

Matthew 13:53-58

Introduction

- A. Matthew 13:53a – And when Jesus had finished these parables...
1. See Outline
 2. Notice (in the Roman Numerals) that Matthew organizes his Gospel around a very “selective” *Geography* (he leaves out many of Jesus’ trips to Judea, and even one of His early trips to Galilee).
 3. We are now in the very last part of the “Galilee” section – before Jesus begins to set His sights on Jerusalem.
 4. Notice also (in the arrows) that Matthew has organized his Gospel around five major discourses of Jesus (Matthew concludes each discourse with a very similar phrase).
 5. We have just finished the third major discourse (the Parables of the Kingdom), and are ready now to begin another narrative section of various stories and teachings.

- B. Matthew 13:53b-54a – He went away from there, and coming to his hometown...

He went away from *where*... and came to *what hometown*? Matthew tells us how Jesus came to live and grow up in *Nazareth*, which was a small, backwoods village in the province of Galilee.

- ✓ Matthew 2:21-23 – And [Joseph] rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel... and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth.”

Jesus lived a very normal life in Nazareth probably from the time He was no more than five years old (Mat. 2:19-20) until the time He began His public ministry at about 30 years of age (Luke 3:23). That’s at least twenty-five years in Nazareth! Matthew skips over all twenty-five of these years in Nazareth, picks up in **Judea** with Jesus’ baptism and wilderness temptation, and then immediately brings us right back to Galilee.

- ✓ Matthew 4:12 – When [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

But after only a brief stay in his hometown of *Nazareth*, Jesus moved to the town of *Capernaum* where He set up His new base of operations for the ministry in Galilee.

- ✓ Matthew 4:13 – And leaving *Nazareth* he went and lived in **Capernaum** by the sea (cf. Peter’s house; 8:14).
- ✓ Matthew 4:23 – And he **went throughout all Galilee**, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people... 8:5 – He entered **Capernaum**... 8:18, 28 – He gave orders to go over to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee]... And he came to the other side, to the **country of the Gadarenes**... 9:1 – And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to **his own city**... 9:35 (cf. 11:1) – And Jesus went throughout **all the cities and villages**, teaching in their

synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction... 11:20-21, 23 – Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done... “Woe to you, ***Chorazin!*** Woe to you, ***Bethsaida!*** ... And you, ***Capernaum...*** 12:9 – He entered their synagogue [***at Capernaum***]... 13:1 – That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat ***beside the sea.***

Well, after being away from Nazareth for probably no more than two years, Jesus is now paying a visit to His childhood home.

- ✓ Matthew 13:53a – And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from [Capernaum], and coming to his hometown [of Nazareth] he taught them in their synagogue.

I. Matthew 13:54a – And coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue...

So for at least twenty-five years of His life (from the time He was probably no more than five years old), this was where Jesus had lived – right here in this little rustic town of Nazareth. This is where Jesus had grown up. And now Jesus is returning to His hometown after only a year or two of being away. But think about it... in this short time away, a whole lot has happened! You could say that Jesus has made something of a “name” for Himself. He has His own disciples (*twelve* of them), He is very popular with the crowds, and He has some very powerful enemies. At over thirty years old Jesus is now a “full-fledged” adult, and so as He has been doing everywhere else in Galilee, He now takes advantage of the opportunity to *teach* in the synagogue at Nazareth – the very synagogue that He Himself had attended from the time He was a little boy.

II. Matthew 13:54 – And coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?”

The mighty works they had at least heard about from others. The news of Jesus’ miracles of power and healing had traveled far and wide. Everyone in Nazareth had at least *heard* something about what Jesus was doing. But His *wisdom* they were now hearing and seeing for themselves. And they were astonished – astonished *most of all* by His teaching.

- ✓ Matthew 22:33 – And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.
- ✓ Matthew 7:28-29 – And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority.

Jesus spoke as one who speaks from God. His words had the certain ring of truth to them. There was a very definite power, and beauty, and a sense of piercing insight about all of His teaching. We know what the people of Nazareth were experiencing, don’t we? *We* have been sitting under the words and teaching of Jesus, and we, too, have been astonished. *Truly*, no one ever spoke or taught like Jesus did. *Truly*, no other teaching has ever contained in itself such an amazing power and beauty. *Truly*, no other Teacher has ever spoken with such authority, and with such a piercing insight and wisdom. *Truly*, no one else has ever spoken in such a way that *all* of His

words have that undeniable “ring” of truth about them. We can easily identify with the people of Nazareth. *Truly* we have also been astonished by the teaching of Jesus.

III. Matthew 13:54b-56 – They were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”

The beginning of these verses would be translated more literally from the Greek: “Whence to this man came this wisdom and these mighty works?” The emphasis is on “*this man*”. Where could *he* possibly have got these things? We know one thing, he didn’t get any of this from his parents, or from anywhere else in Nazareth! And yet Nazareth is where he’s lived all his life – up until just very recently.

Is not this the carpenter’s son? The point here is not about biology, or the virgin birth. The point is social standing. Jesus apprenticed with a carpenter – not with one of the scribes or religious leaders. So as some others asked at a different time:

✓ John 7:15 – How has this man become learned, having never been educated?

As much as we respect the carpenter’s profession, a carpenter’s apprentice is not the same thing as a teacher.

And “is not his mother called Mary?” “And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?” “And are not all his sisters with us?” Once again, the point is not about whether his brothers and sisters were *half* brothers and sisters. The point is Jesus place in society. Look at his brothers. Look what they’re doing! Look at his sisters. They’re all still living right here in Nazareth. We *know* this Jesus. We watched him grow up playing with the other village children. We watched him learn the carpenter’s trade from His father. Where then did *this man* (being the uneducated son and apprentice of a carpenter) get all these things? For we know one thing – it wasn’t from *Nazareth*! And yet Nazareth is where he’s lived for almost all of his life.

Now we can’t argue with the fact that these inhabitants of Nazareth have a very good point. At least as far as their *words* go, they have hit the nail right on the head! They are right to be astonished at the wisdom of Jesus and His mighty deeds. And they are right to conclude that Jesus did not get these things from His years of growing up in Nazareth. And they are right to say that Jesus is the son of a carpenter. So what are we to conclude from all of this? In verse fifty seven, Matthew confirms what we had probably been suspecting all along…

IV. Matthew 13:57a – And they took offense at him.

They found *in Jesus Himself* an *obstacle* to faith (Carson). They found in Jesus Himself what they were convinced was a good *reason not* to believe. And so they felt fully justified in their rejection of Jesus. After all, they could not *reasonably* be expected to believe that this homegrown carpenter’s apprentice could actually be the Messiah. Calvin summarizes:

“They are struck with amazement at the novelty of the occurrence, that Christ, who had not [been educated], but had been employed from youth to manhood in a mechanical occupation, is so eminent a teacher, and is filled with divine wisdom. In this miracle they *ought* to have perceived the hand of God... They are compelled to admire him, whether they will or not; and yet they treat him with contempt... They cut their throat by means of their *own* acknowledgment, when they render so honorable a testimony to the doctrine of Christ, which after all has *no influence on them*, because it does not take its origin, in the usual way, from the *earth*. Why do they not *rather* lift their eyes to *heaven*, and learn that [the wisdom and mighty deeds of Jesus] *must* have come from *God*? ”

Knowing already how completely irrational and inexcusable was Nazareth’s response, Jesus actually increases their guilt even further with a stinging rebuke...

V. Matthew 13:57b – But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.”

This sounds a lot like the proverb today that says: “Familiarity breeds contempt.” In other words, the more you know someone the easier it is to find fault with that person or to dismiss what he has to say. But that sounds like letting the people of Nazareth off the hook – which is the exact *opposite* of what Jesus is really doing!

“Jesus said to *them*”—to the very people who were taking offense at Him—“*A prophet* is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.” Let me tell you something about all true prophets. A true prophet is treated with at least some measure of respect in the cities and towns where he ministers (even if they don’t really *believe* his message or *like* what he says). But when the *true prophet* comes to his hometown, *then* what happens? Then even the outward show of respect is replaced with open contempt. You are *no different* than any other prophet’s hometown. And so when you take offense at Me, it’s only *more proof* that I am who I say I am. People will always use whatever excuses they can find to justify their rejection of God’s messengers. Because of your sin you don’t *want* to believe God’s word. Therefore, you have chosen to use the excuse that hometowns have always been using – for as long as there have been prophets. So in *fact*, your disdain and lack of respect is proof of the very thing you are denying, and therefore it *seals your guilt*. You have *no* excuse – no excuse *whatsoever*. A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household. What should that tell you about who I am? What should that tell you about your own hearts?

Matthew concludes:

VI. Matthew 13:58 – And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

The problem was *not* familiarity. The problem was *not* that they knew Jesus “too well” from childhood. The problem was *unbelief*. And there is *never, ever* even the tiniest bit of an excuse for unbelief. Jesus said:

- ✓ John 3:18 – Whoever believes in [the Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Conclusion

I wonder how many of us, at any time in this message, felt even a little bit of sympathy for the inhabitants of Nazareth. Did we ever feel like we could even partially understand? Did we think that at least they had a more understandable excuse for their skepticism than some others had? But once again, Calvin helps us to see the real heart of the matter:

“[The people of Nazareth] see God working in Christ, and intentionally turn away their eyes from this sight, to behold Joseph, and Mary, and all his relatives; thus interposing a veil to shut out the clearest light... We see, then, that it is not mere ignorance that hinders men, but that, of their own accord, they search after grounds of offence, to prevent them from following the path to which God invites.” (Calvin)

Here is a window into our *own* souls! We are *never* innocent in our failure to listen to God’s word and to follow God’s way. We *never* have *any* excuse... *not even close*. And yet we lie to ourselves. The people of Nazareth lied to themselves. They convinced themselves that the reason they didn’t believe was because they couldn’t *reasonably* be *expected* to believe in light of their knowledge of Jesus and His family since the time He was a little boy. And so we convince ourselves that at least we are “*sincere*” in our disobedience. We convince ourselves that we have at least an “*understandable*” excuse for our sin... for our failure to believe God’s Word... for our refusal to obey. And so we lie to ourselves – and we *believe* our own lies. Truly, the heart is *deceitful* above all things (Jer. 17:9)! But the *very fact* that we are working so hard to make excuses is a condemning proof that we know better. We are truly an irrational people. We need to know this about ourselves. And we are driven to this irrational thinking because of our own sin. We need to pray that God would give us wisdom to *see* the lies that we are telling ourselves and then to lay aside all of the excuses that we are making... for they are all irrational and self-incriminating – every single one of them. In what ways have we been *searching after* a ground of offence, to prevent us from following the path to which God has called us? What lies have we been telling ourselves? With what kind of excuses have we been comforted? Let us *truly repent* of our sin *today* – and find the grace and forgiveness that God has promised.

But we can also see in the sad story of Nazareth a reason for rejoicing and thanksgiving.

“By their questions the people merely condemn themselves: they cannot doubt the fact of [Jesus] wisdom and miracles yet reject his claims. "They took offense at him" ... [they] found in him obstacles to faith, even though the [only true obstacles were] in their own hearts.” (Carson)

The people of Nazareth insisted on limiting Jesus “to the familiar framework in which they had previously known him” (Hagner).

Because of their unbelief, they could only think of Jesus as they had always thought of Jesus – in mere *fleshly* terms as the son of a carpenter, whose mother was named Mary, whose brothers

were James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas, and whose sisters were still living with them in Nazareth. Because of their unbelief, it was impossible for them to see Jesus in any other light. But listen to what the Apostle Paul writes as he speaks for all Christians everywhere:

- ✓ 2 Corinthians 5:16 – Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

By *faith*, we understand that Jesus is not simply the boy who grew up in Nazareth in the family of Joseph and Mary. By faith we understand that Jesus got His wisdom and His mighty works from *God*, because He is the *Son of God*. Let us rejoice that we no longer know Jesus according to the flesh. Let us rejoice that God has enabled us to see Jesus for who He really is – *our Savior and our Redeemer*.

Teaching our Children

Q. How did the people of Nazareth react when Jesus started teaching them in their synagogue?

A. They were astonished. They wondered where in the world Jesus could possibly have gotten His wisdom and His mighty works.

Q. Why would the people of Nazareth be especially astonished (more so than the people in other towns)?

A. ~ The people of Nazareth had watched Jesus grow up in their own village since He was probably about five years old. The people of Nazareth knew Jesus' family. They knew that Jesus had not gone to school. Instead, He had learned how to be a carpenter.

~ The people of Nazareth knew for sure that Jesus did not get His wisdom and His mighty works from Nazareth – but Nazareth was where He had lived for almost all of His life!

Q. How did the people of Nazareth respond to Jesus after thinking about all of these things?

A. They took offense at Jesus. They concluded that Jesus must be pretending.

Q. Does Nazareth's response make sense to you? Do you think they had a good reason to be skeptical?

A. ~ Summarize for your children the quotes from Calvin on bottom of page 3 and top of page 5 Discuss.

~ Nazareth was acting no differently from every other prophet's hometown. They were just looking for excuses.

Q. What was Nazareth's real problem?

A. Nazareth's real problem was not that they knew Jesus too well from His childhood.

Nazareth's real problem was *unbelief* (they didn't want to believe).

Q. Reflect with your children on the Conclusion (page 5)

Outline of Matthew¹

I. Introducing the Messiah (1:1-4:11)

✓ Bethlehem; Egypt; Nazareth; Judea (Matthew leaves out a trip to Galilee followed by another stay in Judea)

- Narrative... (1:1-4:11)

II. GALILEE: The Messiah Revealed in Word and Deed (4:12-16:20; Matthew omits at least two trips to Judea)

✓ Matthew 4:12, 17 – When he heard that John had been arrested, he *withdrew into Galilee... From that time Jesus began to* preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- ...Narrative (4:12-4:25)

➤ **DISCOURSE #1** (The Sermon on the Mount / Kingdom Righteousness – 5-7)
“*And when Jesus had finished these sayings...*” (7:28)

- Narrative (Collection of Miracle Stories – 8-9)

➤ **DISCOURSE #2** (Instruction for Missions – 10)
“*When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples...*” (11:1)

- Narrative (Miscellaneous – 11-12)

➤ **DISCOURSE #3** (Parables of the Kingdom – 13)
“*And when Jesus had finished these parables...*” (13:53)

- Narrative... (Miscellaneous – 13:53-16:20)

III. From GALILEE to JERUSALEM: The Messiah and His Followers Prepare for the Confrontation (16:21-20:34)

✓ Matthew 16:21 – *From that time Jesus began to* show his disciples that he must *go to Jerusalem...*

- ...Narrative (Miscellaneous – 16:21-17:27)

➤ **DISCOURSE #4** (Instructions on life in the Kingdom *Community* – 18)
“*Now when Jesus had finished these sayings...*” (19:1)

- Narrative... (Miscellaneous – 19-20)

IV. JERUSALEM: The Messiah in Confrontation with the Religious Authorities (21-25)

✓ Matthew 21:1, 10 – They *drew near to Jerusalem* and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives... when he *entered Jerusalem*, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, *from Nazareth of Galilee.*”

- ...Narrative (Conflict in Jerusalem – 21-23)

➤ **DISCOURSE #5** (The Olivet Discourse – 24-25)
“*When Jesus had finished all these sayings...*” (26:1)

V. JERUSALEM: The Messiah Rejected, Killed, and Vindicated (26:1-28:15)

- Narrative... (The suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus – 26:1-28:15)

VI. GALILEE: The Messianic Mission is Launched (28:16-20; Matthew leaves out a return to Judea)

✓ Matthew 28:16 – Now the eleven disciples *went to Galilee*, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

- ...Narrative (The Great Commission – 28:16-20)

¹ This outline is based off of R.T. France's outline in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (NICNT)