

The Unbelief of the People of Nazareth

Mark 6:1-6

Mark 6:1-6 – *“Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. ² And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! ³ Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him. ⁴ But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” ⁵ Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”*

Background Notes

In verse 1 Jesus went from Capernaum, where He had been doing the works that are recorded in Mark 5. “His own country” was Nazareth, the town where He grew up. Nazareth is about a day’s walk from Capernaum. Jesus came to a synagogue in Nazareth, the synagogue where He was raised as a boy, and where He would have attended as a young man. This is the synagogue where He was rejected earlier in His ministry, when our Lord read from the scroll of Isaiah.

This is where they rejected His claim of being the Messiah when He read the description from the scroll of Isaiah, and where they tried unsuccessfully to throw Him down the steep hillside (Luke 4). In Mark 6 the Lord returned, and we have here a second rejection at Nazareth.

The word “carpenter” (v3) is broad enough to include not only working with wood but working with stone as well, as a stonemason. The Lord may have done both as he worked with His earthly father, Joseph. The fact that the people referred to Jesus as “the son of Mary” may be an indication that Joseph had died. The “brothers and sisters” mentioned here were the children of Mary and Joseph who were born after the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. They were not cousins, as some people assert, and they most likely were not Joseph’s children by a previous marriage. They were younger half-brothers and half-sisters of Jesus, born to Mary and Joseph after our Lord’s birth. So the idea of the “perpetual virginity” of Mary is repudiated in this Scripture. The “James” who is mentioned here, the half-brother of our Lord, is the “James” who wrote the Epistle of James. And the “Judas” here – the Lord’s half- brother, Judas - is the “Jude” that wrote the Epistle of Jude.

Verse 3 says “*they were offended at Him.*” That is, the people of Nazareth looked down on Him as just a commoner, or just one of them. “Why, if He was the Messiah, certainly He would have come as a mighty hero, a mighty conquering hero, not just a common carpenter like the rest of us.” They were “offended “at Him, and saw no reason to believe that He was anyone special. So the people of Nazareth rejected Christ again, just as they had done earlier in Luke 4. As far as the record goes, the Lord never visited Nazareth again.

There is still an ancient synagogue in Nazareth. It dates from a later time than our Lord’s time, but archaeologists have found that the ruins of the first century synagogue where the Lord spoke are underneath the ancient synagogue in Nazareth today. It’s also interesting that there is a Christian community in Nazareth today. Even though our Lord was initially rejected in Nazareth, there are many true believers gathered to the name of the Lord there today!

Doctrinal Points

1. Jesus is more than a carpenter or the Son of Mary.

When you mention the name of Jesus today, people have different reactions. Virtually no one doubts that He existed, although there may be a few ignorant people who might say that Jesus Christ never existed. There’s just too much evidence out there to prove His existence, so nobody really doubts that. But many people see Him just as “a good man” - the good carpenter from Nazareth. Well, Jesus was a carpenter, and He was a good carpenter. And He was a good man - in fact, the perfect Man. But He was **more** than a man – much more! **He is God!** Colossians 2:9 says, “*In Christ all the fullness of the godhead was pleased to dwell.*” All the fullness of deity was pleased to dwell in bodily form. Jesus is fully God.

Some people are willing to give Jesus a “divine status” but are not willing to grant Him full deity. Some people talk of the Lord Jesus as the Son of “the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of God,” - but they end up putting Mary on as high a plane (or even higher place) than Jesus Himself! The truth is that Mary was part of the sinful human race, just as much as you and I are part of the sinful human race. Mary needed to be saved from her sins, just as much as you and I need to be saved from our sins. Mary was a godly woman, and she was given a wonderful role to play as the mother of our Lord Jesus, but she was not God, she was not divine, and she was not different in essence than any other human being. **The Lord Jesus is more than a carpenter, and more than the Son of Mary. He is God.** I trust everyone listening to my voice has acknowledged that Jesus Christ is fully God.

2. The sin of unbelief hinders the work of the Lord.

Verse 5: “*Now He could do no mighty work there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.*” The point is not that the Lord didn’t have the power to do miracles here – the point is that **He chose not to do miracles there because of their unbelief.** Unbelief is a deadly sin. It hinders the work of the Lord. The Lord could not bring the

children of Israel into the Promised Land because of the sin of unbelief. They wouldn't believe His promises to win the victory over their enemies in the Land. Hebrews 3:19 says, "*they could not enter in because of their unbelief.*" Unbelief ties the hands of God. The Lord could not do many miracles in Nazareth because of their unbelief. The miracles and the message went together. The very fact that the Lord healed a **few** there (v5) in spite of the unbelief is really an indication of God's grace. **The sin of unbelief will hinder the work of the Lord.**

Practical Applications

1. Don't let unbelief limit the blessing of God in your life.

Do you wonder why you're experiencing only a trickle of God's blessing in your life? Is that true in your life? Why are you seeing just a trickle of blessing? Certain TV preachers would tell you that it's because you haven't sent in enough money, right? Well, that's a lie! That's a trick of the religious con artists. However, the sin of unbelief could be the reason. There are many applications that we could make, but let's take this one: Is it possible the Lord wants to bless you by expanding your ministry, expanding the area of Christian service you're involved in, but He can't because of your lack of trust and unbelief?

Maybe you're a student, and God wants to start evangelizing your campus with you - but His hands are tied because you don't believe He can do it. Maybe you're not afraid to witness, but you just have an idea there's no way He can save people on *your* campus - they're too far gone. That's really the sin of unbelief, and it ties the hands of God. It limits God. Maybe you work in an office, and God wants to do a miracle there - maybe even save your ungodly boss! Is that possible? Yes, it is, but you don't really believe He can. You're willing to witness, maybe say a few things here and there, but there's that lack of trust. Unbelief. You just don't believe it would ever happen. **Don't let unbelief limit the blessing of God in your life.**

2. Don't be discouraged by the negative attitude of close friends and relatives.

Notice what our Lord said in verse 4: "*A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives and in his own house.*" You would think your close friends and relatives, the people who know you the best, would support you, but many times that's not the way it works - even with relatives and friends who are fellow believers!

A few years ago I spoke at a large conference on the west coast, and I must admit I was on a bit of an ego trip because a lot of people were there, and they gave me a good response. Little did I know I was in for a humbling experience. I came back to Emmaus Bible College, and in my first class on Monday morning I was feeling pretty good because of the great weekend. A student asked a question in the class - and he fell asleep during my answer! Boy, was that a comedown! But it was the old "familiarity breeds contempt" syndrome - he was used to me as his teacher, so I was nothing special. That's basically what the Lord was saying here.

There's no harder place for us to serve the Lord than at home - whether it's literally in your home or among your close friends. Don't be surprised if you experience this same reaction. Maybe you're doing a really good job in some area of Christian service, but nobody seems to notice and you never get any credit. Don't be surprised – it happened to the Lord, too! **Don't be discouraged by the negative attitude of close friends and relatives.**

3. Don't reject the Lord one too many times!

As we mentioned, this was the Lord's second rejection at Nazareth. He had been rejected there the first time when they tried to do away with Him by throwing Him over a cliff. Our Lord was protected, and walked away through the midst of the crowd. But later in His ministry He returned, and **again** they rejected Him. And as far as the record goes, our Lord never visited Nazareth again.

Perhaps the Lord is speaking to you right now. Is it possible that you've rejected Christ before? Is it possible that you've never received Christ as your Savior? **Now** is the time. Don't put it off - because a hardening process will set in to your heart and your mind.

Don't reject the Lord one too many times.