

## OPEN EYES AND CLOSED HEARTS (MATTHEW 13:53-58)

Now it happened that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. And He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they were taking offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:53-58)

## THE SETTING

Now it happened that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. And He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue so that they were astonished (Matthew 13:53-54)

Jesus left Capernaum, His adopted hometown (Matthew 4:12-13).

Jesus moved there at the beginning of His public ministry.

Jesus went to Nazareth, where He had grown up (Matthew 2:22-23).

Jesus' ministry was well-established at this point; taught and worked throughout Galilee.

Jesus lived in Capernaum for a few years but was called a Nazarene at His triumphal entry (Matthew 21:11).

Jesus taught in the synagogue and astonished them; He said and did mind-boggling things.

Let's talk about their response.

## RECOGNITION

### THE NAZARENES RECOGNIZED JESUS' WISDOM

**Isaiah 11 says about the Servant of God,**

The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on Him, the spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**, the spirit of **counsel** and **might**, the spirit of **knowledge** and **the fear of Yahweh**. (Isaiah 11:2)

Here is Jesus in a nutshell: wisdom, power, and complete submission to the Father.

Jesus was not just wise, though; He was wisdom Himself, the final Word of God; First Corinthians 1:30 says that Jesus "became to us wisdom from God."

The Jewish leaders confronted Jesus many times and tested Jesus, trying to trap Him into violating the Law or offending the people.

They never succeeded; that frustration built until their hatred overflowed into murderous violence.

### THE NAZARENES RECOGNIZED JESUS' POWER

As we saw in Isaiah 11:2, God's wisdom and power go hand in hand.

It is impossible to separate God's wisdom from His power to freely act according to His wisdom.

Jesus' miracles were visible, unmistakable demonstrations of His authority over all things.

He did not work by borrowed authority; He possessed it personally.

He was not a representative of God, but God Himself in human flesh.

He had authority over every effect of the fall:

Healings and resurrections.

Exorcisms.

He had authority over all creation:

Water to wine.

Multiplying good.

Walking on the water.

## THERE HAD NOT BEEN MIRACLES IN ISRAEL FOR A LONG TIME

Three clusters of miracles in the Bible; establishing miracles and confirming miracles.

### The Exodus Cluster

The ten plagues **established** that Moses was God's appointed spokesman.

The wilderness miracles **confirmed** God's presence with His people; blessings for faith and obedience.

### The Elijah/Elisha Cluster

Miracles of Elijah, especially against the prophets of Baal, **established** Elijah as God's appointed spokesman; he called Israel back to the Law of God.

Miracles of Elisha **confirmed** God's presence and blessings for faith and obedience.

### The Christ/Apostles Cluster

Miracles of Jesus **established** Him as God's final spokesman and proved His words to be the Word of God.

Miracles of the apostles **confirmed** God's presence and blessing on those who believed in Jesus and obeyed His Word.

This is important: miracles did not prove that a PERSON was approved by God, but that Jesus was approved by God as God's final Word, and Jesus' apostles had the authority to fully communicate His Word to us.

God affirmed Jesus and the apostles through miracles.

He does not affirm US through miracles.

Hundreds of years had passed since the lives of Elijah and Elisha.

No miracles during that time.

The Nazarenes cannot casually dismiss Jesus' works.

### **SUSPICION: THE NAZARENES WERE UNCONVINCED BY WHAT THEY WITNESSED**

Tradition dies hard.

They did not say:

"Who has wisdom and powers like this man?"

"Glorify God for this man's wisdom and miraculous powers!"

"Behold the hour of our visitation – God's servant exercises God's wisdom and God's power!"

"This man speaks the wisdom of God with divine authority, and performs miracles that only God can perform; we must give Him our undivided attention!"

Instead, they expressed disbelief: "Where did THIS man get THIS wisdom and THESE miraculous powers?"

They decided that what THEY knew about Jesus was all there was to know.

"We know his father and mother, and therefore we know Him. We know His brothers and sisters, and therefore we know Him. They are nothing special; therefore He can be nothing special. So, where did He get this wisdom and power?"

### **THE WONDER OF HUMAN WISDOM**

God made mankind in His image, and He granted us incredible intelligence and wisdom.

118 years ago the Wright brothers flew the first powered airplane, which moved at a speed of just under 7 miles per hour. Just 43 years later Chuck Yeager flew the Bell X-1 at 700 mph, just faster than the speed of sound. Just 13 years after that Alan Shepherd became the first American in space, and he flew at a speed of 5,180 mph. Just eight years later the men on Apollo 10 reached a speed of 24,816 mph, the fastest human beings have ever traveled.

We used to say that our cell phones had more computing power than the Apollo spacecraft. But now cellphone CHARGERS have more computer power than the Apollo spacecraft.

### **THE WONDER OF GOD'S WISDOM**

God wisely designed us in such a way that our wisdom could never uncover His mysteries.

**SLIDE** For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God [That is, the preaching of the Gospel will never satisfy the sinful human desire for information.]. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." [Who says this? God. God deliberately destroys human wisdom and reasoning.]

**SLIDE** Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? [What are their answers? Where is their wisdom and learning?] Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? [A rhetorical question; yes, God has made the world's wisdom foolish.]

**SLIDE** For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not come to know God [God has concealed His purposes in such a way that no amount of human study, reasoning, or intelligence will reveal them], God was well-pleased, through the foolishness of the message preached [The Gospel is foolish to the world.], to save those who believe [who believe the Gospel].

**SLIDE** For indeed Jews ask for signs [miracles] and Greeks search for wisdom [clever reasoning], but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block [the same word as *took offense* in Matthew 13:57] and to Gentiles foolishness [it fails the standards of human reasoning], but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God [This is important: Christ is only the power of God and wisdom of God to those who are the called, the elect. How do we know if someone is elect? At some point in their life they will believe in Jesus Christ as the power and wisdom of God]. (First Corinthians 1:18-24)

**TRANSITION:** Were the Nazarenes humbled by what they heard and saw? No – they stumbled over what they heard and saw.

### **THAT IS, THEY TOOK OFFENSE AT HIM**

The offense of Matthew 13 is the same as the stumbling block of First Corinthians 1.

The Nazarenes were trapped by their own traditions about the Messiah.

In their minds, Jesus' wisdom and miracles did not match Him as a person.

This was not uncommon in Scripture.

#### **Korah and others rose up against Moses:**

Then they assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Yahweh is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of Yahweh?" (Numbers 16:3)

### Yahweh said this to Ezekiel:

Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house. (Ezekiel 12:2)

### That spirit of rebellion remained in the New Testament time:

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is brought to an end in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart, but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (Second Corinthians 3:14-16)

It happened to many others; it happened to Jesus, too.

The eyes of the Nazarenes were open, but their hearts were closed.

### NOTHING HAS CHANGED

People have all sorts of ideas about who Jesus was; from a YouTube video:

A person like us.

A selfless person.

Just a man.

A marketing genius.

A magician like David Copperfield.

A son of God like Gandhi or Mohammed.

People cling to these assumptions and will not let them go.

They can't, because God has arranged things so that we cannot believe or understand the Gospel on our own.

Saving faith requires the work of His Spirit, and He does not do that work for everyone.

The typical, proud response is something like, "That isn't fair; how can God be good if He saves some and not others? There are a lot of people worse than me; what about them? That sort of God isn't good at all!"

### JESUS WAS NOT SURPRISED

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:57-58)

Nothing about their response surprised Jesus; He expected that response all along.

Then why go to them?

Because **God is kind**; He gave them the opportunity to believe.

Because **God is just**; the Gospel was to be preached throughout Israel.

Because **God is sovereign**; the Gospel is not just the means by which sinners are saved; it is also the means by which the condemned are shown to be truly dead in their sins.

Truly humble people would rejoice to hear the Gospel.

Only those dead in their sins resent it.

So Jesus did not do **many** miracles there.

He was not prevented by their unbelief; a common assumption in our time.

He chose not to do **many** miracles; He obviously did some.

The ultimate issue is not whether Jesus healed anyone, but whether anyone believed for salvation.

They agreed that Jesus' wisdom was the real thing.

They agreed that Jesus' power was genuine.

They rejected Him because He did not fit their notions.

As Charles Spurgeon might have said, mark well the exceeding deadness of the heart that is dead in sin.

### BRINGING IT HOME

#### PERSONALIZATION

What a gift it is to understand Jesus' wisdom and power, and believe in Him for salvation!

How humbling it is to know that we understand and believe because of His kindness and mercy, and not because we are clever or wise.

**We have been given the precious gift of faith in Jesus Christ.**

But by His doing **[not our doing] [we]** are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." (First Corinthians 1:30-31)

We glorify Him not for just making salvation possible, but for actually saving us.

And we plead with Him in prayer to save those we know and love for His eternal glory.

**APPROPRIATION**

Justin is going to come and lead us to the Lord's table this morning.

Let us come with a sense of wonder at the gift given to us.