

Called to be Sent: Discipleship 101

Mark 6:6-44

I. The Calling

A. Identity

B. Purpose

C. Success

II. The Cost

"...typically in pagan philosophical tradition this high ultimate deity was seen as so transcendent as to be almost entirely inaccessible and even disinterested in the world and humanity. Moreover, posting this deity seems to have made no impact on the cultic duties that were to be observed. If the high god was not approachable, you were to continue to address yourself to the various deities for favors and needs..."

"Early Christian teaching tended to posit one deity equally august, even categorically distinct from all else, who was also characterized notably as loving the world and humans. Furthermore, this deity sought and even demanded a loving relationship with people, in which a corresponding love for this deity was the central responsibility... In high pagan piety to be sure, particular gods could be praised as benign and generous, but it is hard to find references to any deities either loving humans or being loved by them in Roman-era pagan discourse..."

"In the world of many deities, early Christianity proclaimed one almighty deity in absolute sovereignty over all, beneath whom all other beings were mere creatures, unworthy of cultic reverence. and this all powerful sovereign deity was moved by a powerful love, so Christian teaching claimed, and so sought and offered a direct relationship with people."

"Early Christianity did hold out the hope of eternal life, even an embodied eternal life via resurrection. In a time in which the threat of death, especially from illness, was very much a pressing reality the promise of eternal life may well have struck a positive chord, and so may help account for the readiness of some people to make a Christian commitment..."

The Christian belief in resurrection was in that period the most spectacular religious doctrine regarding the body and among Greeks and Romans this was an unthinkable idea... Christianity may have generated among its converts the new longing for, and confidence in, their own eternal life... it was available more broadly to all believers, not simply to great individuals or supremely virtuous ones...

III. The Challenge