

“The Problem with Unbelief”  
Mark 6:1-6  
(Preached at Trinity, November 3, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verses 1-2** - At some point Jesus left Capernaum which was the place of His headquarters and returned to Nazareth which Mark refers to as His “hometown.” On the Sabbath it was customary for the Jews to go to their nearest synagogue. On this particular Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and began to teach. Every time Jesus taught people were amazed by His word. Great multitudes were coming to hear Him speak.
2. Once again the people were amazed at Christ:  
“Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?”
3. This was our Lord’s hometown. They knew Him. They knew of His former profession as a carpenter. They knew His parents; His brothers and sisters. Perhaps some played with Him as a child.  
**Mark 6:3** – “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?”
4. They knew Him. The text tells us because of this they took offense of Him. How could this hometown boy speak to them with such authority? How could they bow before this one they knew so well?
5. Sadly Nazareth was among the first to reject Him. Nazareth was a privileged city. Jesus grew up in their midst. Yet, familiarity bred contempt.  
A stern warning for the United States. We have been raised around the Gospel, yet most despise it.
6. Because of their rejection and unbelief no great work done among them.  
**Mark 6:5** – “And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them.”
7. Mark adds in **Verse 6** – “And He wondered at their unbelief.”  
KJV – “He marveled” NIV – “He was amazed”
8. Why is it that Jesus was so amazed at their unbelief? Because these people had many advantages that others will not know.  
That being said, every human being has been given rich blessings from God that are designed to lead them to God. There are many blessings that all men enjoy; blessings that should cause all men to flee to God in gratitude, worship, and obedience.
9. Just as Jesus was amazed at their unbelief, we should be amazed that so many continue in unbelief. Tonight I want to set before you first of all these general blessings that all men enjoy – blessings that should cause them to turn to God.  
Then we’ll look more specifically at the particular blessings the people of Nazareth had and our own land has had.

- I. First, the general blessings God has given to all men – blessings that should cause all to worship and serve Him
- A. All men have the blessing of God’s general revelation of Himself.
1. As Creator God has left His indelible image upon all things. You cannot look upon creation without seeing the beauty and excellence of His handiwork.  
<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 19:1** – “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”
  2. Creation reveals the attributes of God. It declares God’s Divine essence  
**Romans 1:20** – “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made”  
“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power. . .”
  2. Paul is saying that through Creation and Providence God is clearly seen  
“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen”
  4. God exists and it is unmistakable. This revelation of God is sufficient as to leave all men without excuse  
We should all marvel at their unbelief.
- B. Second, all men have been given the inward testimony of the conscience  
**Romans 1:19** – “because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.”
1. As our Creator God has left an indelible mark of Himself on us.
  2. Charles Hodge writes of this verse – “It is not of a mere external revelation of which the Apostle is speaking, but of that evidence of the being and perfections of God which every man has in the constitution of his own nature. . .”
  3. There is a void within all men that only God can fill.  
Augustine writes in his *Confessions* – “*You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you*”
  4. Human beings need to pay homage to something outside of themselves. If not God, they will be inclined towards something else upon which to give their devotion—
  5. Of the essence of this inward testimony is our conscience
    - a. The Bible describes our conscience as the testimony of God and His law upon our heart.
    - b. We have this inner understanding of right and wrong
    - c. The lost man suppresses the testimony of his conscience  
**1 Timothy 4:2** – “Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;”  
**Titus 1:15** – “Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”
  6. We should all marvel at their continual unbelief

- C. Third, all men enjoy the mercy of God's forbearance  
NAS **Romans 2:4** – "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"
1. All men should be in hell at this very moment. Each second we spend out of hell is wonderful evidence of God's mercy
  2. God is giving all men time to repent and trust Christ
  3. In addition, He is covering the world with His goodness  
 We enjoy the riches of life out of God's goodness. This goodness should cause us to bow before God in great praise and adoration
  4. We should be amazed at the continual unbelief of humanity
- II. The people of Nazareth were particularly blessed
- A. They were Jews
1. The promises were given through them
  2. The Law was given through them
  3. The tabernacle and all the the foreshadows of Christ came through the Jews
  4. The prophets were of the Jews
  5. They were given the priority in the coming of Christ  
NASB **John 1:11**- "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."  
NASB **Matthew 10:5-6** – "These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, "Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."  
NASB **Matthew 15:24** But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
  6. They had every advantage. Everything God had shown them pointed to Christ. And still they would not believe.  
 "And He wondered at their unbelief."
- B. They heard His amazing teaching  
**Mark 6:2** – "And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him,"
1. Mark records they were astonished at His teaching
  2. We also saw this in **Chapter 1**  
NAS **Mark 1:22** – "And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes."
  3. Jesus spoke with authority and taught with authority  
 The greatest of prophets said, "Thus saith the Lord."  
 Jesus said, "But I say unto you."  
 He spoke with the authority of God.
  4. No one could oppose His teaching – He had infinite knowledge and wisdom.
  5. Who could doubt that His wisdom was greater than any mere man? And yet they did not believe.  
**Mark 6:6** – "And He wondered at their unbelief."

- C. They saw His amazing work  
**Mark 6:2** - "Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?"
1. Jesus demonstrated His authority by His works – Everything He did carried Divine authority
  2. Surely they would have heard about the Gadarene demoniac.
  3. He healed all manner of diseases and even raised from the dead demonstrating His power over death.
  4. Even the wind and waves were subject to him.
  5. There was no doubt He was who He said He was and yet they would not believe Him.
  6. After all, they had seen Him grow up in their town. They knew His family. He had been a carpenter. The Messiah wouldn't be a carpenter would He?
- D. The great tragedy of their unbelief
1. They had been given great advantage. They would be held at a much greater accountability  
**Luke 10:13-15** – "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>14</sup> "But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. <sup>15</sup> "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!"  
<sup>KJV</sup> **Mark 6:11** And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. (only in the TR)
- III. So many have squandered their advantages
- A. Europe is in a wicked state of unbelief
1. France, the homeland of Calvin is in a state of absolute unbelief.
  2. Germany, the homeland of Martin Luther is in a state of unbelief.
  3. Great Britain, the homeland of so many of the Puritans is in a state of unbelief.  
**Mark 6:6** – "And He wondered at their unbelief."
- B. What about our land - Few nations have had the advantages of this nation
1. Our very founding involved men seeking to glorify God
  2. Few have sent out as many missionaries as this land
  3. We have churches on almost every corner
  4. The Gospel is heralded from radio, television, and the internet  
Sermons are available for download 24/7
  5. Our nation has been saturated with the Gospel.  
How much do you suppose Jesus marvels at our unbelief  
Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.
- C. And young person
1. How many times have you heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
  2. You have been taught the Bible from the time of your birth
  3. How much do you suppose Jesus marvels at your unbelief?

**Conclusion:**

1. When people refuse to acknowledge and worship God the problem is not the lack of evidence for His existence. It is in our own resolute determination not to know Him.
2. If God's general revelation is sufficient to leave all men without excuse, how much sorer punishment do you suppose will be reserved for those who have received such great light of revelation and still deny Him?
3. Most of humanity in the history of the earth have had *only* natural revelation. They had no Bible, no churches, and yet they are without excuse. How wretched is our generation who have heard much and yet refuse to turn.