

July 8, 2018
Sermon for the 7th Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Mark 6:1–13

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 6:1–13 (ESV)

¹ 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. 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.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Most of you have seen the logo for RCA. It pictures a small black and white dog, head cocked quizzically, looking into the horn of an old Victrola record player. You may even know the name of that picture—"His Master's Voice."

But have you ever wondered why the dog looks confused about his master's voice? The dog's master is dead, but his voice lives on, coming via the record to a perplexed dog.

While the dog knows and recognizes his master's voice, we so often forget ours. We seek worldly wisdom, not God's voice.

That's nothing new. Many people who should have followed the Master's voice gladly and enthusiastically have looked to earthly wisdom for their salvation. Centuries before Jesus appeared at the Nazareth synagogue, God came to the prophet Ezekiel. He instructed His prophet to deliver a call to heartfelt repentance. Along with His directions, God also gave Ezekiel a warning against the major frustration that would come delivering that message. God said, *"I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation, that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn"* (Ezek 2:3–4).

Even then people wanted worldly wisdom, not God's power. It is not necessary for me to tell you that Ezekiel's message, like those of so many of his compatriots, went unheard and unheeded for the most part.

Having spent hundreds of years ignoring scores of prophets and leaving a multitude of messages unheard until God's power struck, you might think God's people would have learned to listen.

They didn't. Immediately before Jesus' birth, the priest Zechariah found it hard to accept the Lord's prediction that his son would be the forerunner of Jesus (Lk 1:18).

Then, King Herod believed his minuscule might could outmaneuver the Almighty's plan of salvation (Mt 2:16–20).

Both these fellows learned that God was in control. Now, years later, at the start of Jesus' ministry, look what happens when He and His disciples returned to His hometown of Nazareth.

Jesus was a local boy making good. Miracles were being performed, messages were being delivered, and multitudes were being touched by the Savior. Word of these exploits had filtered back to Nazareth. And although the people were proud of his performances, no doubt many of His friends paraphrased the disciple Nathanael by asking:

“Can anything this good come out of Joseph the carpenter's family?” Nevertheless, on Saturday, the Sabbath, the leaders of the synagogue did what was right and proper. They asked Nazareth's famous son to come forward to read from and expound upon Scripture. Of course, Jesus read Isaiah's words of prophecy pertaining to the Messiah. During the time allotted for amplifying and applying the text, Jesus announced, Isaiah's powerful prophecies had been fulfilled, right now, right then, right there in their midst.

The citizens of Nazareth reacted in a predictable way. To say they were not happy with their old friend and boyhood companion is an understatement. They certainly did not offer Him the key to the city.

They had no parade or named no street after him. On their minds and hearts, was pride and resentment. We know your roots Jesus. You come in here trying to act like you're large and in charge. We're not buying.

They were guided by worldly wisdom that ignores Christ's power to save. Their rejection of the Lord and what He wanted to do among them, was so strong that they wanted to silence Him, they were even ready to murder their former friend right then and there.

Some might be surprised, but Jesus wasn't.

After all, murdering prophets was almost a national tradition (Mt 23:31). Now, some 20 centuries later, although physically murdering a resurrected Savior is out of the question, many people in their "wisdom" look for salvation from their own strength rather than the power of Christ.

The desire to embrace worldly wisdom has resulted in a populace that has no beliefs or ethical boundaries. Worldly wisdom says, "Cheat on your taxes but don't get caught. Cheat on your spouse but don't catch anything." Worldly wisdom says, "give up your values, cancel your commitment, ignore your integrity."

Rejecting True Wisdom—God's Power

The craving for worldly wisdom has all too often, made us into double-talkers, where truth and virtue are only for the losers, and nerds.

We have sugarcoated sin to make it appear acceptable. Lying has become “stretching the truth.” Cheating is “bending the rules.” Lust is “healthy admiration.” Hatred becomes “dislike.” Gossiping is only “harmless talk.” Envy is just “appreciating what others have.” Murder is just a “big mistake.” Drug abuse is “an unfortunate misdirection.” Gluttony is “lack of will power.” A violent individual is “temperamental.” Child molesters are “unstable or antisocial.” Homosexuals are “practicing a God-given alternate lifestyle.” And children who are disobedient to parents, bless their hearts, are “strong willed.”

We want worldly wisdom, not the Savior’s power that calls the lost from darkness to light.

Can’t we see that without Christ we are, in many ways, like the *Titanic*—steaming away, oblivious to the dangers around us because we believe it’s nothing we can’t handle?

The *Titanic* had received one warning after another. The messages that told them they were sailing into an ice field were ignored. In fact, when a nearby ship sent an urgent caution, the radioman on the *Titanic* was talking to shore about what time chauffeurs were to meet passengers at the dock. He was sharing menus to be prepared for “welcome home dinners” that would never be served. Preoccupied with trivial things, the *Titanic* responded to the radio warnings: “Shut up. You are jamming my signal.”

Two thousand years ago that was the response of Nazareth to the Savior. “Shut up, Jesus. You are upsetting our plans.”

It is also the response of this modern age to the Son of God. "Do not bother us, Lord. We want fun worldly wisdom, not the Savior's powerful blood to rescue us from damnation."

If that is what people want, that is just what the Lord might give them. When God's Old Testament people shut their ears to the prophets who spoke God's message of repentance, the Lord did not force them to hear.

He allowed them to follow their own path, worship their man-made gods, and commit their own transgressions.

Scripture records, in vivid detail, how worldly wisdom led them to be defeated in war, carried off into captivity, and left without hope.

When Jesus' neighbors in Nazareth shut their ears to His message of salvation, He did not demand that they hear Him.

He did not call down legions of angels to strike down the doubters. He did not perform one miracle after another until they were forced to admit that He was God's Son.

Jesus allowed them to reject him. And that day, when He walked through the Nazareth crowd that threatened to kill Him, he did so with finality.

Never again would He come to that community or preach to that city. Never again would He call them to a new covenant of God's grace and forgiveness.

Make the Hard Choice

What will the Lord do with us and our country?

With history's record so clear, we have to ask, how long will He continue to reach out and preach to people when Bibles are forbidden in classrooms but placed in jail cells?

I don't know. No one can know whether the time will be long or short, but Christians should know it's always the right time to get their priorities in order.

It is time for us to join together and follow the Savior even as we reject the world's wisdom.

A young boy had a puppy, which he loved very much. Loving puppies is what little boys do. This puppy liked to bark because that's what puppies do.

This was not a problem until the boy's mother became ill. Then the dog's yipping and yapping caused her nerves to jangle. When he found out about his mom's discomfort, it took only a few hours before he came and reported, "The puppy won't bother you any more, Mom. I gave him to my friend."

The sympathetic mother replied, "But you loved your puppy." The boy agreed. "Sure, Mom, I loved my puppy. But I love you even more."

That's the spirit with which Christians respond to the Lord. Sure, we enjoy what the world offers. We like the toys, the gadgets, and gimmicks, the riches, power, and fame. But if these things interfere with our love for God, if they displace God, we gladly leave them behind without a second thought.

That's what Jesus did for us. Saving us from sin, death, and Satan was the Savior's first priority. Saving us was more important than having His hometown love Him. Saving us was more important than having the crowds giving Him a big hometown parade or even the key to the city.

Saving us was more important than saving Himself from death on the cross.

That is why we should keep the Lord as first priority. Christians should not hold on to anything that separates them from God's love and power.

Having heard the Savior's words of peace, having seen Him fulfill every prophecy, having watched His great sacrifice on Calvary's cross, we gladly make His mission our own.

His desire to save the lost should be our desire. We may never be called on to make a great witness, but we can give a steady one.

Although we may never powerfully preach eloquent sermons before great crowds, we can quietly whisper His name, consistently.

Although we may not die for Jesus, we can live for Him, consistently. Although we may never perform a miracle, we can, by faithful following, do that which shows true Christian commitment, again, consistently.

It is the steady sun, not the lightning, that illuminates this world. It is the regular rain, not the damaging downpour, that waters the field.

And it is your daily faithfulness that God uses to shape and influence the world.

This we can do in Christ's power but not in worldly wisdom.

Years ago, in southern Egypt, revolutionaries attacked a governor's home. The governor's daughter was carried by one of the guards from her bedroom to safety. He risked his life to protect her. After the rescue, he said to her, "Will you give me a big hug for what I have done?" With a pout and a shake of her head, she answered, "No hugs for you. You took me from my toys." That little girl didn't understand what the guard had done for her.

Not at the risk of but at the cost of His life, Jesus has saved you.

It is a grand and glorious miracle. How do we respond?
Will we, like the little girl, say, “No thanks for you. You make me give up too much. You keep me from my playground, my stuff, my own way”?

That would be the worst of worldly wisdom. No, instead, I invite you to give thanks to God at the wisdom and power of God’s Son, our Savior. He gave His all for you. He carried your sins to the cross and paid for them there. Your sins are forgiven.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline

Power Over Wisdom

Mark 6:1-13

- I. The choice of worldly wisdom.

- II. Rejecting true wisdom—God's power.
- III. Make the hard choice.