

Mark 6: 1-13 July 7, 2018

Today's sermons can be categorized as REJECTION and ON THE JOB TRAINING.

No one wants anyone or anything whether a business or a team to reject them when they desperately wanted that person or that thing to accept them, receive them and include them. None of us like the feeling that we experience when what we wanted so bad lets us know that it does not want us back.

And yet, rejection is something that we have all experienced and will experience in the future. Rejection is sadly a part of the human experience. It begins in our childhood. We get laughed at or ridiculed. We're not chosen by this certain team or that group. We're not invited to sit at this table or allowed to hang out with this crowd. We're not invited to go to this party or this social event. Rejection doesn't end when we graduate from either middle school or high school. The truth is we all have to face the possibility of rejection throughout the rest of our lives. People get rejection notices from trade schools and from colleges. They get rejection notices from banks on loans and are told they can't buy this house, this car or that boat. They receive rejection emails or messages from prospective employers. It is said that today only 2% of all resumes get accepted and of that number only 1 is offered the job. It's been awhile but I remember one of those rejections as if it were yesterday. While I had talent in accounting I had wanted to change my career in a different direction. I applied and was interviewed by Sea-Land Container-you have seen their big containers or the container ships. The first interview went well. The second

interview not so well. But I really wanted this this job so bad I could taste it. Perhaps that is why the second interview didn't go so well. In any event, I didn't get the job. I was rejected.

We all know people who have faced rejection because of their skin color, the way they look or the culture that they come from. Perhaps one of the most difficult rejections is the one people face from a spouse who suddenly and at times, very abruptly, wants out-they want a divorce. They no longer want you in their life. They no long want to share space with you. Now they suddenly decide to trade you off for a newer model or at least what they think is a better model. You no longer are a real person but just an object to move out of the way.

Or maybe you are not tall enough. You are not pretty enough. You are not smart enough. You are not young or old enough. You don't speak well enough. You don't carry yourself the right way. You don't come from the right background. You don't have enough money. It really doesn't matter what the rationale is, the fact is you have been rejected.

And it happens at some point to everyone and that everyone included Jesus and his disciples. That is what the gospel shares with us today. Jesus faced rejection and did his best to prepare his disciples to face rejection.

Mark tells us that Jesus has gone home for a little period of time. Perhaps he needed some time off. Perhaps he needed to do a little work to have some money to go out on the next trip. That is what many rabbis did at that time. They would work, save up some money which they would then use to travel and teach. Perhaps he just wanted to show his disciples where he grew up, the people he grew up with and to meet his mom and the rest of the family.

The less than celebratory reception in Nazareth comes as no surprise to anyone who's been following the story. Jesus' place in the pecking order was settled at birth and the shame and honor police would suffer no foolish attempt to rise up. And efforts by Jesus' family to nip his budding career amid rumors that he was off his rocker could not have escaped notice in the old neighborhood. Despite his success outside of Nazareth, the hometown crowd is having none of it. Mark doesn't give us any hint as to what Jesus teaches in the synagogue. But from the moment he sets foot in town, Jesus is dancing over a fault line.

What is surprising is what happens after the unpleasantness in the synagogue. In the wake of being written off as a wannabe by his own people, Jesus forgoes the luxury of licking his wounds. Instead, he dusts himself off and goes back to work, only to fail spectacularly. Mark tells us straight up that he could do no deed of power there. Thanks to the thick culture of disbelief in Nazareth, the power that has always been on tap for those who believe is now cut to a trickle. And with this stunning one-two punch, the intro class of rejection comes to a close for the disciples.

On to on the job training. Will the rejection lessons come in handy when the Twelve set out on their own? Jesus sends them out two by two with specific instructions and powers. They have authority over unclean spirits. But, they are to travel light....far lighter than when I travel and I think I travel light. They are to take nothing but a staff- no not people but a staff-a walking stick made of wood -no food, no luggage, no money nor even an extra shirt. They are to wear sandals. They are instructed to preach the need to repent. They are to stay in welcoming homes until they leave. If they are not welcomed or they do not want to listen to them, shake the dust off of their feet as a

testimony against them. This shaking off the dust from the feet gesture is to show the people they were making a wrong choice. The opportunity to choose Christ might never present itself again.

When they returned I'm sure they had many tales to tell Jesus. Some were about the success they had by driving out many demons and anointing many sick people with oil and healed them. But I'm sure that not all the stories were about their success but also included times when they did have to shake the dust from their feet.

But as the road gets harder, all of them-with one notable exception-will pass the final test.

I think many of us would like to stand on our accomplishments. Have we invited folk to worship with us? Have we preached the gospel even in a one to one setting? Have we been rejected or embraced? In my experience Jesus has taught me that there is grace to be found when I fail and am rejected. I now just let the rejections just roll off of my back. I continue to preach the Good News of Jesus. I continue to invite people to worship with me. Jesus is standing right next to me. He has known rejection and how it feels. And in Him I am whole. AMEN