

The GOSPEL of MARK

Our Call to Discipleship

Jesus, King of our Faith

Mark 6:1-6

PASTOR'S PRAYER

Almighty Father in Heaven, from all eternity you decreed everything that occurs, without reference to anything outside yourself. You did this by your perfectly wise and holy counsel, freely and unchangeably. You work, make, order, govern and sustain. All your works are marvelous and wonderful. Your ways are blameless, true and good, everyone. We confess, LORD, our hearts often doubt your good providence and we groan and sigh as if we were under the hand of a tyrant. We mumble and complain as if we have only our own strength to draw from. LORD, grant us repentance for the ways we moan and protest with your marvelous works. Give us your Spirit to strengthen us and stir us toward faith and joy and hope as we walk the difficult path of life affirming your strength, trusting your goodness and resting in your daily supply of grace & mercy. Lord, drive out our doubts and unbelief among us this morning and give us the glorious gift of faith and repentance that your name may be known and treasured in our midst and among the nations. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior and LORD. Amen & Amen.

OUTLINE

1. The Nature of Unbelief (vv. 1-3)
2. The Consequences of Unbelief (vv. 4-6)

Central Textual Truth

Jesus confronts unbelief in His hometown.

Central Sermon Aim

I want SGBC to recognize the nature of unbelief and trust Jesus to deliver.

INTRODUCTION

Modern Context ~ Just a few months ago we began hearing about a dangerous virus that was coming closer & closer to our loved ones. One of the many dangers for this virus is that we can not even today, months later, clearly identify it and understand the extent of its danger. And yet it has proved fatal to no less than 100,000 people in the US in just the last few months.

This morning we see in our text something far more dangerous because it threatens our souls not just our bodies. Jesus tells His disciples,

Matthew 10:28 ^{ESV} | *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

What is more dangerous than the virus that can harm our bodies but destroy our souls? This morning we are going to see the astonishing and tragic results of unbelief. Yes! This morning I want to call you all to, Beware of Unbelief!!

Mark Context (v. 1) ~ Jesus leaves the crowded seashore to return to his hometown of Nazareth. That small, out of the way, no place, town that is so insignificant that it does not show up in any history books or writings of the time of Jesus. Even Nathanael asks Philip “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” (John 1:46). And yet these are the people Jesus grew up with and knew him and His family. This is the important context for our text this morning. Notice Jesus’ “*hometown*” mentioned both in v. 1 & 4. And as we read these verses we can see the point is their surprising unbelief.

Over the last several weeks we have been considering together the importance of faith through Jesus’s parables & then we reflected on the necessary object of our faith as Jesus proves His authority by calming the sea (4:35-41), casting out demons (5:1-20), healing the sick & raising the dead (5:21-43).

Sermon Aim & Outline ~ So this morning we have before us an urgent caution as one who will follow Christ that familiarity with Jesus is not faith but in fact can be a hindrance to one’s faith. Being acquainted with Jesus could be one’s greatest reason to remain in unbelief. So this morning, as those who seek to faithfully follow Christ, to believe in Him, we need to recognize two things about unbelief:

1. The Nature of Unbelief (vv. 1-3)
2. The Consequences of Unbelief (vv. 4-6)

THE NATURE OF UNBELIEF (vv. 1-3)

Jesus returns to His hometown and this time he has His disciples with Him. And Jesus goes to participate in what was the regular rhythm of this town. On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue for worship. And their time together consisted of teaching.

Mark 6:2^{ESV} | And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying,

It is Jesus' teaching that brought out these questions & really helps us see what is behind their astonishment.

Questioned His Teaching (v. 2) ~ Let's consider these questions before us a bit. Notice that verse 2 has 3 questions concerning Jesus' teaching. Those who were listening to Jesus' teaching were asking some specific questions. **FIRST**, they asked, "*Where did this man get these things?*" Here they were questioning the source of Jesus' authority. The point is that they knew Jesus growing up & he did not have rabbinical training nor was He taught by some special scribe or religious teacher. In other words they were questioning where he was getting the content of his teaching. The **SECOND** question is, "*What is the wisdom given to him?*" If the first question concerned the source of Jesus' teaching then this question is related to the content of His teaching. What are these truths & practices that this man is teaching and is it in line with the wisdom we have heard before? We know that the content of Jesus' message was the gospel message, "Repent of your sin & place your trust in Jesus Christ to receive forgiveness of sin & enter into His Kingdom." So this is the content of Jesus' message and it seems to NOT be lining up with the wisdom that they have always heard from the scribes and religious leadership. The **THIRD** & final question we have in v. 2 is, "*How are such mighty works done by his hands?*" Here the question and concern is how Jesus is doing what He is doing. We know that Jesus has already been accused of doing His might works by the power of Satan (Mark 3:22-27). And here we have again the question of just how does Jesus do these amazing acts, these mighty works that he is doing? We know that the mighty works were not done by Jesus to impress or to draw a crowd. Instead, Jesus did all these things to confirm what He was teaching. And to prove He was who He said He was, Jesus Christ the Son of God. These questions reveal how the townspeople were doubting Jesus' teaching: its source, content & method.

Question His Person (v. 3) ~ Verse 3, if you will notice, questions something

different about Jesus, His person. Now we know that Jesus' teaching (v. 2) & person (v. 3) can't be separated but here we have a denial of who Jesus taught Himself to be. Do you see here what they are doing? They are assuming that Jesus is nothing more than the ordinary, not that impressive, young boy who grew up in their midst in those not too distant past.

Mark 6:3^{ESV} | Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?"

They are making a few conclusions here. First, they are saying that Jesus' teaching is not from any recognized training because they knew this Jesus. He is that town carpenter that was working with His hands for all those years. And then second they seem to be questioning the family Jesus came from. Men were most often known in relation to their fathers in this culture but here our text relates Jesus not to Joseph but instead to Mary. This could be a reminder that they questioned if Jesus was actually legitimate when he was born. They also knew Jesus' brothers and sisters. They were still there in Nazareth raising their families. The townspeople were simply saying, "We know who you are!" And yet they did not. They believed their assumptions about Jesus instead of what Jesus said about Himself.

Do you see here that their astonishment moves to "*offense at him*", at Jesus. This term means "to be repelled by", "to stumble" or to be "lead astray by". In other words, their determined familiarity with Jesus pushed them to unbelief not faith. The point here is that one will not remain simply impressed with Jesus, "*astonished*". Unless true faith takes root by the power of God's Spirit then Jesus, His words, works and person, will soon frustrate you and turn your heart to be quite offended by His decisive authority and clear demands upon every aspect of your life.

You see

Unbelief is not moral.

It is not just wrong behavior.

Unbelief can't be fixed by better behavior.

Unbelief is not political.

It is not just being with the wrong group

Unbelief can't be overcome by going along with the most favored group.

Unbelief is not intellectual.

It is not just wrong conclusions.

Therefore unbelief can't be eliminated by acknowledging the right facts.

No! Unbelief is rebellion of our will against our God our Maker. In other words, Unbelief is religious. That is, if any person ever turns from unbelief to faith in Jesus Christ (what he taught, who He is and what He demands of every person) then they will never do enough good things, experience enough in society nor reason enough to drive out unbelief. No, one must come to God. Cry out for His mercy and grace, "Be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

I pray you see the encouragement here for those who are seeking to be faithful witnesses among family & friends, those who know you best, that do not believe or may even ridicule or dismiss your faith. Maybe they are offended by your way of life, your other-worldly way of ordering your life? But take heart, brothers & sisters, even our LORD faced unbelief with those who were closest to him.

Is there someone here this morning living in unbelief?

What are the excuses propping up your unbelief?

Have you evaluated the facts and not quite have been convinced?

Have you looked into the teachings of Jesus and really don't agree fully?

Are you waiting to see a congregation live in a way that you have deemed necessary for "Christians" to live before you really think it is genuine?

Do you see how you have wrongly estimated the danger of your unbelief? It is not something you are managing or that you will figure out one day!!

Your unbelief is a revolt against God, His revealed Word and the person Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Repent and believe in the name of the LORD Jesus Christ today.

We can never be too much on our guard against unbelief. It is the **oldest** sin in the world. It began in the garden of Eden, when Eve listened to the devil's promises, instead of believing God's words, "you shall die." It is the **most ruinous** of all sins in its consequences. It brought death into the world. It kept Israel for forty years out of Canaan. It is the sin that especially fills hell. "He that believes not shall be damned." It is the **most foolish** and inconsistent of all sins. It makes a man refuse the plainest evidence, shut his eyes against the clearest testimony, and yet believe lies. Worst of all, it is the **most common** sin in the world. Thousands are guilty of it on every side. In profession they are Christians. They know nothing of Paine and Voltaire. But in practice they are really unbelievers. They do not implicitly believe the Bible, and receive Christ as their Savior.

J.C. Ryle

THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF (vv. 4-6)

The Extent of Unbelief (v. 4) ~ Jesus now responds to their questioning, doubt and unbelief. Here we see the concentric circles of unbelief.

Mark 6:4^{ESV} | And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household."

And this is clearly picturing the extent of the unbelief that will take place in two ways. Never underestimate the extent of unbelief. How far & deep it will go. We often assume unbelief is basically neutral and will never really become damning, it will not really send someone to hell unless it accompanies wicked intentions or violent aims. BUT we see here the extent of unbelief. It is as intimate and close as Jesus' very "household" and it becomes so fierce that it drives a crowd of Jews (those whom our LORD always came to first that they might turn from their wickedness and believe) later in Mark to cry out, "Crucify Him!! Crucify Him!!" (Mark 15:13), the perfect, sinless Son of God, goes to the cross because unbelief in Jesus Christ will one day bring every person to face or be forgiven the unrelenting wrath of God. And here in the gospel of Mark we find Jesus never returning to the synagogues again to teach but instead declares the gospel among the hostile Jewish leadership that will eventually lead to the cross.

The Result of Unbelief (v. 5) ~ Finally, I want us to see the amazing harm and despair of unbelief.

Mark 6:5^{ESV} | And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

Here we don't have the LORD's sovereign power being thwarted by human unbelief. The miracles were not just to amaze, astonish or impress. They were to confirm belief in the identity and authority of Jesus. Here these people did not have that blessing of this confirmation because they refused to believe. Jesus in his full humanity was constantly dependent upon the Spirit to perform miracles that would certify Jesus is who He said He was. It was not the Father's will to display the glory of Jesus Christ through the powerful working of the Spirit except to a very few there in Nazareth. And this caused Jesus to marvel, look at with wonder & awe!!

Mark 6:6^{ESV} | And he marveled because of their unbelief.

I'd like to close by reading comments by J.C Ryle on our text,

We see.....how exceedingly sinful is the sin of unbelief. Two remarkable expressions are used in teaching this lesson. One is, that our Lord "could do

no mighty work" at Nazareth, by reason of the hardness of the people's hearts. The other is, that "*He was amazed at their unbelief.*" The one shows us that unbelief has a power to rob men of the highest blessings. The other shows that it is so suicidal and unreasonable a sin, that even the Son of God regards it with surprise. We can never be too much on our guard against unbelief..... Let us go on watching our hearts, even after we have believed. The root of unbelief is never entirely destroyed. We have only to leave off watching and praying, and a noxious crop of unbelief will soon spring up. No prayer is so important as that of the disciples, "*Lord, increase our faith*".^{Ryle}