

Familiarity Breeds Contempt
Proper 9 - Year B - 07/04/2021

Psalm Reading: 48

1st Reading: Ezek. 2:1-5, 2nd: Mark 6:1-13

Last week we talked about two amazing miracles by Jesus. He cured a woman with a flow of blood and he brought a twelve year old girl back to life.

Amazing occurrence

Crowds Uplifted

Many Brought to Faith

Now, in our reading for today he goes to his hometown, back to Nazareth which is actually not very far from the Sea of Galilee. It is only about 20 miles, a distance that could be walked in a day.

He brings his disciples with him.

Entourage.

Fame precedes him.

Left not left very long before.

Imagine what the people remember of Jesus

Tekton (worker in hard materials, carpenter,
stone mason?)

Eldest son, taking care of family.

Must have been a good student always aiming above
his station.

Ministry began when he was about 30.

Now he returns, this jumped up carpenter who had just recently been repairing roofs and mending the wall around the well.

Then in verse 2 we may read: “*When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many heard him and were amazed.*”

Sounds good doesn't it? But these folk were not amazed because of the erudition, the insight, the forcefulness, or the exhortations of Jesus, rather the townspeople were amazed that this guy, Jesus the Tekton, had the audacity to preach to them! He was no better a person than they were, was he?

They asked, “*Where did this man get these things?*” They can't believe this guy. He's even performing miracles!

Now I think this points out to us what it meant for Jesus to be both fully divine and fully human. Jesus was the most perfect human and yet the people of Nazareth could not see it. (None so Blind...) They had had Jesus with them for thirty years. How could there be anything special about him? Hadn't he been around all this time? They had not seen the divine, only the human.

And they knew so much about Jesus. His mom, Mary lived in town, along with his younger brothers, James, Joseph, Jude and Simon, not to mention his sisters, who they did not even think enough about to mention their names. And his family was ticked off at him, anyway, for leaving the family business, even though his brother's were old enough to take over. His family even said at one point that he was out of his mind for the way he was carrying on. (Mark 3:21)

Embarrassing them / Rising above his station from *Tekton* to *Rabbi*.

So, is it any surprise that in the last sentence of Verse 3 Mark tells us that “they took offense at him!” They were disgusted by the behavior of Jesus. Here he was, the savior of all humanity, healing, bringing a message of love and peace and the people who knew him best were offended by his very presence.

Now, before you condemn these people of Nazareth for their blindness and their stupidity, you should realize that they were not the first nor the last people who would allow their familiarity with a prophet, a good, even divine person to cloud their judgment.

I think we have a tendency to do this very thing in our own communities, in our own churches, and in our own families. We often form a judgment of a person based on what we know of them from the past. We forget that people can change. People can grow into something more than they were, or they change because they have learned from their mistakes.

Because it is convenient, our past perceptions drive our behavior toward others. We form a rut in our behavior because it is a convenient way of dealing with the world, and it should be no surprise that others fall into a rut in their behavior toward us. And thus it is that relationships continue on as they were in the past far into the foreseeable future. We miss out on the growth of individuals and we do not take the opportunity to change ourselves and our own behavior.

So the people of Nazareth missed out on the experience of having Jesus among them, preaching the Word. They missed out on the healing, and the joy that comes from communing

with the Savior. We learn in Verse 5 that “He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people.”

If anything, they were in the best position to benefit from the presence of Jesus. But because of his closeness they could not see the benefits they were missing out on.

One of the things we as Christians talk a lot about is that becoming a Christian makes us new. Paul talks about this in his second letter to the Corinthians. (2 Cor. 5:16-17) He writes: “From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old life has gone, the new life is here!”

Often, when we do confession at a service, we quote this last sentence, “The old life has gone, the new life has begun!” in reference to ourselves. We realize that Christ is making us better people and it is a comforting thought. But we don’t often recognize that it is this same newness that is taking place in us that is also taking place in others. And that is one reason why Paul tells us that we can no longer regard others from the “worldly point of view”, the view from the bottom of the rut of our behavior toward others.

The change in us, through Christ, mandates that we change how we act toward others. This change in how we treat others can and does change how others act in the world. It can change even how others see themselves. You can see the dynamic going on here. There is a move bringing us all ever closer to the Kingdom of God.

This kind of change is not an easy thing to do. It requires conscious effort. It requires us treating others with respect, and

it requires us to take the blinders from our own eyes to see people for the evolving beings they are. We must listen respectfully; we must speak with care and compassion; we must look at the big picture of God's Kingdom rather than the tiny picture of our own self-interest.

The people of Nazareth could not do this, and they were the poorer as a result. As Jesus said to the Nazarenes, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives, and in his own home." They could not benefit from Christ's works because of their poor vision.

One of the great insights from our reading is this. That, just as the Nazarenes could not get past the *Tekton* to see the Messiah, often we do not see the light of Christ in each other, in our fellow church members. Life has conditioned us to see the human side of each other and not the image of God that is ever within us. My friends, we in the church are all richer when we recognize the good in each other, and treat all as valued treasures, children of God.

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Resources:

NIB Vol VIII, p.591-593

Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 137-141

Geza Vermes, *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, pp. 178 and 207

The Message, Mark 6:1-13