

The Rejected Prophet Mark 6

Psalm 19

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Congregation: Colossians 3:1-12

Today we are going to be starting out in Mark chapter 6. Where we will see Jesus leaving the area that he had been ministering in around the sea of Galilee and head back to his home town Nazareth. So turn with me to Mark chapter 6, This morning we will be looking at the first 6 verses, but I want to go back and read chapter 5, starting in verse 21. This journey from Capernaum to Nazareth would have been about a 25 mile journey. As we read through these verses this morning we can see that with this change of location we see a change in reaction by those who hear his teaching. While he was in the area around Capernaum, and the Sea of Galilee he was a celebrity. He had massive crowds always gathered around him, so much so that it made it difficult to eat at times. He had no privacy unless he would sneak away, and as we see with many of the accounts they would even follow him and crowd around and into Peter's house which he had been staying at.

These people were amazed at what they heard and saw, and could not seem to get enough of it. As we see even when he returned back from the west side of the Sea he was immediately met again with a large crowd of people who were pushing and shoving their way to just get close to him. We also saw a different reaction when he went to the west side of the Sea of Galilee and healed the demoniac. In that Gentile region His miracle, and message struck fear into those who heard, and they asked him to leave. In both of these people groups, even though their reaction was different, one thing that they had in common was that they were greatly amazed at the authority he had, not only over the knowledge and use of scripture, but of the miraculous healing of the sick, the lame, the demon possessed, and also the authority over nature calming the storm, and let us not forget the resurrection of Jairus' dead daughter.

He had proven his sovereign power and authority over, both the natural world, and the spiritual world, but as we see here in these 6 verses, when he arrives back home in Nazareth, Jesus does not encounter fear as he did with the Gentiles near the Decapolis on the west bank, nor was he met with the amazement and curiosity that he was around Capernaum and the East Side of the Sea of Galilee. In fact as we read here in these verses it was Jesus who was amazed at their unbelief.

Nazareth was not a large bustling city, it was a small, insignificant area that is actually not mentioned at all in the bible other than a few times here in the new Testament. There is no mention of it in the old testament, and there is no mention of it by ancient historians. In these later years there have been some archaeological digs there looking for remnants, but not much has been found other than some small houses spanning an area of about 60 acres and estimated to have a population of about 500 people. It is also noteworthy that this area would have been predominately gentile. Just about 4 miles north of Nazareth as the city of Sapphoris where Herod Antipas built his capital. After the Assyrian conquest in 721 BC this area of Galilee had been settled mostly by Gentiles. During the 2nd century BC there was the Maccabean revolt which brought some Jewish settlers into the area. But this area still remained majority gentile, so much so that Matthew in his gospel account refers to this area as the Galilee of the Gentiles.

In the 2nd verse here we see Jesus doing that which was his custom. When he would enter into a town he would seek out the local synagogue and would teach there on the Sabbath. It is here that he would be able to witness and teach about himself to the local Jewish population.

And while he taught, we see that those who listened were astonished at his teaching, but not in a way of awe and amazement like before, but rather it was one of confusion, misunderstanding, and rejection. We see this in the following verse with the opening response to his teaching. “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Jews were quite accustomed to traveling rabbi's coming and teaching.

They were accustomed to prophets, and very studied and learned men and they recognize that what Jesus is telling them probably sounds quite a bit different then the messages they were used to hearing. Their response is one of negativity, not one of positive amazement as we saw before in Chapter 1 when Jesus taught at the synagogue in Capernaum verse 22 says, “And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” Yet here, we see they are questioning his authority, they recognize that he too is not teaching as the other scribes do, but their response is, Where did this man hear these things? He was now in his home town, and being such a small town, and beyond only being a small town, only a fraction of them were Jews, Many of them knew Jesus, they knew his parents, and his brothers and sisters. They knew that he did not go off and study under some other rabbi, and now returning to them with an education from some rabbinic school.

Nor was he taught this stuff from his father, for everyone would know that Joseph was a carpenter, not a rabbi. So when he begins to teach in the synagogue he is met with doubt, and unbelief. This should come as no real surprise though, for we already got a teaser, and inciting of the mindset from people who came from his home town in Chapter 3, verse 21. Lets go there and read starting in verse 20. “Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But his own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of him, for they said he is out of his mind. And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, He has beelzebub, and by the ruler of demons he casts out demons.”

So we see even here that these people who knew Jesus from his own home town whether they were just saying this to protect him or not, had little respect for him. They came and were trying to discredit his ministry. Either seeing him as one who has maybe gone a little off his rocker, or seeing him as a brash, arrogant youth who needed to be excused away before the religious authorities the effect is still the same. It stands to show their lack of belief, and understanding as to who Jesus was, and now in chapter 6 we get even a clearer picture of it. We can see it in their response, these people knew Jesus, knew his family and yet they did not even call him by his name but instead questioned, where did this man get these things. They were offended by him, so much so that they did not want to associate themselves with him.

We can further see their offense in verse 3. “ Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? So they were offended at him.” Calling Jesus a carpenter would not be an insult, for in the Jewish world manual labor was honored, but it is the next line that shows their disgust with Jesus when they call him the Son of Mary. The Jewish society of Jesus day was very patriarchal. It was common that the name of the father would be attached to the name of a child just like we use last names today. There are some records of Jewish men being attached to their mothers name instead of their fathers, but it usually had to do with the fact that the mothers were well known in that area. One example is in 2 Sam there is a mention of the Sons of Zeruiah. , Joab, Abishai, and Asael. It was likely the case that Zeruiah was mentioned instead of their father in this case for she was the sister of King David, and would have been well known.

Other times the mothers name would be used in cases of illegitimacy, for there would not been a known father who would claim the child. So at the very worst case, calling Jesus the Son of Mary could very well have been an insult insinuating that he was an illegitimate child. It is not a far stretch to think that this maybe their insinuation here since that is the Jewish response when confronted with the Christians belief of the virgin birth even today, charging Jesus as being born out of wedlock with Mary having been seduced by a Gentile named Pandera.

The word that Mark uses here when he says that they took offense at him, is skandalon, which is a greek word for stumbling block, or to be put off by, or repelled by. Mark uses this word 8 times in his gospel record and in each instance it is referenced to something that obstructs people from coming to faith and following Jesus. And this is not the only time that Jesus is a stumbling block to belief, we saw it this morning in 1 Corinthians verse 23 that we read this morning. Christ the Messiah, crucified on the cross as not the Jewish understanding of the Messiah who would come in might and majesty and establish his kingdom. But that is exactly what he did, on the cross, laying down his life for his sheep, and taking it up again in conquering sovereign power of death and the grave.

Likewise we see this same symbolism used in 1 Peter chapter 2. Starting in verse 1. “ Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking. As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious. You also as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is contained in Scripture. Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on him will by no means be to shame. Therefore to you who believe, he is precious but to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.

It was foolishness to the Jews to think that their Messiah would come as the son of a carpenter. It was such an offense that they consider him to be the illegitimate son of Mary. IN verse 4 we see Jesus response to their disbelief and accusations. “ Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” Jesus was not saying something that was new, or unknown to these people, infact this type of saying was quite common in both Jewish and Gentile literature in Jesus time. So Jesus takes this rather common saying, and makes it applicable to himself, his home town, relatives, and even his own home.

In the book of John, we see that John references that Jesus' own brothers did not believe that he was the messiah, and it isn't until later, after the crucifixion that it is mentioned that James and possibly Jude had come to faith. And later we see that even one of his own disciples betray him. So we see once again this theme of insiders and outsiders. Once again we see Jesus family are outsiders, and these Jews thinking themselves insiders of Gods family, rejecting the very one who is the cornerstone of the kingdom of God. This stands to show that just exposure to the gospel does not always lead to faith, and in fact it may itself become the stumbling block that keeps one from believing.

Marks wording is interesting in the next verse, he says “ Now he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.” One thing that sets Marks gospel apart from the others is his openness in expressing the humanity of Jesus. Unlike the other accounts we see Jesus struggles with the same struggles that we do, he becomes weary, he faces disappointment in the unbelief of his friends and family.

We see again that just because one may be a personal witness to Jesus and his miracles and teaching it does not necessarily lead to their belief upon him. This is one of the greatest mysteries of the gospel. How it would seem those who have been given every chance to believe, like the Jews who for generations had the prophets, and the promises of God, who had the law and all these things pointing them to the coming messiah, yet we see they rejected him, and infact sought to kill him. Or his family, where it would seem that their familiarity with him is the very thing that stands before them obstructing them from having faith and believing on him. IS this not the carpenters Son, is this not the Son of Mary whose brothers and sisters we know? All of these who have been given every single opportunity to come to God in faith and repentance, stand in their arrogance, and pride rejecting Christ. The insiders, have become the outsiders. Then we have those who would never be expected to believe do come to Christ believing. Such as the demoniac of Garasene. No one can predict who God will call to be a part of his family, and as we have seen in our reading this morning in 1 Corinthians 1:27. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and god has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame that which is mighty.

Verse 6, “And He marveled because of the their unbelief. Then he went about the villages in a circuit teaching.” In close here this morning I want to read the conclusion here from the Pillar commentary, “Amazed at their lack of faith, what amazes God about humanity is not its sinfulness and propensity for evil but its hardness of heart and unwillingness to believe him. That is the greatest problem in the world, and herein lies the divine judgement of humanity. Humanity wants a spectacular sign from God, or like the devil, a great display of divine power. But it does not want God to become a human being like one of us. The people of Nazareth see only a carpenter, only a son of Mary, only another one of the village children who has grown up and returned for a visit. If only God were less ordinary and more unique, then they would believe. The servant image of the Son is to prosaic to garner credulity. God has identified too closely wth the world for the world to behold him, too closely with the town of Nazareth for it to recognize Jesus as the Son of God. Humanity wants something other then what God gives. The greatest obstacle to faith is not a failure of God to act, but the unwillingness of the human heart to accept the God who condescends to us in only a carpenter, the son of Mary.

This is just as true today as it was in Nazareth. The world rejects the God of scripture, the Jesus of the bible for neither are what they believe that he should be. Yet God in his sovereign grace, and power through the foolishness of the preaching and teaching of his word is still calling disciples amongst the crowd. He is still healing the diseased and sick hearts of his people, and resurrecting the dead hearts and minds to life in him. Let us learn from these Nazarenes. Let us not take God for granted. I think it is a danger for us, and for our children who have grown up in the church, and in christian homes to at times take God for granted, because we have been surrounded by his teaching our entire lives and we can become complacent, and custom to it. I challenge each and every one of us to not take God for granted, do not be like these Nazarenes, but instead glory and rejoice in your savior, who came as a carpenter's son, born in a manger, to a virgin, to die for his people. Personally, individually, calling us out of the mass of humanity to be a disciple, a brother, a sister, and a friend. Praise him, rejoice in him, and never take your faith, your salvation, your savior for granted.