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The Stress of Doing Christianity among the Offended

Mark 6:1-30

The real risks of being a believer among those taking great offence at Jesus. (China, Iran, North Korea, Canada)—the tangled mess that cannot be disentangled this side of the new heavens and earth—namely the co-existence of freedom of religion and freedom from religion as concurrent public policy in every Canadian setting. Anti-discrimination, hate speech and freedom of expression laws conflict almost always—the challenge to manage morality and exclude the Divine is abject folly.

Jesus plopped his disciples into the middle of the mess of offence as he does with you and me today and commissions us to live and tell the truth about Him. He didn’t/ doesn’t hide the mess from us—and all of us should know that the kingdom of Satan strategizes ways of bringing death to those carrying the message of liberation and life. What to do?

***“Blessed is the one who keeps from taking offence at me!”*** (Matt. 11:6)

Jesus sandwiches our instructions between the realities of two kinds of offended…

 1) those who take great offence at Jesus because he is not who they expected and so write off Christianity as **irrelevant**, [Michael Coren predicts this as the fate of Christianity unless the church adapts both Jesus and his teachings to the mores of the day Globe and Mail OpEd Mar 29 2018 on being removed from 100 Huntley St. in 2015 for endorsing equal marriage… “so many would turn to Christianity if Christians would stop judging them and instead listen [to them sic].”]

 2) those who take great offence at what Jesus teaches because it is not what they wanted and set out to aggressively **persecute** him.

Jesus, 1) identifies the opposition and 2) issues a ministry action plan for Christians caught in the CROSSfire… SO THAT YOU WILL NOT FALL AMONG THE OFFENDED

**What’s the opposition?**

1. ***Jesus went to his neighbourhood…*** (Mk. 6:1-6)… and they took offence at him.

 “he came to the world and the world did not recognize him; he came to his OWN and his OWN did not receive him…” (Jn. 1:10,11)

YOUR OWN! Offended in the midst of astonishing evidence (the evidence might very well be you!)

* People are so transfixed by their own significance, that they resent grace (“by grace are you saved…”)
* People simply reject the grace of God that can only be brokered through God himself in Jesus (“no one can come to the Father except through ME—I and the Father are ONE”)

Not much happens among people who expect little from Jesus and sneer at grace.

2. ***On the far side of the mission launch…***the Castle of Machaerus… a different audience were offended at God’s ways… (Mk. 6:14-29)

* Jesus’ mission, taken seriously, will eventually face a violent collision with the counter kingdom of this world.
* There is a very large group in this world who seek to eliminate anyone/ anything that challenges their way of living as wrong—not only want the freedom to sin, they wish to sin in peace—God’s mission provides the former, but never the latter.

When you eliminate one of God’s servants, you find that twelve take their place!

**What’s the ministry action plan?** (Mk. 6:7-13)

* Christianity is **commissioned** to advance **by the highest authority** in the universe—no room to negotiate more favourable terms; God reigns, welcome it or reject it. Reject it and you are rejected.
* As deputies of Divine authority, God’s people present themselves ***dressed* as fully dependant** in the Lord—children of this King are mostly poor, common, dependant—security, comfort and ease are not priorities.

* Sent to **bring God’s message** (heralds)—not creators of a message; deliverers.
* The message is **repentance**—the upsetting of one’s whole life—hurts because you have to admit your present way of living is wrong! Through Jesus God is making new creations.
* **Unstoppable** results guaranteed—when one is beheaded, twelve take his place!
* God’s rule is advanced **through the hands and feet and voices** of his servants who have been promised his power and authority to call people to submit to the King—to all who received him, he gave the right to become the children of God (Jn 1:12)