

Mark 6:1-13 6 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. And he went about among the villages teaching.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

7 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in their belts-- 9 but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. 10 And he said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. 11 And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." 12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. (ESV)

Grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord, Jesus Christ.

When it comes to getting God's message out, Jesus said something like this: Well, a Proclaimer of the Good News could receive honor - - - except in his hometown and among his relatives.

Has that ever been your experience when trying to tell the Good News of Jesus? Have others, even family members, taken offense at you, like they did of Jesus?

Each of today's Scripture selections shows how hard it is to get God's message out. Ezekiel the prophet was sent to a people who had openly rebelled against God, and God said: "And whether they hear [you] or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them." [Ez. 2:5] Paul, writing to the Corinthians, was defending his status as an Apostle when he began boasting about visions and revelations he had had--he was not enjoying his boasting, but he showed that he was the real deal and had the real gospel. And now Jesus Himself is having trouble with the home folks.

Part 1. In Trouble with the Home Folks

Point 1. Astonished

Jesus had just raised a 12 yr. old from the dead, as we heard last Sunday. He was beside the Sea of Galilee and decided to go back home to Nazareth. He had left home maybe a couple months ago to begin His ministry, and now as he walked southwest along the well worn caravan route he must have felt quite good -- he'd already reached a high point -- raising someone from the dead! -- it was unheard of!

Then, a little way off the caravan route up to the top of that familiar hill, there was home -- just think, home cooking, friendly neighbors, old school mates....

But when He went to church on Sunday -- well, OK, to the Synagogue on Saturday -- all those warm, fuzzy feelings went out the window.

We read, V.2, "... 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."

My, my, talk about a "come-down," home folks in this town of fewer than 500 really knew how to hurt a guy, don't you think?

Why, we knew he was a skilled laborer--a carpenter--but a preacher, a rabbi??

Wait a minute. - - - Yes, astounded, but prejudiced; they thought they knew Him.

Think about **prejudice** for a moment--Christians are subject to **prejudice**, right? Not only that but we let our prejudices, our "pre-judging," mess up our lives. It's because we let familiarity cloud our eyes in the way that we see others. We have a habit of not really paying attention--we have people pegged, we think, and we take the attitude, "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with these new facts about you."

That's the way the home folks treated Jesus, and (here's the old psychologist talking) we won't allow others to change--it messes with our settled opinions--we don't really like to change our minds.

Home folks were astonished and prejudiced, point 1, But Now Offended, Point 2. In Nazareth the problem was not just familiarity: **v. 3c**, "...they took offense at him." "Offend" or "take offense" are words that describe powerful feelings.

Those words come from the Latin, "**offendo, offendere**: to hit, strike, knock." "To offend" (Amer. Heritage Dictionary) 1. To create or excite anger, resentment or annoyance in; to hurt the feelings of; ... 4. the act of attacking or assaulting. The Nazarene town folks were so upset they couldn't take in this new thing about a home town boy--being offended kept them from seeing who Jesus really was. It kept them from believing in God's new plan which the Messiah was revealing. Their hearts were closed--and our hearts can be just as closed.

Result? Point 3. No Mighty Works

Their unbelief was bad enough, but the worst was, Jesus "could do no mighty work there...."

How sad! Jesus had so much to offer besides His wise sayings and a few minor cures--that's all he could do--their unbelief left them in their prejudices and their offended feelings.

I wonder where they are now, those folks of Nazareth.

Some years ago I visited a hospice patient for months, a woman dying on a hospital bed in her living room. She spoke bitterly about her husband (*I always saw him in the garage*) who was an alcoholic. She couldn't forgive him for all those years of neglect and wasting of his money. I read her the story of the Waiting Father who forgave the prodigal son for wasting his substance in the far country, and she was offended by the story--offended at the grace of a God who forgives. Wouldn't you know, a few years after her death I was back at this same house--now as chaplain to this alcoholic husband. He had asked for me. He was dying--cold sober now--and was so guilty about his years of neglect of his wife and kids that he had a hard time believing God could forgive him. I told him the same story of the Waiting Father again and again.

I wonder where they are now.

I tell you that being offended by the Jesus story has eternal consequences.

So # 1, Jesus was in trouble with the home folks; # 2.) they were astonished at his learning and offended at the same time; result, # 3.) they would not believe in Him and so missed out on the mightiest of His works: new life and salvation!

Instead of being offended at Him, we must,

Part 2. Take God's Message Far and Wide and to the Home Folks

First, That Means We Must Recognize the One Sent From God

Our text tells us: **v. 6b**, "And he went about among the villages teaching."

Humanly speaking, our Lord must have left home with a heavy heart.

But He continued His journey thru villages and cities, teaching and healing, until His final journey took him to Jerusalem and a Roman cross.

That was indeed a mighty work, the mightiest of works--by His death He revealed the power of God and the glory of God.

He carried out his baptismal desire--remember? He told John the Baptist He needed to "fulfill all righteousness."

And so He did - - - for you and me.

His death was the mightiest of works ever, because it gave His righteousness to us.

In spite of appearances (you know it looked like the end of everything, that shameful

death of a common criminal) it was really only the beginning.

Point 2. To Get God's Message Out, We Must Follow Where He Sent His Apostles

Here in Galilee He first sent them out: v. 7 **And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits....**
12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.
Power, authority over unclean spirits--the twelve freed many from demons and illness. They offered freedom from sin through repentance and forgiveness. Hearts were turned so that they trusted the Word of Promise, and many were set free for the life that lasts forever--did you hear that little word **free**?

Freedom! Our Independence Day was yesterday, but our liberties and independence are under threat from within our own government as well as from ISIS/Al Qaeda. Such freedoms as we have came to these shores when the Christian Pilgrims brought the gospel of freedom and created a place for freedom of worship. Over the centuries as the Apostles got God's message out, peoples' minds and hearts were freed with the result that here in the new world this Declaration of Independence [show] and this Constitution came into being--liberties established politically!

John Rabe of the Kennedy Ministries writes:

"Included among the longterm cultural results of Christianity are freedom of religion, education for all (including women), care for the poor and sick. . . , the flourishing of art and music, constitutional government with separated powers, and a conviction that 'blessed are the peacemakers'."

James Russell Lowell, American poet of the 19th C., wrote:

"I challenge any skeptic to find a ten-square-mile spot on this planet where they can live their lives in peace and safety and decency, where womanhood is honored, where infancy and old age are revered, where they can educate their children, where the Gospel of Jesus Christ has not gone first to prepare the way."
IM PACT, May 2015, p. 14.

Here's a church getting the message out--this is their bulletin board out front:

EVENINGS AT 7 IN THE PARISH HALL

MON	ALCOHOLICS ANON.	THU	SAY NO TO DRUGS
TUE	ABUSED SPOUSES	FRI	TEEN SUICIDE WATCH
WED	EATING DISORDERS	SAT	SOUP KITCHEN

SUNDAY - - - SERMON 9 A.M. "AMERICA'S JOYOUS FUTURE"

Don't we have an America that needs God's message: Repent and believe the gospel?

Final Point. It Looks Like We Need More Apostles to Take the Message

We have the Word of Promise; we know ourselves to be among the most fortunate of peoples--we have a Savior--we are forgiven.

Now, how do we as a congregation carry out our mission? More Apostles? Pastors, Church councils and Evangelism committees struggle with that question.

Could it be that our attitude is too much like Sally Forth's daughter who, when her Mom was bringing freshly laundered clothes into the daughter's bedroom, didn't offer to get up off her bed and help Mom hang the daughter's clothes.

Dtr.: "I think some things should be left to the pros." [Sunday comic, Sac'to BEE, 2000]

So I guess since Pastors are successors to the Apostles, they should do all the witnessing, right? Leave it to the pros, right?

But we already know that we are all ministers--we are all witnesses to the joy that our Lord has brought us.

We rejoice again today over His continual coming in Word and Sacrament.

We are not pros, like pastors who do have their special role in the church, but we all have the Word of forgiveness in our hearts. Let's get God's message out.

In the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

S.D.g.

The Rev. Dr. Donald Schedler, Ph.D., Snowline Hospice Chaplain, retired
[1778 spoken words] Rockwell 11; Georgia 10; Times 10.