

SERMON FOR JULY 4, 2021

TEXT: MARK 6: 1-6

THEME: A CRISIS OF FAITH

He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. **2** And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? **3** Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. **4** And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." **5** And 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.

In the name of Jesus:

When someone from your hometown goes on and accomplishes things in their life, we say that the person has "done good." By this time in Jesus' ministry, He has done a lot of good for a lot of people. Mark doesn't record this event, but John does in his Gospel, Jesus' first miracle, at Cana, where He turned water into wine. But that wasn't the only thing that Jesus had done. He had done good, we saw it last week when Jesus heard Jairus' plea for the life of his daughter, and even though the daughter died, Jesus raised her to life again. And in the midst of all of this, a woman with a blood disorder, who had this disorder for twelve years and spent all of her money looking for a cure,

suffering at the expense of many doctors, when this woman touched the threads of Jesus' garment, she was healed! The news of these miracles spread like wildfire. Yes, you could say that Jesus had "done good."

And now the hometown hero was returning home, to the town of Nazareth. How does a hometown welcome a hero? In our country and culture, we would throw a parade, give him the key to the city, recognize him by having the mayor issue a proclamation. In New York City, they would throw a ticker tape parade.

But for Jesus? There was none of that. Just listen to how Mark records the scene: "Jesus went away from there (the place where He had done the miracles we just talked about) and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him." Jesus taught in the synagogue, and the many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? **3** Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And then note this response: "**And they took offense at him.**"

There was no hometown welcome for the hometown hero, Jesus. Instead, Jesus was rejected, which is why Jesus said to the people of His

hometown: “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.” And here is the kicker: 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.”

The people of Nazareth knew Jesus, or should I say, they thought that they knew Jesus. Instead of celebrating Jesus’ ministry, the crowds disparaged Him. They looked for reasons not to believe in Jesus. They said: “We know this guy, He is the son of Mary, and here are all of his other siblings. We grew up with Jesus, and we know that there is nothing spectacular about Him, rather, Jesus is just like any ordinary Joe coming from the town of Nazareth. They refused to believe in Jesus. And the result of their unbelief? Jesus did no mighty work there, except for healing a few people here and there. **And Mark records Jesus’ reaction: He marveled, or was amazed, at their unbelief.**

I suspect Jesus marvels at our own unbelief today. Everything we have, all that is ours, is a gift to us by God. We didn’t bring ourselves into this world, God gave us physical life. And in this physical earthly life He has blessed us richly, with all that we need to support this body and life. Clothing, shoes,

food, drink, house and home, relatives and all that we hold dear. God gives His good gifts to us and continues to give His good gifts to us.

In spite of all that we have, we continue to show our lack of faith, our unbelief in not trusting in the Lord. We have and yet we want more. We get and it is still not enough. We worry, we are anxious, we are afraid of the future, not trusting in the Lord and His promises. Oh, we know His promises, we can quote His promises, that He is our Helper, that He loves us, and He will never leave nor forsake us. But we still worry, we still complain, we still lack faith.

There are times in our lives when we have a crisis of faith. A lack of faith. We know we should believe, but we find it difficult to do so. We cry out like the father who had a demon possessed son, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!"

In times when we have a crisis of faith, our gracious Lord Jesus Christ doesn't point us to ourselves, telling us to get our act together. He doesn't scold. Instead, He forgives, and invites us to believe. For you see, faith in simply receiving what Jesus has to offer. Jesus loves you with an everlasting love. He died on the cross for your forgiveness. His shed blood forgives you all

of your sins. He died for you, and He died for all. He has the hairs on the head of every person numbered. Jesus loves you, He loves everyone.

And so Jesus gently invites you to believe. He stands at the door and knocks. He doesn't use a battering ram, He gently knocks, inviting you to receive what He has to offer. The reason why Jesus couldn't do a miracle in His hometown is because the people wouldn't receive what Jesus was offering. They refused the gifts that God had for them.

So here is Jesus' invitation. Receive what He has to offer. For you are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, this is a gift from God, your salvation is not of your own doing. The faith that God requires God gives. He gives you faith in Jesus in the waters of your Baptism. The Spirit speaks to you in His Word, for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ. He feeds your faith by giving to you the true body and blood of His Son Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper.

So when you have a crisis of faith, a lack of faith, a weak faith, don't run from the Lord. Instead, return to the Lord. Seek the Lord where He can be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Receive a stronger faith in Jesus by coming to church regularly, by hearing the Word of God repeatedly, by going to the Lord's Supper as often as it is offered. Go to where Jesus is, in His Word

and Sacraments, to receive what He freely gives, faith, forgiveness, and eternal life. For when we receive Jesus, we have everything we need for this life and in the next.

Amen