

**Message #17****Mark 6:1-6**

Every year we enter the holiday season. It is a time when families get together. In fact, it is one of the busiest travel times of the year. Sons and daughters will travel great distances just to be home for the holidays. According to Triple A statistics, between Christmas and New Year's, 93 million people travel home. Holidays are special times and most want to be home for Christmas. When most people go home, everyone is happy to see them. They want to know what is happening in their lives and it is a celebratory time. It did not work that way for Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the One Christmas is all about. If ever there were one on earth who should be able to go home and have people excited to see Him, it would have been Him. We don't know exactly when this episode occurred or even what prompted it, but it was a time when He decided to go back home to Nazareth, His hometown. Jesus had been raised in Nazareth (Luke 2:39-40). It is where He had grown up. It was His hometown.

Now Luke records a disturbing event that took place in Nazareth many months before this visit. Jesus had gone to Nazareth to the synagogue and read from the book of Isaiah and told them He was the fulfillment of that prophecy. The religious leaders so hated Him that they ran Him out of the city and intended to kill Him. So Jesus left and went to Capernaum (Luke 4:14-31).

Now some have misinterpreted this episode in Mark, thinking this is his account of the same incident as that of Luke. But we may easily prove that this is another visit to Nazareth. It is another time when Nazareth had another chance and it will be the last time Nazareth will have Jesus visit home. There are major differences between this visit to Nazareth in Mark and Luke's visit:

**First**, when Christ goes this time to Nazareth, His disciples go with Him.

This proves this is a second trip. Luke was very careful to say that he researched things in chronological order (Luke 1:3) and he puts Christ's first visit to Nazareth prior to Him calling His disciples. Christ visits Nazareth in Luke 4 and He calls disciples in Luke 5.

**Second**, when Christ leaves Nazareth, this time He goes to various villages and not Capernaum (Luke 4:31).

**Third**, there is no evidence here that when Jesus got done teaching, the people tried to throw Him off a cliff like they did the first time He was in Nazareth (i.e. Luke 4:29).

So we think this is His second visit to Nazareth, His hometown. Even though they had treated him so rudely and badly, He went there again to give them another chance.

Now Jesus had been born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4), but Nazareth was the place where He was raised (Luke 4:39-40) and it was the place where He grew up. It was His hometown. Christ had been raised in Nazareth and we may recall that His own mother and brothers and sisters actually traveled from Nazareth to Capernaum because they thought He was out of his mind. Apparently His own family had embraced the Nazareth perspective that He had lost His mind, claiming to be who He claimed to be.

Nazareth was about 25 miles to the southwest of Capernaum, and in pure grace Jesus decided to go to His hometown and give the city one more chance. God is a God of second chances. Even if He has been treated disrespectfully by someone, He will give them another chance.

By this time His reputation had spread all over the world. Thousands of people were following Him and you would think His hometown would honor Him and welcome Him back.

While we were on Tybee Island, Hollywood was filming a movie called “The Gift.” It stars Chris Evans and Octavia Spencer. Octavia Spencer is from Montgomery, Alabama. She is an Oscar winner. When she went back to her hometown of Montgomery, she was honored at the State capital, she rode up in a pink limousine and the band from her former high school played as she got out before hundreds of people. This somewhat famous actress was being honored for a Hollywood movie because she came home.

Now you would think Jesus Christ would be the most honored Person to ever go home. This is not like His first time to Nazareth. But this time He is famous. He is the most famous Person alive. You would think Nazareth would “roll out the red carpet” for Him. But that is not what happened.

In this text, Mark tells the sad story of what did happen:

**WHEN JESUS CHRIST WENT BACK TO HIS HOMETOWN OF NAZARETH, PEOPLE DID NOT HONOR HIM OR BELIEVE IN HIM AND THEY MISSED OUT ON GREAT THINGS HE COULD HAVE AND WOULD HAVE DONE.**

I am convinced Jesus wants His disciples to see this. He wants them to grasp this. The reason is because in the near future it will be their turn. They will soon learn their commitment to Him will not make them popular with most in this world, including their family and friends.

There are five historical parts to this story:

**HISTORICAL PART #1 – Jesus returns to His hometown of Nazareth. 6:1**

After Jesus had raised a dead girl in Jairus’ home, He decided to leave there and go back to Nazareth about 25 miles to the southwest. Mark has already informed us that Jesus was known as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Mark 1:24).

He hadn't been there for about a year and He decided to go back to His "old stomping grounds." When He first went there He had not been accepted, but time has a way of healing things and Nazareth would have His Divine presence one final time.

When Jesus left to go to Nazareth, "His disciples followed Him." So when Christ went back to Nazareth this time, He traveled there with His entire discipleship entourage. He had already told them, "you are My true family" but now they were all going back to the town where He had been raised.

Now Nazareth was a small town not known for much of anything. In fact, when Nathanael learned that Jesus came from Nazareth, he said, "can any good thing even come out of Nazareth" (John 1:46).

As we have said, the fact that Jesus was willing to travel back to Nazareth where people had tried to kill Him is an amazing demonstration of grace. He is giving the people of His hometown another chance. But most here will turn out to be two-time losers.

**HISTORICAL PART #2** – Jesus teaches on the Sabbath in the synagogue in Nazareth. **6:2a**

When the Sabbath Day came, Jesus went to the synagogue to teach. Mark does not inform us what He actually taught this time, but by this point in time He had gained a reputation all through Galilee as being a very authoritative and powerful teacher (1:21-22, 27, 39; 4:1). In fact, He was having such a powerful impact on masses of people by His teaching and His miracles that you could not even get near Him.

So here is the greatest teacher in the world in the synagogue of His hometown, Nazareth, and He is teaching the Word of God. The main focal point of Christ's ministry was on teaching the Word of God, not miracles. He did miracles. He did amazing miracles, but for the most part those miracles were to validate His teaching ministry.

The most important part of a true Christ-like ministry in the church is the careful preaching and teaching of the Word of God. That is what His ministry was all about.

**HISTORICAL PART #3** – The townspeople of Nazareth respond to Jesus Christ. **6:2b-3**

The people were astonished and marveled at His wisdom. When you have God teaching the Word of God, it would be awesome. There was tremendous dynamic power in His teaching but they still did not understand who He was. In fact, they wondered where in the world this man got His teaching power.

In fact, **verse 3** said isn't this the carpenter Jesus who was the son of Mary? In Luke 4:22, they call Him the "son of Joseph" and here they call Him the "son of Mary." This is probably due to the fact that Joseph is dead and also they did not believe He was really virgin born. They are not about to acknowledge He is God.

So they say isn't this the guy whose brothers are James, Joses (Joseph), Judas and Simon? Isn't this the guy whose sisters live here in Nazareth? That probably means that His sisters had married men in Nazareth and were living there. They are saying how can this guy be so powerful, He is one of us?

We know from John 7:5 that His brothers did not believe in Him during the time of His earthly ministry. They became believers after His resurrection (Acts 1:14; I Cor. 9:5). So the people of Nazareth and His own family disregard who He claimed to be.

In fact, they brought Him down to their level. This guy is no scholar, He is a carpenter. This is the only place in the Bible where Jesus is called a carpenter, which is being used in somewhat of a derogatory way.

Jesus had learned carpentry. I am certain that He was very skilled at it. He knew how to make things and build things. Mark Strauss says there was a major Hellenistic-Jewish city of Sepphoris that was located just a few miles from Nazareth that was being rebuilt in the time when Jesus was growing up. It is possible that Jesus and his brothers, perhaps even Joseph, found carpentry work there (*Mark*, p. 242).

When they say, "Is not this the carpenter," it is a nice way of saying He is no better than us. He is not some educated scholar. He was not trained in the elite schools. He is one of us. He is just a common laborer like the rest of us. They could not believe that a guy like that, from this background could be such a powerful teacher. They could not deny His miracles or the power of His reputation, but they could question, criticize and demean, which they did.

When you are truly right with God, you will discover people will try to point out your flaws. They will try to find some chink in your armor. For us, it is probably legitimate because we have chinks and flaws, but it wasn't for Jesus Christ.

Now notice the end of **verse 3**, they took "offense" to Jesus Christ. The Greek word means they stumbled over the fact that He was telling them they needed to believe in Him to be saved. They were offended by Jesus Christ and viewed the fact that He was from Nazareth as scandalous. He was traveling around being followed by huge crowds and He is claiming He is God and can forgive sins and they did not accept it (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 407-408).

If you are a person who comes from a small town and you go out in the world and you become successful and world famous as an entrepreneur, athlete, actor, musician or politician, you will be honored in your hometown and probably given a parade. Your family will be proud of you and will hold their heads high. In fact, they may even preserve the home where you were raised.

But if you are known as one who loves the Lord and loves the Word of God no matter how famous you become, most not only won't honor you, they will despise you. You probably won't be invited to hometown reunions and asked to address a High School Pep Rally.

You will be viewed as some outcast. People won't want you or your message. That is the way it was for Jesus Christ.

**HISTORICAL PART #4** – Jesus responds to the rejection of the townspeople of Nazareth. **6:4**

Now in response to the people's rejection, Jesus cites a proverb that says a true prophet of God is honored by many people, but never honored in his hometown or by his own family. This is the first time in Mark that the noun prophet is applied to Jesus Christ and Christ is the one using this noun. The reason is He wants His apostles and disciples to understand this key point. When you are called by God, many people will recognize it, but not too many from your hometown or family. Truth is the people from Nazareth don't even think Jesus is at prophet status.

It is interesting that in Greek, Jesus does not use an article "the" before the noun "prophet." What this anarthrous construction means is that He is identifying Himself as being the character and quality of a prophet of God. Jesus is much more than a prophet, He is the God/Savior/Messiah/King, but He is citing a principle that proves people tend to reject the man of God who comes from a city who comes back to the city to teach the Word of God.

One of the reasons why this is potentially true for any normal man is because people from our hometown know about our flaws and failures and imperfections and even our sins. Another way to put this is "familiarity breeds contempt." People who know us and grew up with us know our imperfections.

But here is the problem when it came to Jesus—He does not have any flaws or failures or imperfections.

**HISTORICAL PART #5** – The results of Jesus' rejection in Nazareth. **6:5-6**

There were three results to their rejection:

**Result #1** - Jesus could do no miracle there. **6:5**

Unbelief in any dispensation will hinder and limit the power and work of Jesus Christ. Unbelief will, as one commentator said, "freeze the power of God." Jesus Christ did not do what He could have done and what He was prepared to do. He did heal a few sick people, but He could have done much more than that.

Now Jesus being God could do whatever He wanted to do whenever He wanted to do it. But He will not do what He ultimately could do if people do not believe in Him. **Unbelief will rob you and it will rob a church from seeing Him work in powerful ways. Unbelief will always stifle and limit what God will do with an individual, a church, a city or a nation.** Refuse to believe in Jesus Christ, refuse to believe the Word of God and you will not see God do anything with you.

Let us remember that Jesus has raised a dead girl; He had spoken to a storm and directed nature. He was in His hometown and He could have done incredible things for these people He grew up with, but their rejection of Him prevented Him from doing what He could have done.

It does not matter how many programs a church has, without a faith that truly believes in and trusts in Jesus Christ, that church will never experience the power of God. Charles Ryrie said the problem is not a lack of Christ's power; the problem is "their lack of faith."

One of the most foolish things a person can do is commit suicide. The person who commits suicide ends their life and ends up facing God. But here is the thing—the person misses out on what Jesus Christ could do for them if they just turned to Him. They miss out on seeing Him do incredible things.

That is what Nazareth did—they committed a form of spiritual metropolis suicide. Instead of turning to Jesus Christ and believing in Him, which would have prompted Him to do spectacular things for them and with them, they rejected Him and, as a result, put an end to the dynamic life they could have had.

**Result #2 - Jesus was amazed at their unbelief. 6:6a**

There are two times in the life of our Lord when He marveled or was amazed by something:

- 1) He was amazed by the faith of a Roman centurion who believed in Him (Luke 7:9).
- 2) He was amazed by the lack of faith of those living in Nazareth.

He could not get over the fact that in the face of overwhelming evidence these people would not believe Him. He was flabbergasted by their unbelief. Not one person from this city said we always knew you were special. Not one person from this city said we always knew God's hand was on you. Not one person from this city said we are so privileged to have you here teaching us God's Word.

To them, Jesus was a blue-collar worker, a former carpenter from Nazareth; He certainly was not honored in a God-like way.

**There is nothing more serious or dangerous than to amaze God by your unbelief.** What makes this so terrifying is that if one persists in their unbelief, one shuts off the possibility of God actually doing wonderful and powerful things for them, including saving them by His grace.

**Result #3 - Jesus left Nazareth and went to other villages to teach. 6:6b**

This is so sad for Nazareth. He is leaving Nazareth forever. He will never go back. Had they embraced Christ and loved Him and His Word, He could have stayed there and done exciting things with them and for them. They actually had the God/man in their town and they did not want Him, so Christ went elsewhere to teach.

You see that is what His ministry was all about, teaching the Word of God. His ministry was about sowing the seed, not about demanding that people honor and worship Him. Truth is the people of Nazareth missed out on the blessings of God.

There are some churches that used to be places that reflected the power of God, but they don't anymore. They do not love Jesus Christ and they do not love the Word of God. As a result, they do not have the real dynamic power of God.

In Revelation 2-3 there are seven churches, all of which existed as dynamic churches in the first century. These churches are all in Turkey. I have visited most of them. The churches are gone and the area is dominated by Muslims and mosques. Why? Because they did not continue to accept Jesus Christ or even want God's precious Word in their cities and so He left them. He removed the candlestick.

If you don't want Jesus Christ in your life, He will leave you alone. If you don't want to commit yourself to understanding God's Word, He will let you go your own way.

But here is what you need to see from this text. If you do not respond to conviction, He may never convict you again. He never went back to Nazareth and He may never come back to you.