPLE OFTEN DO NOT APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF THINGS IDEALS, OR EVEN OTHER PEOPLE.

SADLY WE OFTEN FOOLISHLY REJECT WHAT WE SHOULD CHERISH.

THIS, IN FACT, IS WHAT JESUS EXPERIENCED WHILE IN HIS HOMETOWN OF NAZARETH, WHEN HE RETURNED THERE WITH HIS DISCIPLES.

JESUS WAS NO STRANGER TO REJECTION, AND YET IT MUST HAVE HURT HIM MORE INTENSELY TO BE SO COMPLETELY REJECTED BY THOSE AMONG WHOM HE GREW UP.

NOT ONLY DID MOST NAZARENES REFUSE TO ACCEPT JESUS' AUTHORITY, SOME INSULTED HIM, BY CALLING HIM THE "SON OF MARY."

THE INSULT WAS IN THE FACT THAT IN THAT CULTURE AND TIME CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY MALES, WERE ALWAYS REFERRED TO BY THEIR FATHER'S NAME, EVEN AFTER THE FATHER'S DEATH.

THEREFORE TO CALL JESUS "SON OF MARY" WAS AN INTENTIONAL INSULT.

THIS REJECTION OF JESUS, WAS LIKELY CAUSED BY THE THOUGHT HE HAD NO MORE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THAN THEY HAD.

NOR DID HE HAVE ANY KNOWN FAMILY CONNECTIONS TO SCRIBES, PHARISEES, RABBIS, OR PRIESTS.

CONSEQUENTLY THEY REFUSED TO ACCEPT JESUS COULD, WITH ANY AUTHORITY, INTERPRET SCRIPTURE IN THE WAY HE DID IN THE SYNAGOGUE THAT DAY.

SADLY, THEIR CHOICE TO CLOSE THEIR EARS AND HEARTS AND MINDS TO HIM, PREVENTED THEM FROM EXPERIENCING THE HOPE OF DELIVERANCE JESUS OFFERED.

ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF LUKE, JESUS READ FROM A PORTION OF ISAIAH PROCLAIMING GOD'S INTENTION TO LIBERATE THOSE HELD CAPTIVE OR OPPRESSED.

BUT THOSE IN JESUS' HOMETOWN REJECT HIM AND HIS MESSAGE.

IT WAS NOT THAT THEY SIMPLY LACKED THE FAITH TO ACCEPT JESUS, THEY REFUSED TO EVEN CONSIDER HE MIGHT BE SPEAKING WITH GOD'S AUTHORITY.

THE PEOPLE OF NAZARETH DID THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT PROVERB 4 TEACHES-THEY WOULD NOT LISTEN, THEY TURNED AWAY FROM THE WISDOM AND INSIGHT JESUS OFFERED THEM.

THUS IT WAS THEIR UNBELIEF, THAT IS-THE INTENTIONAL ACT OF REJECTING JESUS, WHICH MADE THE ACTS OF POWER AND MIRACLES HE DID ELSEWHERE USELESS THERE.

YES HE HEALED SOME PEOPLE, BUT EVEN THOSE HEALINGS DID NOT BRING THE UNBELIEVERS TO FAITH, OR EVEN A WILLINGNESS TO OPEN THEIR HEARTS TO JESUS' MESSAGE.

HERE, IN THIS STORY WE HAVE YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN, AS WELL AS HOW THE DEVIL CAN USE BOTH DIVISION AND REJECTION TO LEAD US ASTRAY.

THE GOSPEL PASSAGE ALSO OFFERS US A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE RIGHT CHOICE TO MAKE WHEN WE EXPERIENCE THE HURT AND GRIEF OF REJECTION.

NOTICE, JESUS DID NOT ARGUE WITH HIS NEIGHBORS THAT DAY, NOR DID HE SAY ANY WORDS IN ANGER. INSTEAD HE WALKED AWAY.

THIS IS NOT AN EASY THING FOR MOST PEOPLE TO DO. WE WANT TO DEFEND OURSELVES, WE WANT TO PERSUADE THOSE WHO REJECT US TO ACCEPT US INSTEAD.

HOWEVER THIS IS OFTEN NOT POSSIBLE. AFTER ALL REJECTION IS PART OF HUMAN LIFE IN THIS SIN FILLED WORLD.

FOR EXAMPLE: WE DO NOT ALWAYS MAKE THE TEAM TRY TO GET ONTO, OR ARE REJECTED BY A COLLEGE, OR SOME CLUB OR ORGANIZATION OR JOB THAT ATTRACTS US.

AND WORSE STILL ARE THE RELATIONSHIP REJECTIONS WE EXPERIENCE- THOSE OF LOST LOVES, OR FRIENDSHIPS, AND SOMETIMES FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.

THERE ARE ALSO THOSE WHO MAY REJECT US BECAUSE OF OUR FAITH, OR REJECT US AS A CHURCH FOR SOME REASON/

HERE JESUS TEACHES THAT WHEN RECONCILIATION IS NOT POSSIBLE, IT IS OKAY, EVEN NECESSARY, TO WALK AWAY.

THE SAVIOR TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES TO DO THAT WHEN HE SENT THEM OUT IN PAIRS TO BRING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE TO MANY MORE PLACES.

THEY WERE TOLD TO ACCEPT HOSPITALITY AND DO CHRIST'S MISSION WHERE THEY WERE WELCOMED, BUT TO WALK AWAY WHERE THEY WERE REJECTED.

HISTORICALLY THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AS A WHOLE, AS WELL AS INDIVIDUALS HAVE OFTEN FORGOTTEN THIS.

BUT GOD CALLS US TO CHOSE TO LOVE THOSE WHO REJECT US, EVEN AS WE LOVE OURSELVES, AND LOVE DOES NOT SEEK TO FORCE OTHERS TO CHANGE TO SUIT US.

LET US THINK ABOUT GOD'S LOVE FOR US. HIS LOVE DOES NOT IMPRISON US OR OTHERWISE TAKE AWAY OUR FREEDOM.

INSTEAD, GOD CALLS, INSPIRES, COMMANDS US TO LOVE AND TO OBEY THE LORD.

WE ARE ALSO CALLED TO TAKE THE JOURNEY OF FAITH, TO ACCEPT AND NOT REJECT JESUS AS LORD AND SAVIOR-BUT WE ARE NOT FORCED TO DO SO.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN THE CHOICES WE MAKE, BOTH GOOD AND BAD, WISE AND FOOLISH HAVE NO CONSEQUENCES.

THEY DO. AND WHEN WE CHOOSE TO SIN, AND EVEN WHEN WE SIN UNINTENTIONALLY, GOD NOTICES AND CARES.

THIS IS WHY JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD. JESUS CAME TO TEACH US IN WORD AND DEED THE WAY OF GODLY WISDOM.

HE CAME TO SHOW US THE BETTER CHOICES TO MAKE. AND THEN HE DIED ON THE CROSS TO FREE US FROM GOD'S CONDEMNATION WHEN WE CHOOSE WRONGLY.

JESUS PROVIDES FOR US THE ULTIMATE FREEDOM, WHICH IS FREEDOM FROM THE POWER SIN AND DEATH HAS TO DESTROY US.

JESUS ALSO FREES US FROM THE LASTING STING OF REJECTION, WHEN WE OPEN OUR HEARTS UP TO THE LORD.

THE FREEDOM AND HEALING THE SAVIOR OFFERS IS THE PROMISE OF OUR FORGIVENESS AND ACCEPTANCE BY GOD, HE PROVIDES.

PART OF THIS FREEDOM INVOLVES FREEDOM FROM OUR PAST FAILURES AS WELL AS SIN.

YES, WE SHOULD LEARN FROM THE PAST WHEN WE CAN, BUT IT IS NOT GOD'S DESIRE THAT WE LIVE IN THE PAST.

ABOUT THIS ANOTHER CHRISTIAN WROTE: "AS LONG AS YOU REMAIN A PRISONER TO YOUR PAST, YOU WILL NEVER KNOW THE FREEDOM OF THE FUTURE."

TRULY, GOD DOES NOT WANT TO US BE STUCK IN EITHER THE FAILURES OR THE VICTORIES, OR STUCK IN THE SORROW OR THE HAPPINESS OF THE PAST.

INSTEAD THE LORD LEADS US IN HIS WAY THROUGHOUT EACH AND EVERT DAY.

OF COURSE WE HAVE THE FREEDOM TO IGNORE GOD'S CALL AND DO WHAT WE WISH, BUT THAT IS FOOLISHNESS RATHER THAN WISDOM.

THEREFORE, JESUS CALLS US TO FOLLOW HIM SO HE CAN LEAD US NOT JUST TODAY, BUT ALSO INTO TOMORROW.

AS HIS FOLLOWERS, WE ARE CALLED TO SHARE HIS LOVE, AND TO PROCLAIM IN WORD AND DEED THE LASTING FREEDOM FROM SIN CHRIST OFFERS.

LET US REJOICE IN THE GIFT OF FREEDOM THE LORD PROVIDES, AND RESPOND BY SEEKING TO USE OUR FREEDOM WISELY AND TO THE GLORY OF GOD. AMEN

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