

Jesus Divides

Mark 6:1-29

As we move along in the story of Jesus, we leave behind Jesus the healer and press into Jesus the divider. He is scandalous. Jesus divides. He parts crowds. Disciples & skeptics, fans and foes. If we take him as he is, and avoid revisionist history, the same is true today. Jesus divides. He sucks the air out of the room. People are riveted, forced to choose a side. Why? Why is Jesus so divisive? Let's look at three narratives, from a pretty high level (won't get bogged down in a lot of detail), to see how Jesus divides. This message is important if you're exploring Christ, if you're explaining Christ, and if you following Christ.

Confronting Authority

Jesus has doing a lot of uniting—healing, restoring to society, resurrecting a daughter to her parents—and is eager to return home to bless that community. So he makes his way to his hometown of five hundred, with the disciples, and goes to the synagogue to teach. This has been his practice around Galilee. In fact, it was one of the first things he did in his public ministry, in Capernaum, where we told he entered the synagogue and began teaching: “**And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes**” (1:22). When Jesus taught, it wasn't any old lecture; it radiated with authority. You could feel the truth of his words. They resonated. In Nazareth, he begins to get the same response: “**many were astonished**” and they began asking where did he get this wisdom? But then, their awe takes a sharp turn. Incredulous, they ask: “**how are such mighty works done by his hands? Is this not the carpenter, son of Mary?**” How do we know the astonishment has turned to disbelief? Insults. The word for carpenter refers to someone who works with stone and wood, so he may have been more of a general contractor. While manual labor was respected among Jews, they were likely picking up on Roman convention, which saw menial work as lower class, unrespectable. Son of Mary. Why didn't they call him son of Joseph? They not trying to make a theological point; they're turning against him. It's a slam. Joseph may have been dead as this point, read=his dad is out of the picture, you're a bastard. Not exactly the homecoming parade. Then we're told “**they took offense at him.**” The word offense is *skandalon* and it can mean stumbling block, a toy you trip over in the living room. What are they tripping over? Why the sudden shift from awe to offense? It's the same reason we have trouble learning from an inferior employee. The same reason we're slow to admit fault to a spouse. You know she's right, but you just can't bring yourself to admit it. Why? Pride. That's the hinge here, what turns them from awe to offense. They know, deep down, that if they admit Jesus is great, then they have to acknowledge they aren't as great. This hometown boy. They're not prepared to do it. To recognize greatness, to linger in astonishment. So they attack. Are you too great to be taught, to be corrected, to be humble? Too great to apologize to your children for losing your cool? Too important to ask questions and learn? Too cool to lose your dignity for Jesus, to linger in astonishment, so you play him down in conversation with others, or when you talk about him it's cold not warm, you manage him like a doctrine to prop up you're greatness. **When we're not humble, it's hard to be astonished, and easy to take offense.** Why? You're taken with your own greatness. In order embrace Jesus as an authority, we have to abandon our own authority, the authority of self. Perhaps you sit

through sermons and books trying to discredit. Lining up the reasons why you shouldn't accept what their saying, even though, deep down, you know its true. We may even attack preachers and teachers instead of humbly weighing their words. He didn't go to the right school, wrong denomination, he's a sham. [Ravi Z, pride distances me from Jesus' greatness in pursuit of my own greatness.] See what happens? Because we don't want to come under Jesus' authority, we create an alternative authority—the authority of self. We walk around with an invisible crown hovering over our heads, criticizing everything and everyone else, because we are greater, we are better, we have authority. **When this pride encounters Jesus, it forces us to make a decision.** Toss aside our crown, embrace him and come under his authority **or** keep it squarely on, reject him, and choose our authority. **Our pride cannibalizes our awe. It devours worship, reducing us to a corpse hollowed by hubris.** We want so desperately to be in charge, we are willing to reject Jesus, his way, his truths, his demands, and we abandon his reward—astonishment, awe, holiness, God-centered joy. Jesus divides the room. The people hearing Jesus teach could have lingered there, casting their crowns aside, and the teaching hour would have turned into a wondrous worship hour. But instead, **their pride puts them above the carpenter and beneath their crown.** The rejection of Jesus has consequences: “[he could do no mighty works there...](#)” (5). What we think about Jesus has consequences. Now, why could he do no mighty works there? Did their unbelief bind Jesus? Maybe they are a rival authority? This doesn't mean Jesus wasn't able to do miracles—Mark tells us that he actually did. Rather, it tells us that *people didn't want the miracles*. Their rejection of his authority restricted them to the natural world, closed off to the supernatural realm. They refused to take a knee before the King of creation. They talked themselves out of the kingdom, right out of his supernatural glory—healing, forgiveness, and salvation. “[And he marveled because of their unbelief](#)” (6). [Elders & elder candidates. Submission to Jesus.]

Embracing Authority

We've seen what it looks like to reject Jesus' authority, now let's see what it looks like to embrace his authority. In verse 7, Jesus calls and sends the disciples out 2x2 and “[gave them authority over the unclean spirits.](#)” This is why he originally called them—to preach the gospel and exercise authority over demons (Mk 3:14). The disciples have willingly abandoned their own life script to follow Jesus, no matter what the cost. That's what followers of Jesus do. In word and deed. We may or may not exercise Christ's authority over physical manifestations of demons, but we are commissioned to fight them every day, with every whisper of their lies, their intoxicating promises of greatness. Notice they haven't been to Seminary, taken a bunch of counseling classes, or published any books. Jesus calls and sends them anyway. Why? Christianity isn't for religious professionals; it's for everyone. And everyone counts; everyone is sent into the world with the message of Jesus. **We are not sent in the authority of our accomplishments but in the authority of what Christ has accomplished.** We're not sent into our neighborhoods and workplaces in the authority of self, but in the authority of our Savior. He does the saving; he's the good news, not us. When we give up being king, we get all the benefits of Christ. When we acknowledge our powerlessness, his power is free to flow through us. This is precisely what happens to the disciples. They are stripped of any self-reliance, taking the bare essentials—no bread, no bag, no money, only sandals, a staff and a single tunic. They are

utterly reliant upon God. Are you attempting anything that would require utter reliance upon God? Or is all within your control, accomplishable within your power? Jesus has sent you into this city with his authority to reveal *his* greatness. The three things they do have are the same three things the Israelites took with them in their sudden exodus from Egypt (Ex 12:11). Mark harkens back to this theme of exodus, we come *after* Jesus, we enter the city, workplace, neighborhood, on a new exodus with a King who has gone before us. What would change in your life, how you wake up Monday morning, how you spend your week, if you took this seriously? If you woke up to the fact that you are in a new exodus, with a new authority, on a new mission? Two things: **first, more miracles**. The people who rejected Jesus' authority saw fewer miracles. Their unbelief made the closed off to the supernatural. People who embrace Jesus' authority, day to day, see more miracles. Their belief opens them up to the supernatural: "[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](#)" (12-13)..." Under the umbrella of Christ, they delivered people of demonic oppression and healed people with physical illnesses. Jesus still does that, if we are not taking offense to him, if we are not full of unbelief. However, the power for these more extraordinary acts is democratized. It's not clustered around 12 men. As the gospel spread, and the church grew, these gifts were spread out among the church, where some people express these gifts and others express other gifts of mercy, knowledge, prophecy, and so on. This is a description of what happens when we come under the authority of Christ—a much bigger world, a supernatural world where his reign overlaps with the church and we express his power in diverse ways to do Booker T, Northgate, Church planting in Montreal, and more! Center for City Renewal. **But notice that the miraculous**, the supernatural, isn't restricted to deeds. In fact, is always accompanied with teaching, preaching, and sharing the gospel—the supernatural work of God to rescue self-absorbed people to make them Christ-absorbed people. They proclaimed and healed, and so should we. These miraculous acts are signs of a power and authority greater than us. They are meant to bless us, yes, but ultimately are to glorify him. A pop-up ad telling people the king is here. "[The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all they had done and taught](#)" (6:30). Jesus wants to broaden our understanding of the miraculous. The reign of Christ is *supranatural*, God over nature, over men and women who are naturally God's enemies, bent away from astonishment and awe over Jesus. And if we'll take a knee, and look up at the cross, we become Jesus friends, his family, and we gain astonishment and awe. His reign isn't merely over natural things, limbs, hearts, bones, but our natural sinful condition. Those who reject his authority cut themselves off from the supranatural. Jesus marveled at unbelief, but works miraculously through our belief. If we believed, we'd step out with more confidence in the greatness of Jesus and his authority to accomplish city renewal. Faith gets us under the supranatural umbrella where the supranatural is possible. The second thing that would change if woke up to the fact that we are in a new exodus, under a new authority, following a new King is our comfort. More miracles, **less comfort**. The disciples got out stripped down but filled up. As they enter their missionfields, they encounter resistance, people who "[do not receive you and will not listen to you](#)" (11). These verbs form an emphatic negative construction. People say no way I'm believing that. They are closed of the supranatural work of god, to the saving authority of Christ. We're going to encounter that in Austin, if we are on mission. We will face discomfort. When we embrace his authority, we accept his cost. Those who

desire to live a godly life will be persecuted. The next narrative is one big illustration of this point: those who come after me will receive a cost. John the Baptist followed the teachings of Jesus and gets his head cut off by political powers, powers that were even sympathetic to him. **Jesus divides the room.** When push comes to shove, will you side with him or keep silent and edge over to comfort? Will you pursue Jesus embracing the cost of holiness? Will you risk rejection, misunderstanding, and wake up to the mission of Christ or will you trip over your own pride, taking offense at Jesus, being closed off the supernatural work of Jesus in your life, in our great city? Jesus wants to forgive us for downgrading him to carpenter. He wants to ravish our hearts with his tender authority, and he does it by going before us. The amazing thing about Jesus is that he uses his authority to suffer and forgive. We would use our authority to prove we're right, taking offense that Jesus would say we are wrong. But who are we after all? The arrogance of our brief moment on the stage of history, a speck in the moral universe of God's creation. At the cross he uses his authority to suffer for us. He embraces dishonor, absorbs the evil of our arrogance, jumps on the megaton bomb of human pride, only to be blown to a hundred bits so we can hear and share this message: repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. Let's cast our accomplishments at his feet, stop seeking our own greatness, allowing pride to cannibalize our awe. Let's be astonished by Jesus.