

The Memoirs of Peter
Just a Carpenter? The Deadly Danger of Familiarity (Part 2)
Mark 6:1-6
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Well, I invite you to turn back with me to Mark's Gospel, to the sixth chapter, as we continue a study that we began last week on the danger of familiarity. Specifically, we called the message "Just a Carpenter? The Deadly Danger of Familiarity." You know, there is a great danger that comes when we are familiar with something. When I was in college, I often worked as an electrician during the summers. We did all kinds of electrical work: new and repair, residential and industrial. But most summers, the largest number of my working hours were spent in the ship yards of Bayou La Batre, Alabama, later made famous by the Bubba Gump Shrimp Company. We wired a hundred and seventy-five-foot steel-hulled boats that were used for a variety of purposes. Most of those boats were used for shrimp boats. You know, it didn't take me long, as I worked in the ship yards there in Bayou La Batre, to realize that familiarity with those surroundings could quickly increase the danger of serious injury or even death.

And one summer that was driven home to me in a way that I'm sure I'll never forget. This man had started his work-years, I'm confident, many years before with great respect for the four hundred and eighty volts that ran through the cable he used for welding. But over time, as they all did, he became used to dealing with that kind of voltage, and the time came when he didn't even think about it. But one day when he was walking about on the steel deck of that ship that was up on the dry dock, still being constructed, he was soaking wet with sweat from a hot Mobile summer day. He threw that cable that was well insulated across his shoulder to drag it to another location on the boat. And he did it for the last time.

The electricity that ran through that cable to his electric welding torch found the small split in the rubber of that cable, and the electricity ran down his wet body to the cold hard steel of the deck. It knocked him over and fell on him, and for several minutes until he was found by his co-workers, four hundred and eighty volts coursed through his limp body. I watched along with the others who worked there. I watched the paramedics try for some thirty minutes or so to revive him. But as I think back on that incident, it occurs to me that he was in many ways the victim of familiarity. He was familiar with what he did every day. It had become commonplace. And what he had begun his career years before very carefully respecting, he forgot about, lost the respect, lost the way he treated it because of familiarity.

But there's an even more deadly danger of familiarity, and that is becoming overly familiar with spiritual things and with Christ Himself. Tragically, I think the worst example of that has to be the people that Jesus grew up with, the people Jesus grew up with in His own hometown who didn't see the danger of familiarity. Let me read for you again the passage we're studying, Mark 6:1, as we continue to make our way through this wonderful account of our Lord's life:

Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary ... brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household.' And He could do no miracle there except ... He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

As we went through chapter 5, we were reminded that chapter 5 was all about faith, faith demonstrated, demonstrated by the demoniac, ultimately, and Christ, by the woman with the issue of blood, and by Jarius as he saw his dead daughter raised from the dead. But if chapter 5 focuses on those who have faith in Jesus, chapter 6 focuses on those who don't. We see it first here with the people of Nazareth. And then we will see, as we get to Jesus sending out the twelve, there will be whole towns to which the twelve will go that Jesus tells them will reject them and from which they'll have to shake off the dust and leave.

And then most of the rest of chapter 6 is about Herod, Herod's rejection both of John the Baptist and of the One of whom he was the forerunner, Jesus the Messiah, as well. The chapter ends with even the twelve lacking in faith in Christ, as you can see over in verse 52. But the focus of this chapter is primarily not on the faith or lack thereof of Jesus' disciples, but the focus of this chapter primarily is on the lack of faith of those who will not believe in Him.

And the first and most amazing display in chapter 6 of that kind of hard heart, the totally unreceptive unbelief, amazingly, comes in Jesus' own hometown. And it comes from the people who knew Him and among whom He had grown up. As I told you last time, the town of Nazareth was a small town, somewhere, historians agree, between two hundred and fifty people

and five hundred people. There were less people in Jesus' hometown than we can seat in this auditorium. They knew Him; they knew Him well. And yet their hard, unreceptive hearts would not respond to Him.

Verse 1 says, "Jesus went out from there [that is, from Capernaum, from His base of operations where the events of the previous chapter had ended] [and He went to] ... His hometown [that is, to Nazareth]; and His disciples followed Him." Jesus essentially retraces the exact journey that Mary and His brothers had made just one day before, you remember, when they'd come to Capernaum to take Him back to Nazareth by force. Jesus now goes to Nazareth, not on their terms, but on His, and for totally different reasons. (This is where Capernaum was located. It's Jesus' headquarters there on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee.) There were three primary roads that ran through Israel. And the Way of the Sea (the one that's in red there) ran right next to Nazareth, not through Nazareth, but just below it, and through Capernaum. And so, undoubtedly, Jesus travels on this road the some twenty to twenty-five miles southwest from Capernaum to Nazareth. Now, Jesus returns there, because this was His hometown as verse one says. This was where He'd grown up. He had spent twenty-eight years of His life in that town.

Now, this is the second time in Jesus' ministry, in that three and a half years of ministry, when Jesus has come back to Nazareth. The first time was about a year earlier, very early in Jesus' Galilean ministry. It's recorded in Luke 4. In fact, I want you to turn there tonight with me. I want you to be reminded of what happened about a year before when Jesus went back home. Luke 4:13. After the temptation, verse 13 says, "When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time." In other words, Satan wasn't done tempting Jesus. These were simply representative of the temptations that Jesus would face His entire life, but they were unique in that they were at the outset of His ministry and designed by the Spirit of God to test Jesus.

Now, notice verse 14 says, after that,

... Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, ... news about Him spread ... [throughout] all the surrounding district. And He *began* teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. [So, He's throughout the Galilee area, but then verse 16 says,] ... He came to Nazareth, where ... [He'd] been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

Now again, remember, this is about one year before the events we're reading in Mark 6. So, He, as the visiting Rabbi, is acknowledged. He's the hometown boy made good. He's already got a following, and so the leader of the synagogue asks Him to teach the Scripture:

The book of the Prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. ... He opened the book and found the place where it [is] written, "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD GOD IS UPON ME, [THIS IS FROM ISAIAH 61.] BECAUSE HE ... ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE ... SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, ... [THE RECOVERY] OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.' ... He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; [In that world the teacher sat down, not stood behind the pulpit.] and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done ... [in] Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" And He said [to them], "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown."

And then He makes what is a remarkable statement to them. He basically says, you're not going to welcome Me, you're not going to really respond to My message, and it's always been like this. In fact, verse 25: "There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up ... and ... famine came ... yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but ... to a woman [of Sidon] who was a widow. ... there were many lepers ... in the time of Elisha ... none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." In other words, the people of Israel wouldn't respond to the prophets; instead, the prophets ministered to Gentiles. Jesus was essentially saying to them, you are [Back up to verse 18] the poor, the spiritually poor; you are the spiritually captive; you are the spiritually blind; you are those who are spiritually oppressed; and I'm here to proclaim that to you. You're just like those who came before you: you're not open to the prophets. You're not open to Me, just as those before you were not open to the prophets of their time. Not exactly a seeker-sensitive message.

Verse 28: "And all the people in the synagogue." Now keep your finger in verse 28 and look back to verse 22. Just a few minutes before, "all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips." But now, verse 28, "all the people in the

synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things.” Now remember, this is His hometown: two hundred and fifty to five hundred people. They all knew him. “And they got up and drove Him out of the city, ... led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, He went His way. And then He came [the next verse says] to Capernaum,” and He made His home base in Capernaum. He was absolutely rejected by the people of His hometown. They tried to kill Him because of the offensiveness of His message. That was a year before. And now Jesus, in spite of that, returns. There’s such a powerful illustration here, as I mentioned last week, of the love and patience of God with sinners, because Jesus comes back. After being treated like that, He comes back. He returns to preach the Gospel to them again. Jesus has returned to Nazareth with ministry in mind.

Now, as Mark unfolds the story of Jesus’ second return to His hometown, He provides us with the anatomy of unbelief and Jesus’ response to unbelief. Let’s look at it together. Let me just remind you of where we were last time: the reason for their unbelief. As we look at their unbelief, why they refuse to respond to Jesus, we looked at the reason for their unbelief in verse 2 and the first part of verse 3.

Jesus, on the Sabbath, begins to teach in the synagogue. We’re not told what He taught, but we are told that a large number of people came and were astonished at His teaching. But here’s how they responded. Their astonishment wasn’t positive. They said, “Where did this man get these things ... what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? Is this not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?”

Now, notice three times in these two verses they refer to Jesus as “this one.” They knew His mother’s name, they knew His brother’s names, but they don’t use His name. It’s a very clear sign of disrespect. In fact, in English, the Greek expression “this one” is a whole lot like “this guy.” So, their questions, then, as we look at their unbelief, their questions were, “Where did [this guy] get these things?” This is probably a reference to His teaching, to His ideas, His interpretations of Scripture. “And what is this wisdom given to [this guy]?” Again, they acknowledge He has wisdom. They know it didn’t come from Him: He’s never been discipled by a famous rabbi, He’s never been taught. So, where did this wisdom come from? And their third question is where does He get the power for the miracles He performs with His own hands?

Now, in case you think these are genuine questions, they’re really not. They’re asking what is

the source of this hometown boy's wisdom and power and interpretation of Scripture, and with their next set of questions they basically answer this first set. You get what they thought as you look at the next set of questions. "Is not this the carpenter?" Listen, He's just a manual laborer like the rest of us. Who does He think He is? And is not this "the son of Mary"? As we saw last time, that may be a simple expression like "Isn't this Mary's boy?"

But more likely it is an intended attack on Jesus, on His person. In Jewish culture you always used the father's name. And even if Joseph was dead, as he probably was at this time, they would've still referred to Him as the son of Joseph. So, to call Him "the son of Mary" was probably a subtle attack on His person, raising a question, perhaps, as happened on a couple of other occasions, about His origins. Is He really the son of Joseph? Well, we're not sure, so let's just call him the "son of Mary." And the third question they ask, "Is not this the ... brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?"

Now, last time we looked at this in detail; I won't do that again. But it's clear from the text that there are in Jesus' family, at this point as He's beginning His ministry, He has four younger brothers, who are named here, and sisters, plural. So, Jesus grew up in a home of at least seven. Now, Matthew, as I told you last time, says, are not "all" His sisters here with us? Which implies there were more than two. There were probably at least three sisters, and there may have been more. So, Jesus grew up in a family of at least eight siblings and perhaps more. And He would've had the responsibility for them, because He was the oldest son. And Joseph probably died shortly after Jesus' visit at twelve years old at the temple.

So, in answer to their own questions, the people of Jesus' hometown rule out several things. They rule out the possibility that the source of Jesus' authority and power and teaching was from some earthly advantage He had. He was after all a humble, uneducated carpenter from an ordinary family. They also rule out the possibility, apparently, that He received all of this authority and power from God, because they don't even bring up that possibility.

So, they're left with only one option: maybe what we've heard the Pharisees said in Capernaum yesterday.... Remember, Mary and Jesus' brothers (And Jesus' brothers didn't believe in Him.) had been in Capernaum the day before, had heard the Pharisees say He does what He does by the power of Beelzebub, He's indwelt by Satan himself. The brothers who didn't believe in Jesus may have very well brought the word back, or it may have come in some other way. And so, they're left then, with only one option: maybe the Pharisees were right, maybe Jesus' authority came from the powers of darkness. And, of course, they still resented His description a year

earlier of them as the spiritually poor and bankrupt and prisoners who weren't willing to listen to the prophets, just like their fathers had not been willing to listen to the prophets.

So, we've seen, then, the reason for their unbelief. We ended our time last week with the result of their unbelief. Look at the end of verse 3: "And they took offense at Him." The Greek word is they were "scandalized" because of Him. They "were made to trip over," they "found a cause for stumbling" in Jesus. That expression is used some eight times in Mark's Gospel. It always refers to the person who can't exercise faith in Jesus because something keeps him from doing so. This wasn't just "we haven't made up our minds about Jesus," this was outright denial and rejection. What they knew about Jesus had become a stumbling block. They had hard, unreceptive hearts.

And what caused their hearts to be hard to Jesus? It's clear in the context, isn't it? It was their familiarity with Him. It was their familiarity. In their case familiarity had bred contempt. To Jesus' first visit a year before, they had responded with violence, uncontrollable rage: they tried to kill Him. To this second visit a year later, they responded even worse: with cool indifference and personal insult. That's the anatomy of unbelief. The unbelief that comes with familiarity.

Now let's look, as we continue our study tonight, at Jesus' response to unbelief, Jesus' response. First of all in verse 4, notice His proverbial explanation of what's going on here. Verse 4 says, "Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household.'" Now, in various forms this was a common and familiar proverb in Jesus' day. In fact, it dates, even among the Greek philosophers, back fifty years before Christ. It was common among both the Jews and the Greeks, but Jesus adapts that common proverb. He was the very first to use it of a prophet.

And He says, He's a prophet. And He's like all the prophets before Him in that He is not received well by the people of Israel, and specifically by the people of His hometown. Now, you and I honor the prophets, but often the people around the prophets at the time they prophesied did not honor them. They may have recognized them as prophets, they may have said they speak for God, and yet at the same time absolutely hated them for what they said. Let me just give you a couple of examples.

In 1 Kings 19, you remember Elijah? Elijah, one of the greatest of the Old Testament prophets? And he, in the midst of the battle with Ahab and Jezebel and the prophets of Baal, says this: "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your

covenant, [they have] torn down Your altars and [Watch this.] [they have] killed Your prophets [God] with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” And of course, God tells him, look, you’re not the only one, I have thousands who have not yet bowed the knee to Baal. But He acknowledges here the reality that the people of Israel have killed the prophets of God.

In 2 Chronicles 36, as it is explained to us why the people of God are carried off into captivity. This is how it’s explained:

The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent *word* to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they *continually* mocked the messengers of God, despised His word[s] ... scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.

Have you ever thought about this? We read the Old Testament, and we see a few examples of that. But I think we tend to think that the prophets were respected as these great men of God in their times as we respect them. Nothing could be further from the truth. The people of Israel, by and large, responded just like is described in these verses.

Jeremiah was no exception. Jeremiah 20:2 “Pashhur had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put ... in the stocks that were at the upper Benjamin Gate, which was by the house of the Lord.” But if that’s not enough, look at what happens in Jeremiah 26. Turn there with me, Jeremiah 26:1. Now this is just before the fall of Judah, just in the last days of the Kingdom of Judah:

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD, [he says], “Thus says the LORD, [Jeremiah, I want you to] ‘Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, [go to the temple, stand there] and speak to all the cities of Judah who have come to worship in the Lord’s house all the words that I have commanded you to [tell] them. Do not omit a word! Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way, that I may repent [that is, that I may turn from] the calamity which I am planning to do to them because of the evil of their deeds.’ “And you will say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, “If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which [I’ve] set before you, to listen to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I have been sending to you again and again, but you have not listened; then I will make this

house like Shiloh, and this city I will make a curse to all the nations of the earth.”
’” [I’m going to level it, God says, I’m going to make it where nobody lives
here.] Verse 7:

The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. When Jeremiah finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded *him* to speak to all the people, the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, “You must die! Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD saying, ‘This house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate, without inhabitant?’” And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the LORD and sat in the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD’s house. Then the priests and the prophets spoke to the officials and to all the people, saying, “A death sentence for this man! For he has prophesied against this city as you have heard in your hearing.”

Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and to all the people, saying, “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard. Now therefore amend your ways and your deeds and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will change His mind about the misfortune which He has pronounced against you. But as for me, behold, I am in your hands; do with me as is good and right in your sight. Only know [this] for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood on yourselves, and on this city and on its inhabitants; for truly, [Yahweh] has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.”

This is how they treated the prophets. And they go on to discuss it. And of course, they decide to not to kill him, but instead they imprison him. This is how the prophets have been treated. That’s why when you come to the New Testament, and specifically to the sermon of Stephen in Acts 7, listen to what he said to the people gathered in that Freedmen Synagogue there in Jerusalem: “Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? [Name one.] They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murders you have now become.” Wow! No wonder Jesus says, I’m a prophet, and like all the prophets before Me, I have no honor among My own.

Now specifically, Jesus says that wherever else a prophet might be honored, typically, as a rule, he is not honored among those who know him well. “In his [own] hometown,” Jesus said. Clearly there Jesus is referring to Nazareth’s rejection of Him – twice. These were His friends. These were His colleagues, those with whom He had gone to school, those with whom He had traveled together to Jerusalem to the annual festivals, those with whom He had later conducted business when He took over Joseph’s business and served as a carpenter. He has no honor “among His own relatives.” In other words, this is an expression of Jesus’ extended family. His own extended family also rejected Him. And he concludes with those “in his own household.” Here Jesus is referring to His brothers and sisters.

Now, why does a prophet normally face dishonor, I should say, often face dishonor from those closest to him? Sometimes it’s because they can see his weaknesses up close, and they resent those weaknesses. But obviously, that wasn’t true with Jesus. There were no weaknesses: the closer you got to Him, the more purely His character shined. So, in His case, as with many of the Old Testament prophets, it was because His righteousness was a rebuke to them. As we saw this morning in John three, because they loved darkness, they hated the light, because it exposed their evil deeds. But Jesus said, what’s happening here in Nazareth in this synagogue is par for the course. This is what has always happened to the prophets.

That brings us to a second part of Jesus’ response, and that is His intentional refusal. Verse 5: “And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.” Now, if we only had Mark’s Gospel, we might be tempted to think that faith or its absence is more powerful than Jesus, that their lack of faith tied His hands: He wanted to help, but He couldn’t, because they didn’t have faith. Matthew makes it very clear that that’s not the issue in Matthew 13:58: “And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.” It was His choice.

John Broadus, the great commentator out of Southern Seminary, writes, “We need not at all suppose that He refused to heal any who came to Him; the unbelief which prevented Him from working the miracles prevented the people from seeking them.” So, it’s not that some wanted to be healed, and Jesus didn’t heal them. It’s that they didn’t believe enough to come. But just a few. William Hendrickson writes, “Nazareth as a whole turned its back upon Jesus. By and large, the sick remained unhealed and the sinners unpardoned.” But verse 5 tells us that there was a remnant, a remnant who were healed and who, possibly, we’re not told, also came to genuine faith. Jesus refused to do anything more, because it would be throwing pearl before swine. They didn’t believe.

Now that brings us to Jesus' personal amazement. Verse 6: "And He wondered at their unbelief." Now folks, this is absolutely remarkable. So far in Mark's Gospel, he has used this word "wondered" of the crowd's response to Jesus several times: in 1:22; 5:20; and even here in 6:2. But only two times in all of the Gospels are we told that *Jesus* was amazed, only twice. One of them is in Matthew 8 and the parallel passage, Luke 7: "Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, 'Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.'" In this passage, Jesus wondered, He was amazed at the faith of a Gentile centurion. Why? Because he was the most unlikely to believe. A Gentile and a Roman soldier puts his faith and confidence in Christ, so Jesus was amazed.

The other time we're told Jesus was amazed is right here in Mark 6:6. And He's not amazed at their faith, He's amazed at their lack of faith. Jesus, on a human level, was absolutely stunned, marveled. Why? Because of the incredible opportunities and privileges that they had wasted. Imagine what it would have been like. Imagine the privilege to grow up in the same town, small town, town smaller than the number of people that would fit in this auditorium, with God's only Son.

Imagine what it would have been like to grow up with Him as a playmate, to have played with Him together, to have gone to school together, to go to the synagogue on a weekly basis together; at least three times a year to take the annual trek down, as the males were required in their teen years, to go to Jerusalem to the annual feast; to have seen Jesus mature and become a man, to take over His father's business, to take over the family after His father's death; to have seen Him teaching, to have heard His teaching, to marvel at His wisdom; to hear about the miracles that He had presented in other places; to have heard Him preach the Gospel from Isaiah. Imagine what that would be like: to hear Him teach a second time in your own synagogue, and then in the face of all of that to reject Him, to reject His claims. Surely all heaven was shocked. Jesus, at a human level, certainly was. James Edwards writes, "What amazes Jesus about humanity is not its sinfulness and not its propensity for evil, but its hardness of heart and unwillingness to believe in Him."

That brings us to the final part of Jesus' response, and that is His final departure. Verse 6 ends with these words: "And He was going [about] the villages teaching." Jesus left His hometown for the last time that we know of in His earthly ministry. He left, and as far as we know, He never returned after this encounter; instead, He took His preaching of the Gospel elsewhere. He went to other villages. It's interesting, because in the very next passage Jesus sends the twelve out to minister, and this is exactly what He tells them to do. Look down at verse 10 of chapter 6.

... He ... [says, I'm going to] send you out ..., and ... "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. [And] Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them."

In a very real sense, that's what Jesus does with Nazareth. It's a solemn reminder that God doesn't always strive with man. You remember those words from before the flood in Genesis 6:3? "The LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not [always] strive with man forever, because he [is also] flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.'" In other words, in the time of Noah, God said, I'm not going to strive forever, but I'm going to give man a hundred and twenty more years; and Noah's going to preach, and he's going to build, and then judgment. The same was true for the people of Nazareth. God gave them twenty-eight years of His Son and then twice more during His ministry, but then He left and never returned.

You know, I have to say, in a crowd this size there're undoubtedly people who profess Christ, but who aren't truly followers of Jesus Christ. Listen, if you're not in Christ, don't assume you will ever get another opportunity. Don't say, "tomorrow." "Behold, now is 'the acceptable time,' [Paul tells the Corinthians] behold, now is 'the day of salvation.'" Don't harden your heart against the truth of who Christ is. Don't walk out of another service saying, "I'll think about it. I'll reserve that for another time." This isn't a scare tactic, this is what Jesus did to Nazareth. There comes a time at which God draws the line.

Now when we look at this account, as we look at Jesus' trip to Nazareth, there are several things that sort of grow out of it that I want to briefly remind you of as we finish our time together, some implications of this text.

First of all, this text, and I mentioned this last time, but I don't want to leave it this time. This text reminds us of the danger of familiarity. Don't let familiarity breed contempt. None of us face the danger of physical familiarity with Jesus. But many of us face the danger of familiarity nonetheless, a familiarity with Christ and with spiritual things, because we've heard it all our lives. Last week I mentioned to you young people, that's a real concern I have for you. You grow up in a Christian home, you sit in services like this week after week, you go to Awana, you go to all the events, you hear about Christ week after week after week, and you just grow familiar. There's no sense of fear, there's no sense of wonder, there's no sense of urgency; instead, it's complacency. That's a very, very, dangerous place to be.

There's another implication that's important: This story, I think, this account underscores the

importance of faith. Where there is faith, Jesus' claims and His authority and His power are seen and embraced, as we saw back in chapter 5. But where there is unbelief in the heart, the same Jesus is scorned and mocked and attacked and rejected. Jesus hasn't changed from chapter 5 to chapter 6. The soils of the heart have changed, as He Himself described it.

Thirdly: this account reminds us, and this is so important, that if Jesus faced unbelief during His lifetime, so will we as we present the Gospel today. You know, I think we expect that because it's the truth, because we have found it true and have responded to it and have found Christ to be everything that He claims, we just expect people to respond to it. And when they don't, we're kind of shocked. Listen, the people who grew up with Jesus Christ didn't believe. Don't expect anything else. This was so important for the twelve. You know, they're sitting in that synagogue that day. They're sitting there watching this unfold. And if they had any thoughts that everyone in Israel was going to welcome them with open arms because they were coming with the message of the Messiah, their eyes were opened that day. Their hopes were dashed as they watched that scene in the synagogue in Nazareth unfold.

And folks, you and I can't live in a pollyannaic world: People are not going to love us and welcome us. Jesus said, they hated Me, they'll, what? Hate you. Expect that, and be surprised when they don't. William Lane writes in his commentary, "Unbelief is the context in which the Christian mission advances, and rejection is an experience common to the Lord and to His church." Matthew 5 says, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. [Jesus says] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." And Jesus could add, and Me as well.

Number four, this reminds us of who Jesus really was: look at verses 2 and 3 again. Look at their response to Jesus. Where did this guy get these things? What is the wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as are performed by His hands? Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary? Don't we know His brothers? Don't we know His sisters? John Broadus writes:

If Jesus is thought of as a mere man, their question remains to this day unanswered and unanswerable. In the little country of Palestine, in its least refined district, in a petty and secluded town, whose inhabitants were violent and in bad repute among their neighbors, arose a young [carpenter], whose teachings, though ended by an early death, surpassed all the wisdom of India and the Chaldeans, of Egypt and Greece; and who, in the few years of his career as a

teacher, founded “an empire of love,” which has spread wider than any empire of earth, and seems destined to last and to grow in all coming time. Whence had this man all these things? There is but one answer. He was a teacher sent from God; he was, then, according to His own express declaration, God’s Only-begotten Son; [yes], he was all that Thomas called him, for he himself commended the saying, “my Lord and my God.” [Broadus is right. There’s no answer to their question if He’s not all that He claimed to be.]

I love the last implication, because there’s hope for everybody we know here. This story underscores the power of the Gospel and of sovereign grace, because during Jesus’ life, we know how His brothers responded. You remember back in 3:21 of Mark? When His own people heard that-what was going on in His ministry and how He wasn’t taking time to eat, “they went out to take custody of Him.” Literally in the Greek text, “They went out to [arrest] Him; for they were saying, He has lost His senses.” He’s out of His mind. This was Jesus’ family’s (minus Mary’s) response to Jesus, John 7:5, six months before Jesus’ crucifixion.

Fast-forward now, we’re right near the end of His life, just six months away from His death. And John says in John 7:5, “For not even his brothers were believing in Him.” They still don’t believe, after everything He taught, and everything He said, and everything they saw Him do, and after growing up in the same home with Him, the Son of God, the only human being never to sin.

That’s before, but what about after the resurrection? First Corinthians 15:7 tells us, Paul does, that in those post resurrection appearances, one of them was to James, Jesus’ brother. He appeared in His resurrected form to James. As a result of that, when you fast-forward to Acts, after the resurrection, when they gather forty days later in the upper room after Jesus’ ascension, Acts 1:14 says, “[And] these all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, [And I love this.] and with His brothers.” They were there. Forty days after His resurrection, they had come to believe.

Fast-forward a few years later, and they’re still believing. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9:5, says, “[And] do we not have a right to take along a believing wife?” Paul says, listen, if I was married, I had a believing wife, I would have a right to take her along and for her to be provided for “even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and [Peter].”

But my favorite come at the beginning of two letters of Jesus’ two brothers in the New

Testament. Two of Jesus' brothers ended up writing letters that are in our New Testament. The first one is James, the leader of the Jerusalem church. Look how he begins his letter: James, a slave of God (Literally, the Greek text says.) a slave of God and a slave of the Lord Jesus the Messiah. He's the Messiah, He's my brother, and He's the Lord, and I am his slave. Jude basically says the same thing at the beginning of his (Jesus' other brother, another of the two of the four that wrote a letter in our New Testament). Jude 1 says,

Jude, a ... [slave] of Jesus [Messiah], and brother of James, to those who are ... called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ....

You see, in this story, as hard as it is to read of Jesus' rejection, we get a glimpse as well of the power of the Gospel and the power of God's sovereign grace to reach into those brother's lives and make them slaves of Jesus Christ. Don't ever lose hope for those in your life who, like those in Jesus' life, reject everything you stand for: reject Him, reject you, reject the Truth. Don't ever lose hope, because there's power in the Gospel and in God's sovereign grace.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this solemn reminder. Lord, I pray for the people here tonight for whom Jesus and spiritual things have grown way too familiar, where they can sit in a service like this and not fear You when they ought to fear You, not love You when they ought to love You, not swell in their hearts with gratitude when they ought to be giving You thanks, but just feel nothing, because their familiarity with spiritual things has bred contempt.

O God, I pray that You would work in their hearts, that You would open their eyes as You did ultimately the eyes of Jesus' brothers to see who Jesus really is, to see His glory and His beauty, to be drawn to Him, to be willing to give up everything else to get Jesus Christ, to become His slave. Lord, may this be the night in the hearts of some gathered even here tonight.

And Father, for those of us who already are His slaves, don't let us give up on anyone. Remind us, O God, that You will do Your work, that You will prepare the soil of the heart to receive the seed in Your time and according to Your own sovereign plan. May we be faithful to sow the seed and to live consistent lives that reflect Christ before those we know.

We pray in Jesus name, Amen.