

Pentecost 6-July 4, 2021
Baltic and East Nidaros Parish
Mark 6:1-13

“Amazed in His Hometown”

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen



It's pretty neat when someone from your hometown makes it big. I asked my son-in-law this morning who from their hometown area in Iowa made it big in the sports world. He mentioned from his hometown he quickly named Josh Stammer who had a pretty long run with the Buffalo Bills. Brad Seely comes to my mind as someone who rose from our hometown and was successful in coaching football at the national level. Wouldn't it be also neat if someone from this small community became a famous preacher that had the following of Billy Graham. Someone who became famous for the books that he or she wrote or was the subject of the writings of many others. And then imagine what would happen if this outstanding preacher came back to his or her hometown to deliver a sermon in the church where he or she went to Sunday School?

Jesus had accomplished all of these things and even more. He didn't have to attend any seminary to learn what he already knew, since he was God in the flesh. He performed more healings in his short ministry than Oral Roberts believed he did in his lifetime. When Jesus came back to his hometown of Nazareth to preach, everyone was amazed at what they heard. This amazement however disappeared as quickly as a ¼ inch of rain would now disappear into our parched lawns and fields. The amazement of what the people heard when Jesus preached was quickly replaced with how amazed Jesus was at the unbelief of the people of his hometown.

What caused this dramatic shift from the amazement of Jesus' preaching to the people's desire to run him out of town? We don't have to wonder, because it is recorded in scripture, and you just heard what happened. But we may want to believe there was another reason why Jesus was rejected in his hometown than the real reason that caused people's emotions to change from amazement to rejection for this hometown preacher.

One reason we might point to, and it is identified in the reading was that he was in his hometown. Maybe location is the problem. Maybe there is just something about working in the town that you grew up in that just doesn't work. Pastors are often instructed that when they leave a parish, they shouldn't return to perform any pastoral duties. Or maybe it was Jesus' poor selection of scripture to preach from. Mark doesn't mention what scripture Jesus preached about that day, but Luke tells us that Jesus unrolled the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. Like Mark, Luke reports that as soon as Jesus finished his sermon everyone's eyes were fixed on Jesus and were amazed. But Luke also reports how quickly the amazement faded away.

Satan used the same subtle tactic on Adam and Eve to turn them from God as the people from Jesus' hometown used to turn everyone from believing in the amazing sermon Jesus preached. God described Satan, the serpent in the garden as the craftiest of all of his creations. These hometown people were also very crafty in destroying the faith that everyone had when Jesus got done preaching. What is this crafty subtle scheme of the devil to destroy faith? What just happened after Jesus got done preaching his amazing sermon? Jesus'

hometown people not only destroyed Jesus' reputation, but also their faith in him by simply asking a few questions.

The serpent's question was only 4 words long that turned Adam and Eve's ears away from God when the serpent said? "Did God really say?" Jesus' hometown people began by simply asking the five-word question, "Is not this the carpenter?" Then they further asked, "Is he the son of Mary and aren't his brothers James, Joses, Judas, and Simon and his sisters with us? These seem like innocent questions, but their intent was not. Their intent was to destroy the reputation of Jesus. And they were successful. With these few questions, Jesus was almost powerless with the exceptions of a healings in Nazareth. When Jesus looked at his hometown he was amazed at their unbelief.

This is what happens in a hometown. People know people. People not only know other people's past but are very willing to tell others what they know. None of the questions that were raised about Jesus sounded terribly demeaning. But the questions that were asked had the intent to destroy and kill. Asking about being a carpenter had a different meaning then than it may today. Carpenters were very low on the social scale in Jesus' day. Carpenters of Jesus' day often had to move from one place to another to find work. They likely didn't have a place to call home. Normally, people in Jesus' day were identified by their relationship to the father, but as you recall, there was some question about who really the father of Jesus was, so asking if he was Mary's son had the subtle suggestion and reminded them about the question of who Jesus' father really was. And wasn't it Mary's child, Jesus, that broke the fourth commandment by not listening to his parents when they went to the temple and when it was time to go home, he disobeyed them by staying in the temple. If this was the only blemish on his nearly perfect childhood, you can imagine that there must be a couple scandalous stories that could be told about one or more of his brothers or sisters. After these few questions were asked about Jesus, the people that once thought he was amazing no longer believed a word he said.

Jesus teaches us that the first commandment is the most frequently broken commandment and if we didn't have other gods, it follows that we would keep the other commandments. I often have wondered if the next most frequently broken commandment is the 8th. "You shall not bear false witness." On the surface, you might say the people of Nazareth didn't break this commandment. You could say they were pointing out the truth about his past. Yes, Jesus was a carpenter. Yes, Jesus is the son of Mary. And yes, those are the names of his siblings. But the people of his hometown didn't state any of this as being credentials of Jesus. They did it to discredit him.

*Martin Luther's meaning to this commandment more clearly shows how the people of Nazareth broke this commandment. It declares, **we are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander or lie about our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him and explain his actions in the kindest way.***

Since Jesus' ministry mostly failed in his hometown, Jesus simply moved on to preach in the next villages. When he arrived in the next village, he didn't break the 8th commandment by telling the people in that village how poorly he was treated in his hometown of Nazareth. He did just as he taught his newly called disciples to do. He shook the dust off his feet and moved on. This event in Jesus' hometown gave him an opportunity to teach his disciples about faith.

After calling his twelve disciples, knowing the challenges that he had just experienced in ministry, did not send them out alone. Jesus sent them out in groups of two with full authority to cast out demons. These disciples would not have any problem with extra baggage charges if they were to board a plane. If they weren't even allowed to bring one bag to carry any extra clothes or food. Jesus commanded them to travel light. Then Jesus says what sounds a little obvious or ever humorous. "When you enter a place, stay there until you leave." Isn't that what everyone does? But Jesus meant don't pick and choose where you are to stay as we now are able to do by comparing the features that different motels or air B&Bs offer. They weren't to compare the menus that were offered for their meals. They were to go and stay until they left that place.

Then Jesus had to recall how he was received in Nazareth when he told his disciples if people refuse to hear you, simply shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them. Jesus didn't give the disciples different approaches for preaching to different people. If they didn't hear what they had to say, they weren't to assemble in small group settings to help them understand. Jesus didn't teach these disciples skills in debate, in order to help argue the hard of hearing into faith. Jesus said, if they will not hear you, shake the dust off and move on.

When the people of Jesus' hometown asked the question, "Is this not the carpenter"? The answer is yes. Jesus is the carpenter who nailed pieces of wood together in his earthly father's workshop. Little did his hometown people know that this carpenter would be nailed to a tree by the plan of his heavenly Father so that your sins would be forgiven and so that you would believe what every word this hometown preacher has told you today. Amen