



July 4, 2021 Mark 6:1-6. Ezek. 2:2-5

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

The small community of Nazareth was located in a valley just 4 miles downhill from Sepphoris, the central garrison city from which Herod Antipas controlled Galilee. During the early days of the first century, Herod enlarged and rebuilt the fortress, located on the flat summit of a hill, to make it the “ornament of Galilee.” How would the close proximity of this pagan, military enclave have affected the lives of the Jewish citizens of Nazareth? Certainly it must have made them fearful. It is also safe to assume that parents taught their children from their earliest years to avoid any

disorderly conduct in the streets that might attract the attention of mercenaries on their way to and from Sepphoris or of the watchmen on its walls. Such restraint was essential to safeguard not only individual freedom but the security of the community. (See below for more information)

Mark 6:1-6

1 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**. Then Jesus went around **teaching** from **village** to **village**.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: We are told that Jesus was amazed at the lack of faith of the people in his hometown. Do I have resistance to listening because of preformed opinions of someone that blocks my hearing the good news from them?

PRAYER: Neighbor Jesus, you are all grown up now and my how you have developed! My old memories of those days past keep getting in my way of hearing you sometimes. I marvel at your words and deeds, and then, those nagging doubts whispers in my ear, “that’s not what I was taught”. Help me to trust my own grown up experience of your love so I can be open and ready to receive all that you have to give me. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

HOMETOWN: Everyone comes from somewhere. Jesus comes from a little town. Little towns have long memories, and everyone has everyone else pegged for who they are and where they belong in the social context of their world.



Reflect on the town you were born in and what memories those people have of your growing up years. What was said about you in your high school yearbook? Are the projections about you accurate? Are you still little _____ in the minds of the people who still live there? Can this reflection help you get in touch with what is going on in this reading?

SABBATH: The Sabbath was the holiest day of the week for the Jews. Originally, it was a gift to the people in Egypt, as it was the only day that the people had off from the slave labor of the Pharaoh. It allowed the people to rest and regain their humanity in times they were used like beasts of burden.

Do you think Jesus chose the Sabbath to begin teaching back home for a special reason? What might that be?

SYNAGOGUE: The synagogue was the place of study and prayer in the local communities.

Is Jesus making a point when he stands before his hometown people in the synagogue and shares his understanding of God? If he had chosen a hillside or a mountaintop, would it make a difference? How?

AMAZED: The word amazed implies open-mouthed awe: something totally unexpected and yet wonder-filled.

Why is it that we do not expect knowledge from people we feel we already know, but are open to the same wisdom from a stranger?

MIRACLES: The people had heard of the miracles that Jesus had done elsewhere. It goes beyond their understanding how their local boy could accomplish such things.

Do you feel that they really want to know, or are looking for ways to discount Jesus? What information does Mark give to help answer this question?

CARPENTER: A son was expected to follow in the footsteps of his father in his trade and not aspire to go beyond this. If Jesus had been a dutiful son, there would have been no chance to study under a respected teacher

If this were the assumption of those questioning that day, could this explain their confusion and resistance? Would you have probably said the same thing?

MARY'S SON: The question about Jesus' parentage is couched in calling him Mary's son instead of Joseph's son which added to the hostile reception Jesus received in the synagogue.

When you don't want to accept a new idea, do you reach for all the support you can find to discredit the source of the idea? Can you remember an instance that you balked at a truth like these people in our reading today?

BROTHERS /SISTERS /RELATIVES: The people are really struggling. All the reasons to question what they have heard and seen come to the fore.

They recognize his teaching as wisdom, but seem afraid to accept it as coming from him. Why such strong resistance?

WITH: The Greek word used for *with* in this text means to have an intimate connection, not just a casual association.

How does this help us understand the people's confusion and hostile reception?

OFFENSE: In other translations we hear that Jesus was too much for the people. His teachings and deeds were stretching the people beyond their breaking point. Envy and disbelief caused them to take offense at Jesus.

Why do you think the people instinctively react negatively to Jesus' words and deeds? Have you ever experienced this paradoxical reaction at a reunion? What was it like?

ONLY: Mark tells us that Jesus' reception was positive except in his hometown.

What about a hometown gets in the way of a positive reception for the returning son or daughter? What part might jealousy have in this?

PROPHET: Jesus appears to see his role as a prophet. The prophet was a sign that God was present to the people.

What can this tell you about the teaching that Jesus shared in the synagogue? Could the people have been offended by his understanding of God?

HONOR: Jesus lived in a honor/shame-based culture. A person would rather die than be dishonored or shamed. Jesus seems to expect the type of reception that he got that day.

Why do you think Jesus went to his hometown knowing the reception he would receive?

LAY HIS HANDS: Today we hear of the alternate healing method of 'healing touch'. Here we see Jesus touching the sick that open themselves to the possibility that Jesus could help them and receive healing.

What do you think happens when someone lays his or her hands on you with the intent of making you feel better? Have you ever experienced this? If so, what was it like?

LACK OF FAITH: We are beginning to recognize the part that the faith in the source of healing is to the process of getting well. Modern medicine is more and more powerful, but without our trust/faith, it is hampered or made ineffective.

What is it about the healing process that seems to require our trust in the doctor/medicine/therapy?

TEACHING: Often we are told that Jesus went about teaching, but are not told what the teaching was.

Do you ever imagine that you would be one of those people attracted to Jesus' teaching sessions? Is religion one of those areas that you hesitate to entertain new understandings? If so, why?

VILLAGE: There is an old joke that an expert is someone with a briefcase 50 miles from home. Jesus now leaves his hometown and moves out to the neighboring villages.

How far do you drive for a workshop or seminar? Do you give the same consideration to a comparable offering at your local community college as you do one far away? What if your neighbor or a relative is presenting it?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mk. 6:1-6 // Mt. 13:54-58; Lk. 4:16-30; Jn. 7:5,15; **Mk. 6:3** // Mk. 15:40; Mt. 12:46; Jn. 6:42; **Mk. 6:4** // Jn. 4:44;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Ez. 2:2-5; Ps. 123:1-4; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Mk. 6:1-6;

Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Sam. 5:1-5, 9-10; Ps. 48; 2 Cor. 12:2-10; Mk. 6:1-13;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

The Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words for brother and sister can mean relative, even a marriageable person from one's extended family, or "kissing cousin" (Tob 7:9). Pg. 71.

Levine, Amy-Jill & Brettler, Marc Zvi. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 2011

When the prophets are kicked out of any group, it's a very short time until that group is circling the wagons around itself, and all sense of mission and message is lost. Richard Rohr

So the [prophetic vocation](#) is first to help the faith community to embrace a loss that it does not want to admit and then, secondly, to proclaim to the people a hope that they cannot dare to imagine. Fr. Bryan Massingale

The prophet is a man whose whole life is a living witness of the providential action of God in the world. Pg. 20..

[The Sign of Jonas](#). NY. Image Books. 1952

When we trust in God, we live in the light of true faith, and our obedient souls are set on fire in the furnace of divine love. - Catherine of Siena

One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of shore for a very long time. Andre Gide

Was this not merely the carpenter's boy, Joseph's son, known like his brothers and sisters as one of themselves? Likewise, it was his very earthliness which rendered so outrageous to the keepers of God's law that the suggestion that he carried with him God's own authority over human sin. Above all, it was the base contemptibility of his final fate which confirmed his all-too-ungodly earthliness, his vulgar brotherhood in death with criminal and outcasts utterly negating every claim and aspiration to regal status and divine authority. How could he be God's anointed, sent to set the people free from all the fetters of oppression, when he had died, stripped and mocked and fettered at the oppressors' hands? Who could interpret him as the harbinger of final righteousness and power when his mission terminated in abject weakness on a cross, and in a sinner's grave? Pg. 114.

Lewis, Alan E. [Between Cross and Resurrection](#). Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001.

If I looked for my glasses in the morning in the way most seekers search for God, I would stumble around half blind all day. Dr. A. W. Tozer

What was so special about Jesus, the citizens of Nazareth asked righteously. He was no better than anyone else, and yet here he was preaching and working wonders and attracting crowds. This was wrong, evil, and unfair - Jesus was no one special. The citizens of Nazareth had the moral obligation to tell as many people as they could that Jesus was no one special. The envious person always has the pose of self-righteousness. He or she pretends to be a plain, simple, honest person defending integrity, responsibility, maturity, morality, and common sense. Beneath this pose is a nasty, vicious, destructive hatred.....Envy threw Jesus out of Nazareth; envy crucified him.

Greeley, Andrew. [When Life Hurts](#). Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1988. Pg. 72.

"For believers it would sometimes be an easy thing to become a martyr for God, but God also needs living witnesses who will daily offer themselves as living sacrifices for the salvation of others (1 Cor. 15: 31). For death is easy, but it is hard to live, for a believer's life is a daily dying. But those who are thus ready to lay down their lives for God's sake shall share His glory and live with Him for ever in fullness of joy." - Pt. 5, Sect. 2 - Christian Mystic

Every particle of creation sings its own song of what is and what is not. Hearing what is can make you wise; hearing what is not can drive you mad. Ghalib (Sufi Poet)

The small community of Nazareth was located in a valley just 4 miles downhill from Sepphoris, the central garrison city from which Herod Antipas controlled Galilee. During the early days of the first century, Herod enlarged and rebuilt the fortress, located on the flat summit of a hill, to make it the "ornament of Galilee." How would the close proximity of this pagan, military enclave have affected the lives of the Jewish citizens of Nazareth? Certainly it must have made them fearful. It is also safe to assume that parents taught their children from their earliest years to avoid any disorderly conduct in the streets that might attract the attention of mercenaries on their

way to and from Sepphoris or of the watchmen on its walls. Such restraint was essential to safeguard not only individual freedom but the security of the community. With this background, I can readily understand the reactions of Jesus' family when they heard that he was attracting large crowds throughout Galilee and that there were scenes of unruly conduct and confrontations with religious leaders. It must have seemed to them that such a careless attitude towards authority was demented. If this was, indeed, how they felt, their attempt to "arrest" Jesus was motivated by love and concern for his safety. They were upset about his method, not his mission. In the same way, it is easy to understand the less-than-enthusiastic reception Jesus received when he visited Nazareth Mark 6:1-6. Some must have felt his method constituted a rejection of the code of behavior they practiced and which he had been taught.

I believe this interpretation makes it easier to understand why Luke, in Acts 1, could describe the mother of Jesus and his brothers as being part of the close community of believers, meeting together with the apostles in the period immediately following the execution. Additionally, James, his brother, was leader, of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem until he was executed by stoning. These later events indicate the breach between Jesus and his family was transitory and not fundamental in nature. Smithies, Ronald H. *Family Ties*. [Bible Review](#). Feb. 2000. Page 10.

Our demons are unrecognized gods.

"I would rather lose, in a cause that will some day win, than win in a cause that will some day lose!" Woodrow Wilson

And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight inside the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom. Anais Nin

Ironically, a prophet must be educated inside the system in order to have the freedom to critique that very system. You have to know the rules of any tradition, and you have to respect those rules enough to know why they do exist--and thus how to break them properly, for the sake of a larger and more essential value. Richard Rohr

If we trust God to act in us, God will act in us. This is how our lives become prophetic. ...If we are completely open to the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit will be able to lead us where God wants us to go. Going along that line, our lives will be prophetic. Thomas Merton: *The Springs of Contemplation*:

With teaching a community will not die; but without prophecy it will not live. James D. G. Dunn

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B* 2011-12. Pgs. 96-98. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B* . 2005 Pgs. 96-100. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Grana, Janice. [Images](#). St. Mary's College Press, Winona, MN. 1976. **RELEASE YOUR CAPTIVES: Page 67. PRISON: Page 123.**

Shea, John. [Stories of Faith](#). Thomas More Pub. Chicago. 1980. **SENDING OUT: Page 176.**