

Introduction

1. In 1993 I went home to West Virginia.
 - a. I had been gone from home except for short visits for 15 years as I attended Virginia Tech and took my first major job as an engineer for IBM at NASA JSC.
 - b. During my time away, I had grown in my faith and completed my seminary training for ministry.
 - c. I was called at age 33 out of secular employment to my first pastorate at the Old Greenbrier Baptist Church, which is located about 15 miles from my hometown.
 - d. A few of the folks at Old Greenbrier knew my parents and had known me as a child and young man, but they accepted me and love me through my first four years of ministry. I later went back for another ten years of service with them before coming to Abingdon Baptist.
 - e. A few years after leaving Old Greenbrier, I put my name in to serve as pastor of my home church, the one I had grown up in and been baptized. I never heard back from them, and they eventually called someone from out of the area as pastor. While I never received an explanation for why they did not consider me, I thought that perhaps some of the folks on the pulpit committee who had known me as a young boy could not envision me as the man who would now serve as their pastor.
2. We have concluded a major section (Mark 4:1-5:43) in which Jesus has displayed His victory over nature, demons, disease, and death.
 - a. We now move to Mark 6 which deals with Jesus' rejection and people's lack of faith in Him.
 - b. Warren Wiersbe comments, "One of the central themes in this section [Mark 6] is the unbelief of people who came into contact with God's Servant. All of these people had every reason to trust Jesus Christ, yet all of them failed to do so, including His own disciples!" (Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 73)
3. Jesus was not fully received by the inhabitants of His hometown in today's text. They still saw a simple carpenter's son and not the son of God who came to proclaim the coming of God's kingdom to earth.
4. **Read Mk 6:1-6a.**

A. Jesus Went to Nazareth (1-2a)

1. Jesus left Capernaum for his "hometown" (Gk., *patrida*) of Nazareth.
 - a. Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Mt 2:1), but Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth (Lk. 1:26, 2:4), which was Jesus' hometown from early childhood after Joseph and Mary returned there with Jesus after a sojourn in Egypt to avoid Herod's wrath (Mt 2:19-23).
 - b. Nazareth is a city in the lower hill country of Galilee
 - 1) Nazareth is not named directly in this text as Jesus' hometown.
 - 2) However, based on the other Gospels and Mk 1:9, we know that Jesus came from Nazareth.
 - 3) Jesus is called "Jesus of Nazareth" in Mk 1:24, 10:47, and 16:6. He is also referred to in Mk 14:67 as "the Nazarene."
2. As was his custom, Jesus taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath just as he had done in Capernaum.
3. Those who heard his teaching in Nazareth were "amazed" just as those who had heard it in Capernaum (cf., Mk 1:22).
 - a. The Greek word for "amazed" (Gk., *ekseplestonto*) is the same in both Mk 1:22 and Mk 6:22.
 - b. This word is not a positive amazement or awe. It carries a more negative tone of perplexity and disbelief.
 - c. Who was this Jesus and by what authority did He say and do these things?

B. Jesus Rejected by the People of Nazareth (2b-3)

1. The people wanted to know the source of Jesus' teaching and miracles.
 - a. Like the scribes, perhaps they felt the source of His power was Satan and not God (cf., Mk 3:22).
 - b. They couldn't get past the fact that he was "the carpenter," "son of Mary," the one whose brothers and sisters still lived among them in Nazareth.
 - c. Hadn't his own family rejected Him (cf., Mk 3:21,31) and been concerned for His mental condition?

- d. Wiersbe summarizes their thinking when he writes, “A carpenter was a respected artisan in that day, but nobody expected a carpenter to do miracles or teach profound truths in the synagogue. Where did He get all this power and wisdom? From God or from Satan (see Mark 3:22)? And why did His brothers and sisters not possess the same power and wisdom? Even more, why did His brothers and sisters not believe in Him? The pole who called Him ‘the son of Mary’ were actually insulting Him, because in that day you identified a man by calling him the son of his father, not the son of his mother” (Wiersbe, 75).
- e. The people of Nazareth couldn’t get past who Jesus had been to see who He really was.
2. The results of their consternation was that “. . . they took offense at him” (3b)
 - a. The verb “offense” (Gk., *skandalomai*) is the root for our word scandal. It is also sometimes translated as “stumbling block.”
 - b. The Nazarenes “stumbled” over Jesus. They failed to identify him properly and so did not respond with faith.
 - c. Jesus has been and continues to be a stumbling block to many who cannot or will not accept Him as Son of God and Savior (cf. Isa 8:14, Ro 9:32-33, 1 Pe 2:8).
3. James Brooks notes “This was Mark’s last reference to Jesus’ teaching in a synagogue. The synagogue had become a place of rejection (cf. 3:1-6). Later in the narrative the emphasis is placed on teaching in houses (7:17,24; 9:33; 10:10; cf. 6:10)” (James Brooks, *Mark*, 98).

C. The People Lacked Faith (4-6a)

1. Jesus responded to the people’s questioning of his wisdom with a truism: “A prophet is not without honor except in his own hometown, among his relatives and in his own home” (4).
2. Wiersbe cites another old saying “familiarity breeds contempt” and surmises that “The contempt shown by the Nazarenes said nothing about Jesus Christ, but it said a great deal about them!” (Wiersbe, 74-75).
3. The people’s lack of faith in Jesus hindered His ministry among them.
 - a. The inhabitants of Nazareth were unlike Jairus and the woman with an issue of blood who had faith.
 - b. They were more like the Gentiles of Gadara after the healing of the demoniac. They rejected Jesus and wanted Him to move on.
 - c. They knew that Jesus’ words and actions in healing a few sick people were miraculous, but they could not accept the fact that this son of a carpenter could be a God-sent miracle worker and teacher.
 - d. William Lane concludes “The performance of miracles in the absence of faith could have resulted only in aggravation of human guilt and the hardening of men’s hearts against God. The power of God which Jesus possessed could be materialized in a genuinely salutary fashion only when there was the receptivity of faith. Unbelief excluded the people of Nazareth from the dynamic disclosure of God’s grace that others had experienced” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 204).
4. Jesus was “amazed (Gk., *ethaumazen*) by their lack of faith (Gk., *apistian*).
 - a. Jesus’ amazement is described using a different verb than the one describing the people’s amazement (cf. Mk 1:22, 6:2).
 - b. However, this verb also carries a sense of negative astonishment or disbelief.
 - c. Jesus simply can’t believe the people are so lacking in faith.

D. Reflections

1. We too know much about Jesus, but do we like those in Nazareth sometimes lack faith? Do we forget who Jesus is? Do we take Him for granted and in the process hinder God’s work not only for us but through us by our lack of faith in Him?
2. Sometimes it’s hard for us to go home. The people who know us best, who know our backgrounds and sometimes our past weaknesses and mistakes, can’t or won’t accept us. Jesus was perfect and without sin but still rejected by those closest to Him. We shouldn’t be surprised when other reject us and our faith.

3. Do you truly appreciate Jesus, who He is, and what He has done? Akin notes, “Sometimes we spend so much time with someone that 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 comfortable with Jesus. His goal is not 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, or your soul mate. He is not your genie in a bottle obligated to grant your every wish” (Akin, 120).
4. We can be amazed by Jesus’ teaching and His actions but still not believe. What will you do with the claims of Jesus on your life, which are amazing—forgiveness of sin, eternal life, meaningful service in His Kingdom. Will Jesus be a stumbling block or a source of life and power for you? Place your faith in Him and He will work powerfully in and through you.
5. How do you or will you honor Jesus with your life?
 - a. What amazing things have you seen Jesus do in your life and the lives of others for which you will give Him praise and glory right now?
 - b. How has the teaching and work of Jesus strengthened your faith?
 - c. Who needs to hear your testimony of faith? To whom is God sending you with the message that Jesus is not a stumbling block but the Savior.
6. Even when others around us lack faith, we must be faithful to teach and to act in the power of Jesus to help others.