

June 15, 2025

“AND HIS OWN DID NOT RECEIVE HIM”

Mark 6:1-6a

(11 of 22 in a series through Mark 1-9)

When Aaron and I were at Southern Seminary, we had a classmate named Matt who never spoke when we were in class. We would gather to discuss, debate, and argue, and everyone would be chiming in, but not Matt. I mean, he never said anything. I reasoned that he must have been shy, or perhaps he just didn't feel like he could hang in the discussions. I didn't know. But then the oddest thing happened. A few years after Aaron and I finished up at Southern, Matt published a book. I mean, that's not completely shocking. We were all there doing academic work. But then he published another, and then another, and then another. Last I checked, he has twenty books published or in process of being published.

And I remember when these books started rolling out with his name on the cover, I went into Aaron's office and said, "Can you believe this is Matt? I mean, you never heard him speak either, right?" Aaron and I concluded that at some point he must have made the decision that he wouldn't use words unless they were going to be published. I just had the hardest time reconciling that silent, seemingly shy kid with the guy that cranks out a couple of published academic works every year. There was no way in my mind to reconcile the Matt cranking out those books with the quiet, seemingly shy kid I knew in our classes.

That's kind of how the people in the town of Nazareth felt in the story recorded in the text we're looking at this morning, Mark 6:1-6a. We've already seen that Jesus was growing in popularity in measures that are hard to imagine. The crowds had been so eager to get close to him and touch him on occasion that he'd had to get in a boat and out in the water just to shield himself from them crushing him in their desire to be close to him. I mean, the Beatles or Elvis had nothing on him when they were in their heyday. And then Jesus went to his hometown, and things weren't anything like that.

Why not? Well, it's because they knew Jesus. They knew his dad, his mom, brothers, and sisters. He was just one of them. It would be like if some kid had grown up in our church community and then made it big in the entertainment field so that people clamored to be around him. But when he came around here, he'd just be that kid we all know, took care of in nursery, comforted when his parents left church without him that one Sunday, and, you know, all the stuff kids around here experience. It'd be hard to go from thinking of someone you feel so familiar with to wrapping your head around the idea that they're something so much different than anyone else. And that's what the people of Nazareth were feeling when Jesus came back home. They didn't see some bigshot when they looked at Jesus. They just saw Jesus, the kid that Joseph and Mary had—perhaps the kid they believed Mary had conceived out of wedlock—which may have been the very thing they were suggesting when they referred to Jesus as the "son of Mary" since typically one would identify someone through his father. Again, in their minds, he was nothing to get excited about and maybe even someone to deride.

Therefore, Mark tells us that when Jesus came and began to teach in the synagogue, demonstrating amazing wisdom and displaying mighty works by his hands, their response wasn't to fall down and worship him or commit to be his followers. Their response was to say, "He can't be all that. We know him. We know his family. He's nothing special." And Mark says that they took offense at him. Therefore, Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown among his relatives and in his own household" (v. 4). After all, we've already been told that his own family members thought he was out of his mind. Therefore, Jesus laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them, but otherwise he did nothing. That was Jesus' homecoming.

So why is this little episode of Jesus' rejection by those in his hometown given to us? What are we supposed to see and learn from it? I think a few things. Let me note a few points of application for us this morning. First, this episode reminds us that we must guard against familiarity obstructing God's glorious nature and the gospel.

We must guard against familiarity obstructing God's glorious nature and the gospel

At the core of why they were rejecting Jesus was their familiarity with him. They knew him. Watched him grow up. Knew his family. Therefore, they were blinded by that familiarity to who he really was. This should be a warning to us.

Phil Robertson, who came to fame with the show *Duck Dynasty*, died a couple of weeks ago, and when I heard of his death, I immediately reflected on an interview I'd heard him give some time back. He was talking about when someone first shared the gospel with him. I've forgotten most of the details, but I remember him saying that someone approached him, told him the details of the gospel—that the God who existed eternally created the world and everything in it, then man sinned and rightly fell under God's just judgment, but instead of simply condemning everyone to suffer his eternal wrath, God sent his Son into the world who took on a human nature, lived a perfect life, died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, and then rose from the grave back to life on Easter Sunday morning so that anyone who repents of their sins and places their faith in the crucified and risen God-man can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Then, and this is the part that stuck in my head since that interview, Phil said that the man, after sharing that, asked, "Have you ever heard that?" And Phil responded, "No, and that seems like a pretty big thing never to have heard."

And it is a big thing, isn't it? This is an amazing truth. There is a God who created this world, including us, and because we rebelled against him, he has every right to destroy and punish all of us. But instead, he did this amazing thing and redeemed us so that we're forgiven, loved by him, and awaiting the day when he'll raise our bodies and bring us to him to live forever in a new creation where there's no Satan, sin, or death.

And we could say more. This glorious God has promised that he'll work everything in our lives for our good and care for us in every way as we seek first his kingdom, withholding nothing from us

that he knows is for our good. That's crazy. I mean that's ridiculous. Can you imagine how that sounds to someone who is unfamiliar with the truths of the Bible? If they could hear without their sin blocking their eyes and ears, they'd say, "That sounds too good to be true."

Well, brothers and sisters, these true things must never stop sounding too good to be true to us, or we'll have reached a point where our familiarity with our glorious God and his work in the gospel has obscured what should continually cause us to marvel, give thanks, and rejoice at. If we truly see these realities without obstructing their glory (by our familiarity with them), then it will always feel fitting that we give thanks and praise to our God. And that must be our stance. We must not allow our familiarity with our God and his gospel to obstruct us from seeing the glory of both. Second, we must recognize that our lack of faith can cause us to miss the Lord's blessings.

We must recognize that our lack of faith can cause us to miss the Lord's blessings

The result of the unbelief of those in Jesus' hometown is that Jesus "could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them" (v. 5). In other words, they missed out on many potential blessings the Lord could have brought their way because of their lack of faith.

Now, let me note something about what Mark tells us here. When he writes that Jesus "*could* do no mighty work there," it's because Jesus *chose* not to do any mighty work there. Otherwise, he would have been honoring their unbelief and rejection of him, something Jesus was unwilling to do. He could do no mighty work, in other words, because he *would* do no mighty work under the conditions of his reception—of lack thereof.

We can't conclude that he could do no mighty works there because somehow we have the power to limit the omnipotent Lord. God doesn't need to consult us before exercising his power. He created this entire universe before any of us were around to believe he could do so. But, again, he *could not* work miracles in the same way that God *cannot* sin. To do so would be to violate his nature. Similarly, to bless these who were spurning our Lord is something that Jesus *would* not do. As we noted last week, our Lord demands that we believe.

So this is another important reminder for us. Our lack of faith can cause us to miss out on the Lord's blessings. How many of us, for example, can tell stories where in light of the Bible's teaching on giving, we gave? And we gave not because we had no needs but just had a little extra and gave. Rather, we gave sacrificially. We gave, thinking, "I need things that I can't account for." We gave, even though there were needs that we didn't have covered in the budget. And then we can tell stories of God's amazing provision. Many of us can. I know we can because I've sat around with my small group on occasion, and we've multiplied stories about making decisions to give bountifully and then becoming recipients of the Lord's bountiful provision. That's an example of an act of faith leading to great blessing.

And yet, some can't tell those stories because you're just unwilling to trust the Lord. You have much more confidence in your ability to try to take care of all your needs than you do in the Lord to provide for your needs. Don't continue down that road of a lack of faith. Trust him. Trust his Word. Believe his promises. And let that faith move you to obey, and you'll see the Lord's blessings. I don't mean you'll get rich. I'm not preaching the prosperity gospel. But the Bible repeatedly gives promises about the Lord's care for us. Jesus tells us in Luke 6:38 to give and in the measure we use, it'll be measured to us in return. Paul tells the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 9 that the one who sows (i.e. gives) sparingly will reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Don't rob yourself of blessings that the Lord would joyfully pour out on you because of your unwillingness to place your faith in him and his promises. It may be that you're in a place right now where the Lord can do no mighty work because he doesn't want to honor your lack of trust in him. Our lack of faith can cause us to miss the Lord's blessings. Third, we must see that Jesus is at the center of all things.

We must see that Jesus is at the center of all things

The reason I want to note this is because when Jesus began his ministry in Mark's gospel, the first thing he said was, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). If you'd asked every supposedly faithful Jew in Nazareth in the first century, "Are you looking forward to the arrival of God's kingdom, when he'll make everything new and remove all the effects of sin?" every one of them would have said, "Absolutely." And yet, here the people of Nazareth, rejecting Jesus. What they were missing is that Jesus at the center of all things. He brings God's kingdom because he is God's king. You can't reject the king and get the kingdom.

Think about how Jesus-centered the Bible is. In Colossians 1:16 Paul tells us, "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and *for him*." Did you hear that? Everything in all creation was created *for* Jesus. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:9-10 that God has ordained history so that it's leading up to the day when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that his exalted Son, Jesus Christ, is Lord. In Psalm 2:12 we're commanded by our God, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in his way." And some people have the audacity to ask, "Do you think people can fail to believe in Jesus and still be saved?" Any biblical author would have responded by asking, "Are you kidding me?" Recently one prominent biblical scholar suggested that you could deny that Jesus rose from the dead and still be a Christian. There may be nothing more unbiblical than that.

And that kind of erroneous thinking is built upon the idea that something is more important in all the world than Jesus Christ being exalted and glorified. But nothing is. Everything is about Jesus and him being glorified. And, brothers and sisters, he is worthy of all blessing, honor, and glory. Jesus is no mere hoop to jump through so that we can get the joys of heaven. Jesus is the goal. He is the aim. He is at the center of all things. All things exist *for* him. Knowing him is eternal life (John 17:3).

So, putting everything we've said so far together, we never need to get over the thrill of who Jesus is and what he has done. We should be eager to proclaim Jesus to others and to praise, trust, and obey him ourselves. Jesus is at the center of all things. Those in Nazareth thought they could dismiss Jesus and know God's blessings, and they couldn't be more wrong. All things have been created by him, through him, and for him. All things are about him. And on that note, one final thing we should note is that Jesus' rejection was part of God's promised plan.

We must understand that Jesus' rejection was part of God's promised plan

If you were to read Mark's gospel and be unfamiliar with it, you're probably finding yourself really cheering Jesus on by the end of chapter five. I mean, look at all that he's done. He's healed the lady with the issue of blood and dealt with her gently and warmly. He's delivered the demon-possessed man who lived among the tombs, utterly transforming his life. He's healed lepers. He's forgiven sins. He's amazing. And yet here, in Nazareth, he gets rejected. And so if you were unfamiliar with Scripture and simply reading this gospel, you might think, "Oh no. I really hoped things would go well with him."

But the reality is that Jesus' rejection is the fulfillment of a pattern that we find throughout Scripture. From the beginning, when Abel offered a sacrifice pleasing to the Lord and his brother, Cain, didn't, we see that the righteous are persecuted by the unrighteous. Cain killed Abel. But it doesn't stop there. Ishmael persecuted Isaac. And Paul tells in Galatians 4:29 that "Just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now." That is a pattern that was started with Cain and Abel and repeated with Ishmael and Isaac was always repeated. God would send righteous prophets to his unrighteous people, and they'd be persecuted and killed. When Jesus spoke to the Pharisees in Luke 11:45-52, he said to them that they always killed the Lord's prophets, from Abel to Zechariah—which was a reference to the first and last book of the Old Testament. He was saying that they've always done this. And Jesus would be no exception. Every righteous prophet that died was simply a type or shadow of the ultimate righteous one who would be sent from God and face persecution and death. Jesus' rejection was no accident. This isn't a text that should lead us to doubt that Jesus is God's promised king. It's a text that assures us that Jesus is God's righteous king.

In fact, Jesus' rejection and crucifixion was all part of God's plan. No one took Jesus' life from him. He laid it down because in dying, he was paying for our sins so that we might be forgiven. His death was necessary for us to have life. And so Jesus' rejection in Mark 6 shouldn't lead us to doubt that Jesus is God's righteous king. It should serve to assure us that Jesus is God's righteous king. He is the King who was promised that would come and die for his people so that he might free us from God's wrath and raise us to life.

But Jesus' rejection is a reminder of something more as well. It's a reminder that that we shouldn't anticipate the response of the world toward us as followers of Jesus to be different. Jesus will tell us in regard to his own rejection and persecution that we're not above our master, and it's enough that we get to be like him. That is to say, like him *in his suffering*. He'll tell us that

it is by being faithful to him, even if it costs us shedding our blood and losing our lives, that we'll find ourselves victorious over death just as he was.

Therefore, we must recognize that as those who are united with Jesus by faith so that what is true of him is true of us, we will face persecution and rejection, as Jesus does here. It's always been this way, going all the way back to Abel. And yet death isn't defeat. It is victory. Jesus' charge to us is to be faithful to death, and we'll receive the crown of life. Every time a believer dies and the enemy celebrates, the Lord simply welcomes us home. And when he raises our bodies from the grave, it'll be clear to every enemy that our deaths should have never been seen as victory to them. In fact, the only way the enemy sees any victory is if we decide that we'll stop obeying Jesus in order to avoid persecution. Be sure, the devil isn't persecuting in hopes that you'll faithfully endure and die. He's persecuting in hopes that you'll turn away from Jesus. Following Jesus to death simply reminds him of his defeat. Satan wasn't rooting for Jesus' death. That's why when Peter tried to suggest Jesus shouldn't die, Jesus responded, "Get behind me, Satan." The devil knew that the obedience of the Son to the point of death signaled the devil's defeat. And it is enough for us to get to join Jesus in that.

Therefore, let's never get over the glorious nature of our God and his gospel. Let's live our lives, trusting in him to the point that we're constantly choosing to obey him, even when it's hard. Let's make sure that Jesus remains at the center of our lives and honoring him as the center of our aspirations. And let's follow and obey him until he returns or we die. And if we do so, we'll certainly not be disappointed. And let's remind ourselves why that is as we come to the table and proclaim our victory over death because of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. Amen.