

Wil Owens
A Tale of Two Towns; Matt 14:34-36
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Introduction – At the end of ch13 we find Jesus in His hometown of Nazareth. At the end of ch14 we find Jesus in the town of Gennesaret. These two towns tell two very different stories. You really couldn't find two examples that are any further apart than these two, true polar opposites when it comes to Jesus. One rejects and one receives. There's much to learn when we examine opposites, especially opposites concerning Christ.

First, these two towns serve as examples. They not only tell their tales. They tell our tales. They tell our stories as well. For truly when it comes to Christ, every single person falls into one of these two categories; reject or receive, Nazareth or Gennesaret.

Second, these two towns could not only categorize all of humanity, they also exemplify the ramifications of their position regarding Christ. Rejecting or receiving Christ is not a minor decision with minor repercussions. What follows rejection and what follows reception are massive consequences. Not only is their position in total opposition, but so is the outcome of those positions.

Third, all of this brings us into a position of evaluating our own, individual position regarding Christ. Are we Nazarene when it comes to Christ or are we Gennesarene? Examining their differences in relation to Christ will help us to clarify our own relation to Christ.

- I. Gennesaret Recognized Him; Nazareth Questioned Him
 - a. Gennesaret recognized Him. By that I mean they understood who He was. In v33 the disciples in the boat with Jesus had just proclaimed Him as the Son of God. That truth of who Jesus is was beginning to filter down and spread throughout Gennesaret. They were beginning to understand and recognize Christ as the miracle working Messiah. The One who could meet their needs. The One they needed.
 - i. We know that by the way they welcomed Him, by the way they responded to Him to landing on their shore. Immediately they began to spread the word, gather the sick, and bring them to

Jesus. They displayed a remarkable reception. Their actions communicated loudly that they needed Him, wanted Him, were receptive to Him.

- ii. I don't mean to imply that everyone in Gennesaret were believers, but at the very least, at this point, they knew and welcomed Him with glad and grateful open arms. They knew He was no ordinary man.
- b. Now Nazareth recognized Jesus too, but in a totally different way. They recognized Him as nothing more than a man, as nothing more than one of them. They didn't happily receive Him in their town; they questioned Him.
 - i. Isn't this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? He's one of us. He's nobody special, nobody different. Who does He think He is teaching us? Who does He think He is projecting Himself as worker of miracles?
 - ii. Gennesaret saw Him in His glory even in His humanity; Nazareth saw only His humanity and couldn't see His glory.
 - iii. Gennesaret beheld Him as He was; Nazareth beheld Him as they thought Him to be.
- c. Do we recognize Him? Do we see Him as He truly is? Or do we hold Jesus to merely be another historical, religious figure? Just another man, another prophet, another good person?
- d. C.S. Lewis saw clearly the unjustified position of regarding Jesus as nothing more than a good person. Either He is who He said He is or He is a liar. You don't have the luxury of dismissing Him as the Christ while regarding Him as a prophet. He doesn't leave us with that option. A true prophet of God does not lie.
- e. John writes in his gospel ch1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."
- f. How do we recognize Jesus?

II. Gennesaret Implored Him, Nazareth Took Offense at Him

- a. Now we begin to see the vast differences in ramifications of rejection or reception. Gennesaret implored Him. Recognizing who he was, they sought His mercy and power. They asked Him for grace. They threw themselves upon His mercy.

- i. And notice how they implored Him. They didn't approach Jesus as if He owed them anything, as if they deserved His attention or time. They came to Christ in earnest humility. Just let us touch the lowest, smallest part of your garment.
 - ii. They knew His power and position, and they knew their need and condition. They not only recognized who He was; they recognized who they were. They were the undeserving beggars; He was the sufficient and able One.
 - iii. Their remarkable welcome in v35 is followed with remarkable faith in v36. They truly believed just a simple touch of Jesus's garment would suffice to make them whole. That remarkable belief in Jesus is what caused them to implore Jesus. They knew He was all that they need.
 - iv. Is that how we believe in Jesus? Is that how we view Jesus? Do we have such a great view of Jesus that we implore Him for His mercy. Do we understand our need? Are we like those of Gennesaret who truly believe just a touch of Jesus will save us, will make us whole?
- b. Or are we like those of Nazareth who rather than implore Him, take offense at Him? Who does He think He is to demand that we worship Him – that we surrender our lives to Him – that we forsake all and follow Him – that we take up a cross – that we deny ourselves? How dare He require me to die to myself that I might find life in Him!
- c. There are some who know that Jesus will take us just as we are but He loves us enough to never leave us as we are. And there are some who only want a Jesus who will not only take them just as they are but will endorse and approve of who they are. As with the woman caught in adultery and brought to Jesus, they want a Jesus that says "Neither do I condemn you," but they don't want a Jesus who says, "Now go and sin no more."
- d. Do we implore Him or do we take offense at Him?

III. Gennesaret Experienced Him; Nazareth Missed Him

- a. Speaking of vast, polar differences in ramifications, just contrast 14:36 with 13:58. And as many as touched it were made well. And He did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

- b. Gennesaret experienced the power and wonder and glory and mercy and grace of the Lord; Nazareth missed it, save only a few.
- c. How you see Him is how you know Him. If you see Him as Lord and Savior, you will know Him as Lord and Savior. If you see Him as the Son of God, you will know Him as the Son of God. But if to you He's just another person, then you'll only know Him as just another person. You won't know the Lord. You won't know the Savior. You won't know of His glory. You won't know Him.
- d. Unbelief or belief. Missing Him or being made well, being made whole by Him. Nazareth or Gennesaret. A Tale of Two Towns is a tale of everyone.

Conclusion