

Amazing rejection.

Text: Mark 6:1-6 for 7/8/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

There are many things you can see in this world that could be called "amazing." You can see amazing sights in nature, such as the Grand Canyon or Rock Mountain National Park. You can see amazing architecture such as the Great Pyramids of Egypt or the Statue of Liberty. You can even see amazing feats of engineering and design such as the worlds highest bridge, the Beipanjiang Bridge in China, which stands 1854 feet above the river valley that it spans.

Yet there is one thing that most of us would not consider "amazing," and that is rejection. Being rejected by a person or a group is not something we consider so out of the ordinary that we would call it amazing. But as the Gospel writer Mark records for us Jesus work in his hometown, what we see happen to our Lord, we need to realize can also happen to us. There in Nazareth we see ...

Theme: Amazing rejection

I. Jesus was rejected

II. Don't be surprised when you are rejected

As Jesus began his ministry he made the city of Capernaum his base of operations. Located on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum is where Jesus began teaching, preaching, healing the sick and driving out demons. From Capernaum Jesus went out into the surrounding villages to preach the good news, eventually making his way back to his home town of Nazareth.

While Jesus was in Nazareth he went to the synagogue to preach and teach. The message Jesus proclaimed there was one of law and gospel. The Gospel writer Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus preached about that day. For the content of his message we have to go to the Gospel of Luke. Luke tells us that Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah where it says: **"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"** (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus then told the people, **"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"** (Luke 4:21). Jesus proclaimed the gospel, the good news that he was the Savior God had promised. Luke goes on to tell us that Jesus then proclaimed a message of law. Jesus spoke of how the people of Israel rejected God's promises of a Savior, so God gave his promises to others; foreigners who came to faith through those promises and received God's gift of salvation. Jesus was warning his listeners not to reject the message.

Mark tells us that **"many who heard him were amazed"** (v. 2). This was not a, "Wow, Jesus is an awesome preacher" kind of amazement. This was the, "Who does this guy think he is?" kind of amazement. The people of Nazareth had known Jesus almost his entire life. Now he was telling them he is the Savior and that they should repent of their sins!? The people's

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amazement quickly turned into resentment. We are told, **“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him** (vs. 2, 3). The word translated “took offense” is the Greek word from which we get our English word “scandal.” A scandal is something that offends people’s norms or ideals. What Jesus said was scandalous because he was saying that he was the Messiah, the one God promised to send to save the people of Israel. That went against these people’s ideals because many in Israel believed the Messiah was going to be a powerful king who would come and destroy Israel’s earthly enemies and restore Israel to power. Jesus was no king. These people of Nazareth only saw Jesus as Mary’s son, with brothers and sister whom they knew. To the people of his hometown Jesus was nothing but a carpenter, and that is all he would ever be. They rejected the idea that Jesus was the Savior. The people of Nazareth rejected Jesus and his message.

Do Jesus words ever “amaze” us? Do we ever start to say of Jesus, “Who do you think you are?” Like the people of Nazareth are we perhaps a little too familiar with Jesus? When our Lord uses his words to point out our sins do we ever act astonished? Do we ever “take offense” at Jesus when he tells us to repent of all our sins? Do we feel “scandalized” by Jesus words? He’s supposed to be our friend, isn’t he? Shouldn’t your friends cut you a little slack? Shouldn’t your friends overlook your little flaws and mistakes? Jesus is all-knowing. He knows we are not perfect, so he should allow us to have a few little sins in our lives, shouldn’t he?

We hear Christ’s words of law, and because of our familiarity with Jesus, we either become upset that he would point those things out, or we simply ignore what he says. Since Jesus already paid for our sins we feel we don’t have to listen to the rest of his words. As his believers do we sometime act like we are entitled to only hear only the gospel? To accept only the gospel is to reject a large part of what Jesus tells us. When we reject part of Jesus’ words we are really rejecting them all. To reject Jesus’ words is to reject Jesus. If you don’t have Jesus, you don’t have forgiveness or eternal life.

Don’t be like the people of Nazareth and reject Christ. Instead, believe him! Believe him when he speaks of how our sins have separated us from God. And then believe him when he tells you that he is the one who paid for all of those sins. Believe him when he tells you how he has fulfilled all of the promises God made through his prophets. Trust Jesus when he tells you that his life was lived in place of your life, and that he laid down his life for you, his friends. Especially believe your Lord when he says from the cross, **“It is finished”** (John 19:30). With those words Christ left no sin unpaid. By his sacrificial death our Savior even paid for all those times we foolishly rejected him. Believe and trust in Jesus, the promised Savior of God, who has take away your sins, and now offers you forgiveness and eternal life.

What Jesus did for us, and for the whole world, is something truly amazing. He willingly sacrificed himself to save us from death and hell. Now he freely offers his salvation to everyone. This amazing news of Jesus saving work is something that we want to share with the people in our lives. This message of Christ is a message that brings forgiveness, salvation, and life to those who hear it and believe it. Yet this message isn’t always so well received. Jesus proclaimed the gospel in Nazareth and look what happened to him. He was rejected! So, don’t be surprised when you are rejected.

As Jesus followers we are always working to build up our faith with the words of our Lord. As we do that God blesses us with opportunities to share his word, both law and gospel.

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Yet we may find we struggle with those opportunities because we know what may come with them. Our Lord Jesus himself said, **“No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also”** (John 15:20). As Christians, we know we will face persecution in this life. When that persecution comes from unbelievers we may not like it, but we can usually tolerate it.

But the persecution that is the hardest to face is the rejection that comes from those who are closest to us: From our family, friends, and people who know us well. When we share our Lord’s words with the people in our lives, even the people whom we love the most, those people can be “amazed” at us. They can take offense at what we say. We shouldn’t be surprised if those people say to us, “Who do you think you are?” The people closest to us know our faults and our weaknesses and they may feel we have no right to tell them about their sins. So they reject us and the message we try to share with them.

That rejection can be painful. I know that quite well. Like the sister of mine who threw away her connection to Christ because she chose to break God’s commandment against adultery. She refuses to listen to the message of Christ. Now, whenever I’m in the room she will not allow me to speak about God, or Jesus, or faith. Or my father who was never happy about me joining the Lutheran church or speaking about the truths that we teach in our churches. When he found out I wanted to become a Lutheran pastor he said to me, “You’re just doing this to get back at me!” Then he refused to speak to me for the better part of a year. To this day I am still not sure what I was “getting back at” him for. Sadly, like the people of Nazareth, sometime the people closest to us will reject us because of our faith and the truth of God’s word that we try to share with them.

So, what should we do when that happens? Keep watching and waiting for opportunities to share Jesus with those closest to us, even those who have rejected our Lord’s message in the past. We have to keep in mind that this is not our message, it’s Jesus’ message. These are the words he has shared with us; words he has used to bring us to faith. All our Lord wants us to do is to be faithful to his word. Christ wants us to be faithful in sharing the good news about him whenever the opportunity arises. Jesus wants us to help others see their sins, so they can see how much they need him. Then he wants us to share with those same people the Savior whom God sent to take away the sins of the world, our sins and their sins. We don’t share the message to prove that we are right and someone else is wrong. We simply state what our God has told us because it is through that Word of God that the Holy Spirit works to create saving faith in people’s hearts, even in the hearts of people who keep trying to reject him.

We never know when or how the Holy Spirit will carry out his miraculous work of creating faith in a person. This is why we keep sharing the good news about our Savior. We shouldn’t be surprised if people reject us because of the message. If the people closest to Jesus rejected him, should we really expect things to be any different for us his followers? So don’t be surprised. Instead, keep praying for the strength to be faithful with Christ’s message whenever he sets an opportunity before you.

We certainly need that strength of faith because rejection is not pleasant, especially when it comes from the people closest to us. Yet we realize that rejection is a part of being a follower of Jesus. It is better to be rejected by the world, then to be rejected by God for rejecting his Son. Don’t be a part of Nazareth’s amazing rejection. Instead, continue to cling to your Lord and Savior for the forgiveness that you need. Jesus will never reject those who trust in him alone for salvation, because our Lord is always wanting and waiting to share his amazing

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heavenly home with all his believers. Amen.