

Mark 6:1-6

6 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.

“Well, how did things go in church last Sunday? How was the worship service?” A lot of people are asking those questions at this time of the year.

Back in May a group of seniors graduated from our seminary in Mequon. One of those graduates preached here at St. Paul’s three weeks ago. Last week that young man was ordained and installed at his new congregation in North Fond du Lac. Today he is probably preaching to his congregation for the first time.

Now parents and friends of the graduates will be asking, “How did things go? Did the members of the congregation like your sermon?” The new pastors will probably answer, “Yes, thank God, things went pretty well. The people here are some fine Christians.”

When graduates answer that question -- I don’t think any of them will use the word “amazing.” They will not say, “The people here were *amazed* at my sermon! They were *amazed* at the things I’ve been doing. --And I was *amazed* by the people!” --We don’t ordinarily talk that way.

This morning, however, we see an exception. We hear about a time when the people, and the preacher also, used the word “amazing.” St. Mark tells us that when Jesus preached in his hometown of Nazareth,

It Was an Amazing Church Service! (But, unfortunately, the people missed the point.)

I. In Nazareth

Jesus teaches; people are amazed

What happened?

Jesus had been working in Capernaum. There He performed two powerful miracles.

- He healed a woman who suffered from a bleeding disorder for 12 years.
- Then Jesus raised a 12-year-old girl from the dead, the daughter of Jairus. (Mark 5:21-43)

Soon after that Jesus and His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee. They walked the few miles to Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth. On the Sabbath Day, Jesus and his disciples went to church, to the synagogue. The people invited Jesus to be the teacher that day. And so this morning we see Jesus speaking to the people of His hometown.

The Bible tells us about several occasions when Jesus preached in a synagogue. But this time the story is different. Mark tells us nothing at all about the content of Jesus’ sermon. Instead he focuses on the people who were present that day. He describes their response. Mark

writes, “many who heard Jesus were **amazed**.” (6:2) That is a strong word. Literally, it means that they were “amazed out of their wits!” They were flabbergasted.

Why? They were wondering about the **source** of Jesus’ teaching. They were asking, “Where did this man (“this fellow,” as they called Him) get these things?” (6:2) Did He perhaps attend some famous college or seminary in Jerusalem? “What is this wisdom that has been given him?” (6:2) We haven’t heard things like this before. And, “Who gave Him the ability to perform those miracles we have been hearing about?” (6:2, paraphrase)

Jesus had already answered their questions

Those are good questions. -But the people of Nazareth should have known the answers. Jesus had already told them.

Apparently this is the 2nd time Jesus preached here in his hometown. Apparently it was on a previous occasion that Jesus took the Book of Isaiah the Prophet. He turned to chapter 61, there He read a prophecy about the coming Savior. There Isaiah had written,

The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me,

The LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

The LORD has sent me ... to proclaim freedom for the captives.

After reading those words, Jesus sat down and said, “People of Nazareth, in these verses Isaiah is talking about ME! I am the Messiah whom God promised to send. You ask about the source of my wisdom -- I am speaking words and wisdom which God has given to me! You wonder about My miracles -- I am performing miracles by the power of God.”

Now Jesus is preaching in Nazareth again. Perhaps we wonder, “Did Jesus repeat the things He had told them before?” Perhaps. “Did Jesus say to the people of Nazareth, ‘Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand!’” Probably. (That is the message Jesus proclaimed wherever He went.) Mark tells us only that the people of Nazareth were listening carefully to Jesus’ words; they knew about Jesus’ miracles; and they were amazed out of their wits!

It was an amazing church service.

Two Problems

But there was a problem. The people missed the point. Actually there were two problems:

1) Problem #1 is that the people did not believe the words Jesus spoke. When the people looked at Jesus, they saw only a mere human being. They were thinking, “This man does not **look like** the mighty God who created heaven and earth. He does not **look like** the Lord God who came with thunder and lightning back at Mount Sinai when He gave the Ten Commandments. Jesus does not have a bright light shining from His face. How can this man be the Messiah? How can this man possibly be the Son of God?”

The answer of course is that while He lived here on earth, Jesus ordinarily did not exhibit His power and glory. He concealed His divinity, His “godness.” He concealed it under ordinary flesh and bones. We sometimes call it Jesus’ “state of humiliation.” Jesus, the Son of God, humbled Himself so that He could act as our Savior, so that He could die on a cross and pay for our sins with His blood.

2) Problem #2 is that the people did not understand the reason why Jesus was performing miracles. St. John tells us that Jesus’ miracles are “signs,” signs that point to Jesus. Those signs tell us, “This is the One. This is the Messiah whom God promised to send.” When Jesus healed the woman back in Capernaum, that miracle was a sign telling us that, “Jesus entered this world

to show God's mercy toward people who are suffering." When He raised that 12-year-old girl from the dead, that miracle was sign announcing that, "Jesus is the Son of God who has power even over death."

Without honor in His hometown

But instead of believing Jesus words, instead of seeing Jesus' miracles as evidence that He is the Son of God, we hear the people asking, "Isn't this the carpenter" (6:3), the man who has his carpenter shop right down the street? "Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" (6:3) "We know this man's family. All of them are ordinary people. They look just like us. What right does He have to make these claims for Himself? What right does He have to say, 'Repent of your sins, and believe the gospel'?"

Mark tells us that "they took offense at him." (6:3) "We find this offensive and repulsive. We do not want our city to be known as the hometown of a man like this!"

When the people of Nazareth missed the point, they were making a tragic mistake. If the people are right, then Jesus is a mere human being, then He cannot pay for our sin, He cannot raise Himself from the dead, He cannot be our Savior. But – because Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, we can trust Him completely for all that we need.

Jesus' disappointment

How does Jesus respond? In this entire account we hear Jesus speaking only one sentence. Jesus is probably shaking His head as He quotes an old proverb, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house, is a prophet without honor." (6:4) That's the way it often works. If a young man goes off to school for several years; if he studies to become a doctor and then comes back to his hometown; the people of his hometown often remember him from the days when he was a little boy, running around with the other kids. The people often have trouble trusting him as their doctor. Apparently that proverb applied back in Nazareth.

For Jesus, that sabbath day back in Nazareth was a disappointment. Mark tells us that, Jesus "could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them." (6:5) Why didn't Jesus do more miracles? Because of their unbelief. Jesus "was amazed at their lack of faith." (6:6) First the people of Nazareth were amazed at Jesus' preaching; now Jesus is amazed at their unbelief.

Jesus was disappointed. He left Nazareth; but He did not quit. Instead Jesus "went around teaching from village to village." (6:6b) Did He ever return to Nazareth? Did He ever speak to those people again? The Bible does not tell us. We do know that every unbeliever has a final opportunity to hear God's word, a final opportunity to believe it and to repent of his sins. After that comes the Judgment Day.

II. In Appleton

Source of sermons

Here at St. Paul's we hear some fine sermons week after week. We ordinarily do not use the word "amazing" to describe them. But there are some other parallels between what happened back in Nazareth and what happens here at St. Paul's.

The people in Nazareth asked about the source of Jesus' words and wisdom. We have the right to ask our pastors that same question: "What is the source of your preaching and

teaching?” Most of us already know the answer. The source is the Bible. Before they stand in the pulpit, our pastors spend many hours studying their sermon text. They look carefully at every word - not only in our English translation but also in the original Greek and Hebrew. When they stand in the pulpit, they want to tell us exactly what God is telling us in His word. No more and no less. They want to conclude their sermons with a loud, “Amen! This is the truth. This is what God says.”

Disappointments

For us

Jesus was disappointed when He saw the response of the people back in Nazareth. Most of us know the feeling. We speak to others about our Savior. We invite others to come with us to church and Bible class. We speak to family members who have fallen away. But we are often disappointed. People prefer to live in their unbelief.

Because of those disappointments, we need encouragement. That is one of the reasons we gather here in this place. Here we receive personal encouragement for our own faith. Here we encourage one another as we sing fine Christian hymns. Here in this place where we pray that God would bless our words and our efforts, that He would open (or, reopen) the hearts of others.

Then we leave church, go home, and get back to work – just as Jesus did. Jesus did not stop; neither will we. We dare not stop until the day when Jesus appears in glory.

For pastors

You and I know a couple members of our congregation who need special encouragement. I’m thinking about our pastors. Our pastors faithfully prepare sermons and Bible classes. Sometimes they have visible success. At other times they are disappointed. Their words and invitations are met with apathy or even rejection. Our pastors – and our teachers – need our encouragement.

We give them encouragement by attending church and Bible class. We give encouragement by speaking a word to them after the service or by sending them a text message or an email. They need our prayers and support. Please take my word for it.

Positive comments

The people of Nazareth talked about Jesus’ sermon there in the synagogue. They probably talked about it during the week. We Christians do the same thing today. When we talk about the church service and the sermon, it is important that we say something positive.

Why? Because our attitude often rubs off on others. Years ago I heard an older pastor say that, “Some families serve ‘roasted minister’ for Sunday dinner.” If children hear only negative remarks about their church, about their pastors and teachers, we need not be surprised if children adopt the same attitude. When they grow up, some of those children will want nothing to do with God and His word. Again, please take my word for it.

Most of us are probably not amazing individuals. But we do have an amazing Savior. Therefore - may God bless our pastors and teachers as they proclaim His amazing grace. May our time together be an encouragement to speak to others about our Savior. May He open the hearts of others and make them receptive also to His word. Amen.

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