

# Unbelief that made even Jesus Marvel

Mark 6:1-6

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## Introduction

Today we will continue our sermon series from Mark's Gospel.

- Over the last few weeks, we have been looking at the remarkable majesty of Jesus in handling desperate situations.
  - He instantly calmed a storm with a mere word that had put terror in his seafaring disciples.
  - He drove out a legion of demons that had terrorised a whole community.
  - He healed a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years who had suffered many things from the physicians and had only gotten worse.
  - And He had raised a twelve year old girl from the dead so that she was immediately made well.
- In each instance, those who saw were left in utter amazement.
  - In each case they were struck by the majesty of the one who stood before them and who did these mighty works with such ease as one in complete authority.

But with Mark 6, we come to a passage where His majesty is not acknowledged.

- This time, *He* the one who is amazed.
- I have entitled the sermon, *Unbelief that made even Jesus Marvel*.

Listen as I read this passage to you, beginning in Mark 6:1-6.

- This is the word of God, so please pay careful attention.

**Mark 6:1-6:** Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. <sup>2</sup> 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! <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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.” <sup>5</sup> Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed *them*. <sup>6</sup> And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

May the LORD add His blessing to the reading and the preaching of His holy word.

## I. Consider here our Saviour's gracious desire to do good.

A. We are told in verse 1 that He came to His own country with His disciples.

1. His was the small village of Nazareth, about 25 miles southwest of Capernaum.
  - It was never mentioned in the Old Testament, in the rabbinic literature of the Mishnah and Talmud, or by the Jewish historian Josephus—or anyone else really.
  - Archeologists have concluded that it was an obscure hamlet of earthen dwellings in sixty acres of a rocky hillside with a total population of 500 at most.

2. Some of you are familiar with the nostalgia of returning to the place where you grew up, especially when you have only been away for a year or two.
  - This is all the stronger when the place you come from is a small place where many of your relations still live and where you know everybody.
  - Jesus likely knew everyone in this place.
    - He had lived there for nearly thirty years, growing up there and working as a carpenter.
    - He had probably worked for many of them and he was well acquainted with their quirks and their laugh and their way of life.
    - His mother and brothers were there, and his sisters, we are told in verse 3, still lived there too, probably married now.
      - We must remember that He was more human than any of us are, for we are corrupted by sin. He experienced the fullness of what feel only in part.
3. Think of the great love that He had for these people—for He, more than any of us, knows what it means to love His neighbour as Himself.
  - How He cared about each one of them—
  - How He must have prayed for them over the years.
  - He dearly loved these people. There was no malice in Him toward them.

B. Look at how He endeavours to do them good.

1. In verse 2, we are told that when the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue.
  - His great desire was to persuade them that the kingdom of God was a hand, and that they should repent and believe the gospel.
    - That was His message to all in every place—surely to them, His people.
  - How earnestly He must have prayed before He delivered His message.
    - As a man, He did not know, unless it was specifically revealed to Him, how His message would be received.
      - As the Son of God, He knows all things; but as man, He knows only what is revealed to Him.
    - And as a sinless man, He certainly yearned for His gospel to be welcomed and embraced to the salvation of souls.
2. That He taught on this occasion is all the more a loving act in that He had been previously rejected when He endeavoured to preach to them.
  - In Luke, we have His visit to Nazareth before He set out on His Galilean ministry and settled in Capernaum.
    - On that occasion, He was by without the twelve because He had not yet called them.
    - He had been rudely received—as they had sought to drive Him off a cliff when He claimed that He was the Servant Isaiah wrote about and that many in Israel would reject Him while the Gentiles would come to Him.
    - It appears that they would have killed Him if they could.
  - But now a year or so later, He is back and He renews His effort to preach to them.

- He will not be hindered by their abuse of Him.
    - His love will not allow it.
    - Perhaps they will listen to Him now that He has been acknowledged elsewhere as a prophet and where news has reached them of the marvellous signs and wonders that He had done.
    - Maybe they had even heard about the daughter of the synagogue elder that He had recently raised from the dead.
  - 3. Surely, He was also ready to heal and to deliver those who were in need.
    - His heart of compassion was always stirred when He saw those who were sick and demonised.
- C. Know that our Lord Jesus still delights to do good for others.
1. He has sent us to do good in His name.
    - When you go to serve, when you go to encourage, when preachers go to preach, when you give to those in need, when you seek to be an example and pray for opportunities tell others of your hope...
      - Jesus is with you—delighting in what you are doing.
      - He loves for His gospel to go forth now just as He loved for it to go forth when He was here.
  2. He intercedes for us in heaven.
    - He ever lives to make intercession.
    - Know that He is doing so, even when you so much as give a cup of cold water in His name.
    - He prays for our church, for our worship services, for each one of us to be blessed.

TRANS> He is out for our blessing for our good.

## II. “But *He* can’t be our Saviour. We know who *He* is.”

- A. This was the conclusion the people of Nazareth reached.
- Look at verses 2-3: **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! <sup>3</sup> 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.**
1. They were offended at Him, it would seem because they knew Him.
    - As Jesus says in verse 4, “**A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.**”
      - They said, “How can He be anything special?”
      - “We know Him and He is just one of us.”
      - “He is nobody special—He is only a carpenter, not a messenger from God.”
  2. They said this even though they could see both His wisdom and His authority.
    - What wonderful things they saw! It says:

- a. They were astonished at the wisdom by which He spoke.
    - They heard words that rang with authority and truth.
    - They heard words that were full of grace and hope.
    - His words were words that penetrated them and showed them all that they had ever done.
  - b. They were also astonished at the mighty works that He did.
    - Not only had they heard reports of His miracles, but He had also healed a few people among them as verse 5 indicates.
  - c. The evidence was all there that He was from God.
    - It was right before their face.
    - They could not deny it.
3. They inquired where He got these things, for they knew His background.
- They knew that He had not studied under any famous rabbi or even been to university... but there He was, speaking with wisdom and performing mighty signs and wonders.
- a. The answer was obvious—
    - His teaching and authority had to be of divine origin.
    - But they refused to accept that.
  - b. They concluded He could not be anyone special because He was just one of them.
    - They *knew* who He was.
    - He did not meet their criteria for the Messiah.
    - He did not meet their criteria for what the Messiah ought to be.
- B. This problem is actually much bigger than Nazareth.
- 1. The Jewish nation as a whole rejected Him for the same reason.
    - He can't be the Messiah—He died on the cross.
    - He can't be the Messiah, none of the chief priests and scribes know who He is.
    - He must conform to their concept of what the Messiah ought to be. He must save them from the Roman dominion at once, not go to a cross.
  - 2. Many of the Greeks could not accept Him as a both God and man—God the Son now taking on the nature of man while still remaining God.
    - To them, this was absurd and scandalous.
    - He can't be the Saviour of the world that He is preached to be.
      - We know that God cannot take to Himself human flesh.
      - He does not measure up to our requirements.
  - 3. And so today... there is another related error—many will have Him as man—but refuse to acknowledge that He is God.
    - Often, they take Him as the poster boy for their cause—whatever it may be.
      - He is the ideal of whatever they want Him to be rather than the Son of God who comes with authority to call us to repent and believe the gospel that there is forgiveness through Him and a kingdom of righteousness.
    - They refuse to accept that He can call them out as sinners who need to be saved by Him.
      - No, to be the right kind of Saviour, He must conform to what they want Him to be.

4. Perhaps saddest of all are those who grow up in the church and will not have Him.
  - They have heard His glory declared and they know all about Him.
    - They are familiar with what the Bible says about Him—and they know that He is not what they need.
      - He cannot be a Saviour for them.

TRANS> So all these conclude: “*He* can’t be our Saviour. We know who *He* is.”

- What folly for us to suppose that we know what God must do to save us!
  - We are the ones who need to be saved.
  - It’s not that He can’t be our Saviour because we know who He is...

### III. Actually, He can’t be our Saviour because of our unbelief.

A. We are told that it was the unbelief of the people at Nazareth that kept Him from doing many miracles among them.

- Verse 5 says: **Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed *them*.**
  1. It was not that He was unable.
    - He had authority to heal the sick and to cast out demons.
    - His power was the same regardless of what people might think of Him.
  2. But the pride of these people kept them from coming to Him because they refused to acknowledge His authority.
    - To come for healing or expulsion of demons would require them to humble themselves before Him and acknowledge His authority.
    - They were so careful to protect their pride that they deprived themselves of the benefits of His healing ministry.
  3. You have no real basis for your unbelief.
    - The evidence is all there—the truth itself attests to you.
    - And yet you hang on to your pride and refuse to believe.

B. How destructive unbelief is. It is the most self-destructive of all things.

1. By unbelief, sinners deprive themselves of the forgiveness of sin...
  - They find some fault with God’s remedy—some defect in their mind with the Saviour and they refuse to come to Him.
  - So they go on in their guilt, without any remedy.
    - Oh yes, they may try to deny their guilt—but that will not help them on the day of judgment.
    - A murderer may convince himself for a while that murder is not wrong, but that will not help him when he stands before the judge.
  - If you do not come to Christ for forgiveness, you will have to bear the full punishment of God for all your sin.
    - There will be no escape for you if you reject God’s remedy.
    - The outcome will be eternal torment in the Lake of Fire.
2. What blessings you will forfeit!
  - a. You forfeit the blessings of this life...

- The comfort of free forgiveness now...
  - The joy of serving the Lord, even the privilege of persecution in this life.
  - The fellowship of the saints and communion with God.
  - The growth in holiness and new life, and in the knowledge of Christ.
  - You forfeit living in the hope of Christ's return and of living in the assurance of His love.
    - You forfeit all of this because of your proud unbelief—because you find some defect in Christ.
- b. You also forfeit the blessings of the life to come...
- The resurrection of our body to immortality...
  - A new heavens and new earth where righteousness is found...
  - The delight of living in God's house where His glory is seen and where His kindness is constantly experienced.
  - The glorious company of all the people of God made perfect in love and righteousness so that they all love the way their Saviour does.

TRANS> What folly it is to let unbelief keep you from the one and only Saviour.

#### IV. Such unbelief caused even Jesus to marvel.

- Verse 6 says: **And He marvelled because of their unbelief.**

A. This is very striking. Jesus marvelled!

1. We have seen Jesus doing signs and wonders that made the people around Him marvel, but He always seems to be unimpressed about it.
  - Recall in our text last week how after raising Jairus's daughter, the girl's parents and the three disciples who saw it were **"overcome with great amazement."**
    - But for Jesus, it was as simple as calling a child to get up in the morning after a good rest.
    - Remember how He told them, as they were awestruck, to get the girl something to eat, because she was hungry.
2. There was only one other time that this word *marvel* is used of Jesus...
  - And that was with the presence of faith—in a Roman centurion.
  - Perhaps you remember—this man, a rich and powerful man, who had built a synagogue for the Jews—who sent to Jesus to request the healing of his servant.
    - And do you remember what he did when he heard that Jesus was coming?
      - Luke 7:6-9 tells us: **the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. <sup>7</sup> Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." <sup>9</sup> When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"**

- It appears that Jesus did not expect this. He marvelled!
    - We must remember that He was not omniscient in His human nature—He had revelation given to Him by prophecy, but His divine mind was not mingled with His human brain.
    - Therefore, He was amazed when He saw faith like this in a Gentile and it gave Him great pleasure to anticipate the promise that His Father had given the nations to Him for His inheritance.
3. But here at Nazareth Jesus marvelled at their unbelief.
- He marvels at such stubbornness... that these who know Him and these people that He knows should be so hardened as to reject Him.
  - They knew Him—they know His integrity, they knew His sanity, they knew His character—He had never cheated any of them or told a lie.
    - They know His love and His kindness who loved them in their village for all those years—what a delight He must have been!
      - They recognise His wisdom from above—and they see His mighty deeds...
        - Yet, they refuse to believe.
        - How could this be?
        - It made Him marvel.

B. You ought to marvel at unbelief too, whenever you see it.

1. Sometimes we don't stop to consider how absurd it really is...
  - a. We all know that God made us—it is a fact that cannot be denied.
    - We can see His eternal power and divine nature in the things He has made.
    - We suppress this truth with outlandish theories and speculations that are preposterous for even a child to believe.
  - b. And we all know that we have sinned against God.
    - We are desperately moral no matter how hard we try to deny it.
  - c. And then, if by God's grace, the gospel should come our way...
    - It is a marvel that we should hear that God sent His Son into the world to die for our sins—to be punished in our place.
      - And that we should see that His followers testify that God raised Him from the dead and that they died for preaching that message—forgetting all sorts of advantages they might have had in the world because they preached that message—
      - And where the message is one where they confess that they are sinners who are in need of His forgiveness and deliverance—not that they are great men, but that they are sinful men who need to be saved by Him.
    - Here is God's way of salvation, clearly revealed in the world...
      - And yet it is not believed.
      - It is insane that every human being does not rush to Christ as soon as the word of the gospel comes to him.
        - It is something to marvel at.
        - It is something that Jesus marvelled at.

- So go ahead and marvel.
    - Sometimes I think we are too hesitant to marvel about this.
      - Perhaps we are thinking that others must see something that we are missing.
        - But it is not true—unbelief is insanity of the highest order.
        - So go ahead and marvel.
          - Don't let yourself be duped—you know that it is insane.
2. But of course you must be careful about *how* you marvel.
  - a. You must not marvel in a smug or proud way—no, not that at all...
    - 1) You know that but for the grace of God, the same unbelief is in you.
      - God's word teaches us that faith is the gift of God.
        - It teaches us that there are no grounds for boasting.
        - You were dead in your sins until He made you alive.
        - You did not change your heart or put a new Spirit within you.
        - You did not cause yourself to be born from above.
      - The only reason you believe is because, like Lydia, God opened your heart to believe...
        - because He chose you freely in His plan to be redeemed...
        - because He appointed you before you had any say for belief of the truth.
      - If He had not called you with that divine call of His that brings about what it calls for, you would be in unbelief.
        - Whether you are a child of the covenant like Jacob and Esau, or an outsider to God's people from the world...
          - If you are in Christ today, it is because God caused the light of His glorious gospel to shine in your heart.
  - It is only because He has changed you that you can now see how insane unbelief is—now that you believe, go ahead and marvel.
  - 2) But really, you should marvel even more about the unbelief that remains in you—marvel about that more than you marvel about the unbelief in the world.
    - Perhaps it is even more amazing that, if God has opened your heart to believe, you still have so much unbelief.
      - How often do you insanely live as those the treasures of this world are of more value than the treasures of heaven...
        - so much so that you don't even bother to read the word or attend the services at your church—and if you do, you do so with so little hunger and so little prayer.
      - You come as if the treasure there is worth very little—you are more eager to see something on Facebook than to hear from your Lord...
    - We could go on about our unbelief... as believers...
      - But when we see the unbelievers of this world, yes, we should marvel that they refuse to see the obvious...
        - but not without marvelling that we who have been called into God's fellowship continue in so much unbelief.



- b. And you must marvel at unbelief, not with glee—but with deep sorrow.
  - Yes, there is a form of laughter that is appropriate, at the insanity of unbelief...
  - But there should be much sorrow—for these are your neighbours and you should weep for them.
  - You should plead with God for them and you should also plead with them as you have opportunity.

TRANS> Let's return to look at the marvelling of our LORD in this regard.

C. His was to be sure a marvelling that filled Him with sorrow.

1. With the centurion, it was an amazed gladness that He had—
  - He marvelled at the faith that He saw in this man!
  - It filled Him with hope and gladness about the Father's promise that at the time appointed, the Gentiles would be brought in.
    - Jesus prays for this from heaven, and He rejoices to see them flooding into His kingdom.
2. But with His own people, He marvelled at what He was losing. He was a man of sorrows.
  - He went to Nazareth, to the people He knew so well, with earnest prayer as He arrived and went before them to preach in the synagogue.
    - Perhaps now they would hear Him—how could they not believe now?
    - How He loved these people.
  - But to His amazement, they heard His wisdom and they saw His authority, and instead of believing they were offended.
    - What pain it must have brought to Him who loved them so well—so much more than you have ever loved anybody.
3. O brothers and sisters, know that He ever lives to make intercession for us—that He is still praying and still yearning for the lost to come to Him.
  - When you go in prayer to speak of Him to a friend, He is yearning and praying with you.
  - Every time we gather for church, He is yearning and praying for the word to work in all of us and in those who do not believe.
    - Join Him in those prayers and those yearnings.
    - See that you are faithful in your attendance, in your prayers for blessing, in your desire for God's Spirit to work among us.
      - Do not bring grief to Him by your indifference.
  - I know that many of you have health problems that keep you from attending both of our services on Sunday.
    - But let me urge you, when you cannot be here, listen to the sermons at home because these are the sermons that God has for us as a congregation.
    - They are sermons that are prayed over for your sake—by our Lord and by me as your minister who delivers the word—sometimes I pray for each of you.
      - And your elders and many of your fellow members pray for you.
      - See then, that you not only attend, but also that you receive the word in faith, believing.
        - That Jesus might marvel at your belief instead of at your unbelief.
        - How glad you will make Him!