

Jesus: A Prophet Without Honor

Mark 6:1-6

Introduction: 1) It is a well known statement and saying made popular by Jesus: “A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country.” He would make this statement on more than one occasion (Luke 4:24; John 4:44). Applied to you or me it may be the occasion for a moment of sadness and disappointment. Applied to Jesus, it is an event of tragic and eternal consequences that even causes our Savior to “marvel” at such unbelief. (6:6).

2) This is Jesus second recorded, and His last, visit to his hometown of Nazareth as far as we know. His previous homecoming, recorded in Luke 4:16-30, did not go well at all. Initially impressed by his preaching (4:22), the town he grew up in turned on him, became enraged, and attempted to murder Him (4:28-30). In spite of such treatment Jesus returns, this time with his 12 disciples. It will be a painful training time. Perhaps He is hopeful that things will be different this time. Unfortunately, He will be disappointed again.

3) As we consider how Jesus was treated by His own hometown, His own family and friends, it might be good for us to reflect upon how we see Jesus, how we treat this Servant-King, how we respond to the One who was rejected by those who were certain they knew Him best. It is critically important we see Jesus as He truly is, as He is revealed in Scripture; not as we might hope, wish or want Him to be. That is not our call to make!

Transition: Let me put before all of us three questions for our careful contemplation.

I. When you consider Jesus: are you only amazed? **6:1-3**

- Few, if any, people are neutral when it comes to Jesus. Everyone has a reaction. Everyone has an opinion. Unfortunately, those opinions often fail to measure up and match up to the full biblical portrait we find in the Bible.

- Too often a “cafeteria approach” is taken and we select those parts of Jesus that we like and find pleasing to our taste. Those other aspects of His person and work, we simply pass over as if they were not there.
 - Jesus leaves the area around the Sea of Galilee, perhaps Capernaum, and he heads approximately 20 miles southwest to his hometown of Nazareth (cf. 1:9, 24). He had made a previous visit, maybe a year earlier, recorded in Luke 4:16-30, with disastrous results.
 - Nazareth was a no where town made up of nobodies. It is estimated the population was between 150-200. So insignificant was this small town that it is never mentioned, not once, in the Old Testament, Apocrypha or rabbinic literature. It only receives scant attention in the New Testament. Little wonder that Nathaniel said in John 1:46, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”
 - That is a good question. It actually has a great and very positive answer! An amazing man named Jesus was reared there, educated there, He grew up there. Now, what is it concerning this man that should amaze us?
- 1) His teachings should astonish you but that is not enough. 6:1-2
- On this return trip Jesus brings his disciples. This will prove to be most instructive for their ministry assignment and field testing experience that will soon follow in 6:7-13 (note especially v. 11). What their Master encounters they will too.
 - Once again on a Sabbath he taught in the synagogue. Again the people were “astonished.” They were amazed, overwhelmed, struck by what they were hearing from the son of Joseph (Luke 4:22) and Mary (6:3).

- However, their amazement again turns to skepticism and ridicule. In rapid fire succession Mark records 5 questions they began to banter about among themselves:
 - 1) Where did this man get these things? (6:2)
 - 2) What is the wisdom given to him? (6:2)
 - 3) How are such mighty works done by his hands? (6:2)
 - 4) Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? (6:3).
 - 5) And, are not his sisters here with us? (6:3)
- These are meant as slights, disparaging questions. Note, they did not deny he was saying and doing these things. This makes their rejection all the more amazing and them all the more culpable and responsible. Is there at least an echo of Mark 3:22? If He did not get these things from God, if this wisdom does not come from God, if these mighty works He performs are not done by God, then who? How? They chose to leave the question open.

Application: In his day some chalked up what He said and did to Satan. In our day some chalk up what He said and did to a superior intellect and a witty disposition. His teachings should astonish all of us, but that is not enough. Even those who deny the supernatural, His miracles and His resurrection can applaud His teaching.

2) His miracles may captivate you but that is not enough. 6:2

- At this point in Mark's gospel the miracles are at who can say, and growing!
 - 1) Peter's mother-in-law (1:29-31)
 - 2) Many more in Capernaum (1:32-34)
 - 3) A leper (1:40-45)

- 4) A paralyzed man (2:1-12)
 - 5) A man with a deformed hand (3:1-6)
 - 6) Many again (3:7-12)
 - 7) Calmed the storm and sea (4:35-41)
 - 8) Delivered the Gerasenes demoniac (5:1-20)
 - 9) Healed the woman who bled for 12 years (5:25-34)
 - 10) Raised Jarius' daughter from the dead (5:35-43)
- His hometown does not deny all these things, but it does not bring them to faith. They simply cannot reconcile what He has done with who they think He must be!
 - Deny His miracles? No! Receive Him as Messiah? No! This is the Christ? This one we have known all our lives is the Son of God? Are you kidding? Are you serious? We may not be able to explain His miracles but we know who He is. He is nothing and a nobody, of that we are certain.

Application: Apart from the eyes of faith, no one will see Jesus for who He truly is.

Miracles can only take you so far, but in and of themselves, they are not enough. His teachings point to Him. His miracles point to Him. They are divinely ordained signs, billboards, declaring in BOLD LETTERS this one is the Christ, the Son of God! Believe Him! Trust Him! Follow Him!

3) His background will not impress you but so what. 6:3

- The derisive comments peak in v. 3.
 - 1) “Is not this the carpenter?” Jesus is nothing more than a commoner, a low-born artisan who works with His hands. As a *tekton*, he works with wood, metal and stone. He makes plows, carts, yokes, wheels, doors, locks, tables, lamp stands

and cabinets. He builds things and repairs things. He is a handyman with a carpenter's belt and a hammer. He is uneducated and unschooled. He has no PhD or MDiv. Why He doesn't even have a B.A degree! He may have not even graduated from High School. He is a construction worker! A man's man to be sure. Jesus was no sissy girly man who looked and acted like a 1960's hippie! Still, his occupation was not impressive, certainly not the stuff of an esteemed rabbi. He was blue collar through and through. No black tie dinner invites for this guy. We sure need to hear 2 Corinthians 5:16, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer."

- 2) "Is not this the son of Mary?" Perhaps this is nothing more than an indication that Joseph had died. Perhaps this is a cheap shot at the scandal of His birth! They were reminding him that he was an illegitimate child born to a whore!
- 3) "Are not his 4 brothers and sisters here with us? (cf. 3:21, 31-32) James (Jacob) and Joseph are the names of 2 of the patriarchs. Judah and Simon the names of 2 famous Jewish revolutionaries. Here is a family hoping for the rescue and redemption of Israel. He was right there with them and they missed it.
 - All of this is to say you are a nobody from nowhere. If anyone should know who you are we should! You are nothing special. Just one of us. You are a nobody with a nobody job and a bastard child to top it off!
 - Publius the Syrian (c. 2 BC) is the first to say, as best we can tell, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Apparently this was the case with Nazareth and "the local boy makes good" named Jesus. He was just too ordinary, too commonplace.

Our minds are made up about the homeboy! We will not let the evidence get in our way, and nothing will change our mind.

II. When you consider Jesus: are you offended?

6:3-4

- Not everyone responds to Jesus in the same way. In the context of His death on the cross as our substitute and sufficient payment for our sin, Paul says it is a stumbling block to Jews and it is foolishness to Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:23).
- However, even before the offence of the cross made its mark on history, those who knew Jesus best found Him completely unacceptable, His ministry and growing popularity a scandal! Again please take careful note: Jesus' teachings and miracles do not automatically produce faith. It may actually turn some people away. This is how it was with those who changed his diapers, learned the Torah, kicked the ball around, went fishing, enjoyed table fellowship, spent the night, went hiking, who at one time gave Him hugs and kisses. Not anymore. All that has changed.

1) In spite of clear evidence you may reject Him. 6:3

- The last phrase of v. 3 is clear and to the point. It is also heartbreaking and a cause for grief and sorrow.
- “And they took offense at him.” (*ESV*)
 “So they were offended by Him.” (*HCSB*)
 “They were deeply offended and refused to believe in Him.” (*NLT*)
 “Who does he think he is? They tripped over what little they knew about him and fell, sprawling. And they never got any further.” (*The Message*)
- The word “offense: is *skandalizomai*. They were “scandalized” by all this talk and hupla about Jesus. Jesus offended their personal sensibilities. His works they

could not deny and his words they could not handle. The evidence was in and it was clear and they did not care! Like the rocky ground in Mark 4:16-17 they have an initial response that is positive but it does not last long at all. Initially proud, they quickly became embarrassed.

- In spite of overwhelming evidence they would not believe He was the Christ, the Son of God. The whole thing is just too scandalous. A crucified Jew from nowhere murdered unjustly 2000 years ago is the Savior and only Savior of the world? Impossible! No way! I am offended. You are not the first.

2) In spite of close proximity you may dishonor Him. 6:4

- Jesus responds with a familiar maxim made famous by Him. Aligning himself with the prophetic tradition that culminated with John the Baptist, he acknowledges with a broken-heart his rejection by those who knew him best, those you would have expected would stand with Him no matter what anyone else said or did.
- They knew Him but could not explain Him and so they rejected Him, His hometown, His relatives, even His own household cast their ballot against Him. This prophet from God (1st time He is called a prophet in Mark) meets the same fate as so many who had gone before Him.
- Sometimes we can get so close to something we no longer see it. We spend so much time with someone we no longer appreciate them. For those of us raised in a Christian environment, this is certainly an ever present danger we must guard against.

- In a sense, we should never get completely comfortable with Jesus. His goal is never to make us comfortable. His goal is to bring us to repentance and faith, humbly falling at His feet confessing Him as Lord and God.
- He is not your homeboy, your buddy, your soul mate or a puppet on a string you pull and he does your bidding. He is not your genie in a bottle obligated to grant you every wish.
- Nor is He some ordinary guy who lived 2000 years ago who stirred things up for a few years and got nailed to a cross for His troubles. His hometown got it wrong. His relatives, at least for a while, got it wrong. The religious leaders of the day got it wrong. Rome got it wrong. And still today people get Him wrong!
- Do you see Him for who He truly is and call Him Lord, Savior, Master, King? Do you let Jesus set the agenda for your life? And as Mark 8 says, for your death?

III. When you consider Jesus: are you guilty of unbelief?

6:5-6

- Rejection sometimes comes when, where and from whom we least expect it. The end of v. 6 tells us that Jesus left his hometown of Nazareth moving on to teach in other villages. To our knowledge, He never again returned home. Their rejection, their unbelief made it clear he was not welcomed. Did He shake off the dust on His feet as a testimony against them (v. 11)? We don't know.
 - What we do know is the unbelief of the Nazarenes brought about a 2-fold reaction on the part of Jesus.
- 1) Unbelief is one thing that limits Jesus. 6:5
- 1) Jesus did no mighty works in His hometown.

2) He healed just a few.

- This verse again is simple and clear but has raised many troubling questions. How could the omnipotent Son of God be bound, limited by the unbelief of Nazareth? Of anyone? I believe the answer is this: He could not because He would not in the face of blatant unbelief. The parallel account in Matt 13:58 clarifies the issue: “And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.” Morally and spiritually He was constrained not to reveal His power in such an environment of rejection and unbelief.
- Come to Him in faith like Jarius and the woman who bled for 12 years and He will heal your body and bring your only daughter back from death (5:21-43). Reject Him in unbelief and you provide an environment where he not only does not do for you what He does for others, you also send Him on His way in search of those who will listen to His kingdom/gospel message and embrace Him as Lord.
- Tim Keller is helpful here: “Jesus’ miracles were not “magic tricks” designed to prove how powerful he was, but “signs of the kingdom” to show how his redemptive power operates. His miracles always healed and restored and delivered people in ways that revealed how we are to find him by faith and have our lives transformed by him...He “could” not do a deed that would not redeem” (Keller notes, (62).
- So, there was no public display with His supernatural power. More likely, quietly and privately, “he laid hands on a few sick people and healed them.” Oh, but imagine what He would have done in the presence of faith!

- Hebrews 11:6 reminds us, “And without faith it is impossible to please him [God], for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

2) Unbelief is one thing that amazes Jesus. 6:6

- Only twice in the Bible is Jesus said to be amazed.
 - 1) Luke 7:9 when He saw the faith of a Roman centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant and believed He could do it by long distance and with just a word.
 - 2) Mark 6:6 and the unbelief of those of His own hometown.

He marveled at their unbelief (*ESV*)

He was amazed at their unbelief (*HCSB*)

He was amazed at the lack of faith (*NIV*)
- Interestingly both Jesus and His hometown are dumbfounded, each by the other. Like the pagan Gentiles who could not get past His healing a demoniac and messing up their business (5:1-20), they could not get past His humble origins and familiar feel. Jesus, on the other hand, could not believe their unbelief in light of what He said and did. Such unbelief sadly foreshadows the unbelief of the nation of Israel as a whole. It foreshadows the unbelief of many in our world, and even in our churches.
- It is a shock to our system that the sovereign God would come to us from such a humble town, from such a humble family, from such a humble trade, from such a humble nation. It is a scandal to be sure. Once again we see the truth, “God’s ways are not our ways!”

Conclusion: 1) The preacher Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) was an American pastor who well said, “Familiarity breeds contempt, but only with contemptible things or among contemptible people” (Wiersbe, 59). The contempt shown by the citizens of Nazareth said nothing about Jesus. However, it said a lot about them!

2) What about you? What about me? Do you show contempt towards the Jesus revealed in Scripture? Do you allow the biblical evidence to slay your biases, reshape your preconceived notions of who Jesus must be for you to accept Him? Believe in Him? Trust Him?

3) Are you “scandalized” by the simplicity of His gospel? The unfairness of its message that says a child-molester or even a serial rapist and murderer on death row can be made right with God by child-like faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

4) Or, have you become so familiar with Him having been raised in church all your life that His words no longer convict? His miracles no longer astonish? His death on the cross for you no longer strikes the cord of “Amazing Grace?”

5) Familiarity can blind us to the greatness and glory of a Savior if we are not careful.

Spiritually inoculated at some point in life, we become immune to the real thing! I have seen it far too many times. You do not come to Jesus on your terms. You come to Jesus on His! This prophet was without honor in His own hometown! Please, do not make the same mistake in your heart. The consequences are of an eternal nature.