

Mark 6:1 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?" And 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. (NKJV)

We left off a few weeks ago with Jesus raising Jairus's daughter from the dead. Since that time Matthew tells us few more things that Mark doesn't mention. We read in **Matthew 9:27** **When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!"** **28** **And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."** **29** **Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you."** **30** **And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See *that* no one knows *it*."** **31** **But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country.** **32** **As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed.** **33** **And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!"** **34** **But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." (NKJV)**

We see here that Jesus was doing even more miracles. And even though they were warned sternly not to tell anyone, they did exactly the opposite. They were like we are so frequently. We justify some very good reasons to completely ignore what God says. We know what God says, but He can't really mean it. We know better....at least so we think.

And then the Pharisees, upon seeing demons cast out, something they have probably never been able to do, they show their hardness of heart. They clearly know that their theory is full of holes and will not stand up to reason. But it has become their catch phrase, their mantra, their slogan, their soundbite. "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons."

It is a shame that these Pharisees did not see themselves in the same framework as Jairus saw his situation. Had they been **desperate and powerless**, maybe they would have had a different attitude. But they saw themselves as powerful and

needing nothing. So they condemned the Son of God, even contrary to all the evidence.

Now we find ourselves at our text this morning.

Mark 6:1 Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him.

Christ went from where He was and made his way back to Nazareth. This was his hometown. This is the community he grew up in. This is the place where the drama of His birth played out. This is where Jesus's half brothers and sisters probably lived. This is where Jesus' mother lived. And the whole community probably had opinions about Jesus based on half truths and incomplete information.

Christ's last visit home did not end so well. He preached at the synagogue and when He was done they drug Him to a cliff that they hoped to fling Him from. Then he walked through their midst and left them. So that is the last memory of Christ in this town.

So Christ and His disciples arrive and hang out for a few days. We have no idea where they stayed or what they did during these days. But we can assume, based on verse 2, that Christ was not preaching. We are not sure of what to make of that. I doubt that is a good sign. One might have thought people would be begging Christ to teach them what He had been preaching all over the land. You would have thought that they would have been bringing their sick to Him. But we don't see any of that. The next thing we see is when Saturday comes.

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!"

So Saturday comes and everyone goes to the synagogue for Saturday services. And Christ begins to teach. And as He teaches, they are impressed. They cannot **help but be impressed**. The word for astonished is very strong.

It means to strike with panic, shock, astonish, to be struck with astonishment, astonished, amazed

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.

So these people, in our vernacular, were blown away by Christ. They were impressed, enthralled. Now note that it says "many hearing Him". This certainly did not include everyone, as we will see. Imagine those who escorted Christ to the cliff on His last trip. Do we really think they had completely humbled themselves to Christ **now**? I doubt it. They were probably in the Pharisees corner, looking for a way to kill Christ if they could.

Now let's look at the question.

"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!

We live in a world that elevates questions and mocks answers. Anyone who has ever worked with children knows that they reach an age fairly quickly when they learn how to use questions to their advantage. They learn how a question can make themselves **look like they want to know the truth** but what they really want is to **hide some truth**. A question makes them appear that they are unknowing when they are actually fully informed.

And they practice this deception even before they can talk. How often have we given a command to do something or to stop doing something and we get a dumb look in return. The look that says I have no idea what you are talking about. That is the first stage of the insincere question, the deceptive question.

And this flaw doesn't get any better as we age. How many times have we counselled people when a question is asked by that person that is clearly designed to get us off the trail? Sincere questioning is necessary to get us to truth. But not all questioning is sincere.

One of the best examples of duplicity and deception come in a question asked by Pilate. Do you remember that story? Christ is being questioned by Pilate. Pilate asked Christ, "Are you a king then?"

Christ told Pilate that Pilate is right in calling Christ a king. He goes on to say that Christ was born for this purpose and that He was born to bear witness of the truth. "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice", Christ said.

Now, at this point there are a million sincere questions that could have been asked. But what does Pilate ask?

"What is truth?" Pilate effectively uses this question to make everything that Christ just said irrelevant to Pilate. Pilate can now wash his hands of this whole situation. Some questions are sincere questions. Some questions are deceptive questions. We need to know that as we deal with people.

Now think about our text today. Tell me, if you had been there in this audience...if you had heard all of the stories about Christ...if you had seen Him turn water into wine...if you had met some of the people who were cured by Him...if you had heard his preaching previously when he claimed to be the prophesied coming one...if you knew all of this, is this the question you would have chosen?

"Where did this man get these things?" Talk about a stupid question, a deceptive question, a self evident question. Anyone with a pea brain knew exactly where He got these things. He got them from God. But do you see the problem with that? If Christ got these things from God, that means Christ is representing God. And if Christ is representing God, then that means that these people should be respecting Him and revering Him and even worshipping Him. But that would

require humility. That would require them endorsing Christ as one sent by God. That would eliminate all their other options.

Then they go on with their question- **And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!**

Well, what wisdom **do they think it is?** It is obviously the wisdom of God. There is no mystery here. There is no question needed here. This is a time for statements. People with faith would be making statements at this point. They would be proclaiming the glory of Christ. But unbelief will always result in insincere and deceptive questions.

What questions do we ask that are just like these questions?

What things do we pretend **to not understand** or **we don't want to understand** because we simply don't want to do **what we must** once we understand them, once we believe them?

The heart truly is desperately wicked. And we all know how to be very deceptive, even to ourselves. What questions are we asking that we already know the answers to?

The next question reveals more of the real issue. The next question reveals the disbelief. It shows us where many in this crowd are coming from.

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?" And they were offended at Him.

This crowd viewed Christ from, primarily, a human natural perspective. Is this not **the carpenter?** Christ had raised people from the dead, for crying out loud. They knew this. He had healed people. He had cast out demons. He even told storms to knock it off and they did. They may or may not have known about all that, but we can be sure they heard the gossip of all that Christ had done. How in the world could they reduce Him down to being a mere carpenter? How could they see that as being His primary identity? That would be like referring to Abraham Lincoln by saying, wasn't he that logger? This sentence reveals their perspective. They saw the world through natural eyes, hometown eyes, that refused to take in the Glory of God and the power of God.

Then look at the next reference. The son of Mary. While it is probably true that Joseph is probably already dead, this would not have stopped Jesus as being referred to as **the son of Joseph**. That would be standard. But that is not what these people referred to Christ as. They referred to him as **the son of Mary**. That insinuated that there was some question about who the real father was. In other words it insinuated that Jesus was illegitimate. They were essentially saying, we know the truth **that really** matters. We have heard the gossip. The fact that Jesus can raise people who are dead out of their tombs isn't the important thing. The gossip they have heard is the important thing.

Then they go on.

and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?"

Do you see where they are going? They are doing all they can to make Jesus common, to bring Christ down to the natural, to their human understanding, to their human expectations and limitations. If they can do this, they do not need to reverence Him. They do not need to feel conviction and respond by repenting. They can escape the obvious obligations that they would have toward God. Scripture also tells us in John 7:5 that not even his own brothers believed in Christ at some point. So the reference to Christ's siblings may have been appealing to the fact that **not even they** believed in Christ. And they were the ones who all these people rubbed shoulders with day in and day out.

Then look what it says next.

And they were offended at Him.

The word for offended is the word we get Scandalous from. It means to be offended in one, to find occasion of stumbling in one, *i.e.* to see in another what I disapprove of and what hinders me from acknowledging his authority
Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.

I would venture to guess that every one of us here has used this trick to avoid the hot seat. It is just **too easy** to do this. We are subject to someone who is proclaiming the truth, often someone with some authority. They touch on an area that we really don't want to submit. So we find something wrong about this person, maybe the fact that they, themselves, don't follow the teaching perfectly. Then we discredit their position and, by so doing, we can ignore the conviction. It is a trick to **take power out of conviction**. It is a **deception**.

And what I have noticed is that we will very rarely bring these issues into the light of day. We won't initiate a conversation with the person we have the problem with. Because if we did, we would soon find that the conviction still holds, even though the communicators of that truth are flawed.

We are so very tricky. We cannot trust our hearts. What person are you **offended by** and if you weren't you know **you would have to change**? Be careful there. You do not ultimately answer **to that person** who **does not know** your heart. You answer to God **who does know** your heart. You may be able to fool others. You cannot fool God.

These people in our story were offended at Christ. They found a way of robbing Christ **of their authority** over them. They viewed Christ as **not being qualified** to be in authority over them. What a terrible spot to be in. We would never be so bold, we think. But do we do the same thing to the word of God? Do we remove its authority over us by doing lazy scholarship? Do we pick to side with the people

who agree with us, even though we suspect that we are not really going by what scripture says?

Being offended at God is always a danger to us. We can resort to this at any point. The world is heartily offended by God. And many of them say so. And for now the sun keeps coming up and going down.

But one day the true perspective is going to be seen. There will only be 2 kind of people. And there will be seen **the one offended-ness** that will really matter. God is going to have those **who He is not offended at**. And it is not because they are such stellar human beings. It is because they have trusted Christ's work on the cross to count for them. They have accepted that Christ took upon Himself **our offense** against God, and that He was punished for it. And that now we can be free of that offense because of Christ.

And there will be those who God is **deeply offended at**. And His offended-ness is not just an emotional reaction. Their offense is sin and it is punishable by death. He will send them to everlasting punishment.

So if you are someone **who is offended with God**, God really isn't affected by that. But if God is **offended by you**, that is something that will greatly affect you. We would do well to throw away all of our excuses and call on Him today, while there is opportunity.

Now Christ responded to these offended people.

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."

This is the same proverb Christ quoted the last time he was in his hometown. Our well known saying captures the same idea. Familiarity breeds contempt. We know, from our perspective, just how great and special Christ was. Eventually, at least, some of Christ's brothers came to that same understanding. James became a leader in the church and wrote the book of James. Judas wrote the book of Jude. So they eventually got it.

But so often it is true that we cannot see just how special those people are who live in closest proximity to us. We **stop remembering** that if a person has faith in them, it is a miracle. We stop expecting God to do the impossible in their lives. We stop believing that it is even possible. We miss the giftedness of God. We only focus on **the cost that loving them is to us**. How sad that is. But how true it is.

Because these townspeople knew Christ's history, they would not believe His calling. We cannot allow that to happen with us in our ministry to one another. We may be intimately aware of many failures of our brothers and sisters and ourselves, but we should never limit each other to that history. **God's calling** always takes precedence over **our history**. **Who we are going to be** is not ultimately limited by **who we were**.

5 Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed *them*.

We discussed this in Sunday school a few weeks ago.

I researched this a little bit to see what the various interpretations would be.

I found about what I expected.

The Armenian view used this statement to emphasize that God cannot do anything great unless we have faith. They went on to say that great works of God are scarce now because we have no faith. Basically they report that God's hands are tied. He wants to do a lot of things, but we don't let Him because we don't have faith.

Our charismatic brothers take it a step farther. They say that we experience illnesses and lack of success due to the fact that we will not exercise faith. The best of what the world has to offer would be ours if we just exhibited faith.

Those in the sovereign grace camp conveyed more of the view we will express this morning.

The question we must ask is, if Christ was not able to do a mighty work, what is it that caused that inability?

When Jonathan and I go fishing, we tend to get close to the end of our fishing time and one of us will say, "One last cast". Now, that really isn't a rule. It is more of a guideline. We will take one last cast unless that cast shows any signs of catching a fish. Then we might stretch that out a bit longer. But at some point, usually due to time constraints, we make one last cast and we are not able to make another.

Now if someone looking on said that they were not able to make one more cast, it would be true. Even if the reason is from a self imposed limitation. At some point, I cannot make one more cast because I may have promised Carla to be home at a certain time to do some other task.

I believe that is the type of limitation this text describes.

Let's look at it.

Could Christ do no more miracles because He was spiritually incapable of doing more miracles? That is what many preachers believed that I read. But I do not believe it. They say that faith is required for Christ to do miracles. But that does not stand up to the texts we have already studied. Just one example, the storm that threatened to sink the boat Christ and the disciples were in. Which one of them showed an iota of faith? None that we know of. Was Christ limited? Not in the least. We could point to many such examples. So I think that view is flawed by wrong assumptions.

Now, could it be that Christ could do no miracles because His morality, or his wisdom, or His commitment to His purpose forbade it? I think that is highly likely. Christ was here for a very specific purpose. And He did not spend much time doing anything outside the sphere of his purpose. So it would not be a stretch that, given the constraints of what He was here for, spending more time in

Nazareth would have been a waste of time. He simply could not allow Himself to linger there. There were a few people who came to Him for healing. He healed them. But He was going to accomplish no more good in this place. So **did He have the power** to do more miracles at Nazareth? Yes. No human limits the power of God. But was He limited **by some other consideration**? I think that is more likely the case.

But in looking into all of this I found another study that was at least worthy of mention.

A scholar named Michael CJ Bradford presented the following. He claims to understand Greek. I do not, so take it with a grain of salt.

He says that he interpreted the verse as follows. I will quote his article.

“And He was not showing power there to do any work of power, except for having laid the(His) hands on a few sick people, He healed them.”

I chose “was not showing power” and “work of power” in the first half of the sentence for two reasons:

1) The word for “work of power” (δύναμιν) is derived from the word “was showing power” (ἐδύνατο) in the Greek – it’s important to not miss Mark’s play on words here; and

2) The Greek word in this text commonly translated as “could” (ἐδύνατο) is in the imperfect tense, which is better translated as “was showing power” or “was showing ability.”

It’s important to note that the imperfect tense also indicates a continuous action. Thus, by writing that Jesus was not showing power Mark was indicating that Jesus was not continuously demonstrating His power through works of power (miracles), but only sporadically (as the second half of the verse clearly states). It’s also important to note that this sentence in Mark 6:5 seems to be simply a statement of fact. This is also consistent with the use of the Indicative Mood for the verb “was showing power,” as this mood is used to denote a simple statement of fact.

So this author makes the point that the text is not saying Christ **was not able to do this thing**. The text is just reporting that **He was not showing continuous power**. But we need to keep something in mind here. Even when Christ was slow to heal, He was still doing way more than anyone else was. A miracle is a miracle. And these few would have been absolutely amazing.

6 And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. (NKJV)

Christ only marveled two times. He marveled at the faith of the centurion who made a request of Him and He marveled at this lack of faith by His hometown crowd. We would say Christ was amazed. This disbelief of His hometown would

appear to be a wonder. It was a disbelief that was hard to fathom, hard to believe, hard to imagine given the circumstances.

They were so committed to seeing Christ in the way **they preferred to see Him** that they **refused** to see Him **in the light of truth**. The problem with these people is not that **they did not know Christ at all**. Their problem is that **they thought they knew him well** but they only knew things about Him. And they would not receive any truth that contradicted their view of Christ.

We have a very clear example to avoid in this text this morning. We must avoid allowing **what we already know of Christ** to supersede **what there is still to be known about Christ**. We must open ourselves up to Him and receive from Him the truths that His Word reveals about Him. We do not have God in a box. We cannot contain Him and limit Him so he meets our expectations or confirms to our current understanding. Approaching Christ in this way will always leave us a little bit uneasy, but we know that we can trust His character. We know He loves us. We don't always know **how that love will display itself**. We don't know His short term will for our lives. But we know enough about Christ to know that we can trust Him with our lives.

Along with this we need to be very careful that we do not come up with strategies to protect our lives, as they exist now, **from the intrusion of the authority of God**. We would do well to examine our lives to see what it is that we are **hesitant to allow God to change**, where we are resistant to admitting that our way of living, in some way, is not what it **should be**, or **could be**, or **would be**, if we would only submit it to Christ's Lordship. Maybe we are afraid to accept the truth about **our need to change** because we are afraid that **we can't make that change**. And if we admit that **we must change**, we are afraid we **won't be able to do it**. Maybe we resist because we, frankly, **don't want to** make the change. There are lots of reasons.

But where Christ calls He enables. Resisting the changes needed in your life will assure that whatever **self-created misery** you have now will simply continue. If you do what you always did you will get what you always got. But if you will accept Christ's authority to lead your life, He will provide truth that will set you free from whatever it is that is so difficult to let go of. It may be very hard. But it will be very worthwhile.

The last line in our text:

Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. (NKJV)

I think that shows the reason He did not do more miracles at Nazareth. There was more work to do in getting the good news to those who would respond appropriately to the good seed being thrown onto the soil of their hearts.

This is also a good example for us. There are plenty of people who will not hear us or respond to our ministries. That is no reason to quit our ministries. But it is often a reason to move on to the next person.