

A Prophet Without Honor

Mark 6: 1-6

November 16, 2025

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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.

Have you wondered what separates those who are apathetic, those who scoff, mock, reject Jesus Christ and those who love and follow Jesus Christ? It is unbelief!

You could divide the whole world into two categories – those who are pro-Christ and those who are anti-Christ. Those who are in the believing category and those who are in un-believing category. Those who are Heaven bound, and those who are Hell bound. Those who are in the sinners saved by grace category, and those who are in the sinners awaiting judgment category. Those who desire holiness, and those who crave unholiness. Those who see in the person of Jesus Christ, an unmatched beauty, joy and satisfaction and those who are neutral, apathetic and some who are even offended by Jesus Christ.

No one is born a believer. It only by grace through faith you are a believer. And if you think you have been saved by your own merit, then you would be in the self-deceived category and therefore in the unbelieving category. Unbelief implies contempt, disdain, offense and even hostility for Jesus Christ.

So, if you believe Jesus is the Lord and Savior of your life, why would you be ever *offended* by him or his teaching?

Because, here in our passage, we see Jesus goes to his hometown. Jesus is first met with *astonishment* at his teaching. Then they are *offended* by him. Jesus, in the end, *marvels* at their unbelief. This is the irony of it all. These are people from his hometown, his family and his relatives and yet have such contempt and dishonor for our Lord. Jesus is a Prophet without Honor in his own town.

Yes, sadly, there may be people in your close circle and family who are like these in Nazareth. And we want to pray that they see Jesus for who He is.

My prayer this morning is that this passage would stir you up to honor, cherish and love the Lord Jesus Christ with all that you have.

Let's begin our exposition by looking at verse one.

Verse 1.

¹ He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.

Notice his disciples followed Jesus where ever he traveled. We'll come back to that. But Jesus is back in his hometown. Nazareth was a town about 60 miles north of Jerusalem. At the time of this letter, in the first century, Nazareth was most likely inhabited by 500 people. It was an obscure town. Very few knew about this town. Nothing major happened in this town. Work was hard to find. Joseph very likely took Jesus to the nearby town of Sefphoris for work. Mary and Joseph, the earthly parents of Jesus were a poor Jewish family. So, when Jesus grew up, everyone knew him as the son of Mary and Joseph. And for thirty years, the people in town saw him as a normal man.

Verse 2

² And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished,..

On a Sabbath day, Jesus began to teach. The initial reaction was always astonishment when Jesus taught. And this astonishment was not because they believed in him. Jesus' teaching was unlike the teaching of his day. The scribes and the Pharisees were lovers of money. They liked the attention and the adulation of the people. They really did not care for the spiritual needs or the physical needs of the people. They were domineering and authoritarian and lacked the prophetic authority of God. They put too many burdens on people.

Jesus, on the other hand, taught as one with authority and power. Every word was impactful for the listening ear. His burden is easy to bear because He took the weight of your sin on himself. When we saw Mark 1, Jesus taught in another synagogue in Capernaum, and this is what they said, "*And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.*" Mark 1:22.

When Jesus taught – demons trembled. Sick people were healed. Needy people were forgiven. Softened hearts were sanctified. This is all positive.

Negatively, greedy hearts wanted more from Jesus and were hardly grateful.

Hardened hearts turned hostile.

And here in Jesus' hometown, these folks show a kind of disdain for Jesus after this initial amazement. Why? What did Jesus teach that they had such contempt for him?

Mark the Gospel writer does not tell us. But the Gospel of Luke gives us some insight of into what Jesus taught. The timeline with Mark and Luke look a little different but the conclusions are the same at the same place – Nazareth.

So, there is what the Gospel of Luke tells us:

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,* ¹⁹ *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, “*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*” ²² And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph's son?”

Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah chapter 61. People knew the prophecy. Jesus says that the prophecy of Isaiah has been fulfilled in their hearing.

Why? Because Jesus had been preaching good news to the poor. Healing the sick. Setting oppressed people free. And they all *marveled* at him...until Jesus gives them two examples of what two well-known prophets of Israel had done.

Elijah had gone to a poor widow not in Israel but in Sidon. (Luke 4:25-26)

Why? Because the kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit.

And Elisha had gone to man to heal a man who is not in Israel but in Syria. (Luke 4:27)

Why? Because Naaman was needy and was willing to worship the God of Israel.

Jesus was pronouncing an indictment on the hardness of their hearts.

How do the people in the synagogue react? In raging madness. And they want to push him off a cliff. (Luke 4:28-29)

Jesus preaches one sermon and they want to kill him. Imagine that!

Now, back to Mark's Gospel. The people in the synagogue are astonished. This astonishment is an astonishment of *contempt* for our Lord.

What do they say? Verse 2 and 3.

1. Where did this man get these healing *powers*?
2. What is the *wisdom* he has?

3. How does he do such *mighty* powerful signs and wonders?
4. 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?

They see Jesus as one among them and nothing more. A man who did carpentry. Carpentry or working with stones was not a profession beneath them. But they cannot reconcile the fact that Jesus talks with prophetic power and authority. Jesus is more than a Prophet. Jesus is the Son of God. They cannot bring themselves to honor or even worship Jesus – the Savior of the world. Their sin of contempt clouds their hearts. So they conclude their reasoning by taking *offense* at him. What a terrible conclusion!

Verse 2b.

And they took offense at him.

Offense is the word *scandalizo*. You get the English word *scandal* from here. You see the people in Jesus' hometown were offended, insulted and scandalized by Jesus. If ignorance was to be accepted as a valid excuse for their not knowing who Jesus really was, their contempt of Jesus feeds their ignorance.

“It is not mere ignorance that hinders men, but that, of their own accord, they search after grounds of offense, to prevent them from following the path to which God invites” - John Calvin

There was a time John the Baptist doubted if Jesus was the Christ and sent messengers to Jesus. What did Jesus say?

²² And he answered them, *“Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.* ²³ *And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”* Luke 7:22-23. You want to be blessed, learn not to be offended by Christ!

And there are consequences for treating Jesus with such contempt and disdain. First, Jesus tells them what they ought to have done but had failed. And then he shows us by his actions the consequences of such disdain.

Verses 4 and 5.

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.

What does dis-honoring or honoring Jesus look like?

1. In John chapter 5, when the Jews were trying to kill him, Jesus tells them these words: “Whoever does not *honor* the Son does not *honor* the Father who sent him” John 5:23
2. In John chapter 8, they accuse Jesus of having a demon. And what does Jesus say? The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?”⁴⁹ Jesus answered, “*I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me.*” John 8:48-49
3. The apostle Peter writes to churches instructing them “*in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy*” 1 Peter 3:15.
4. God speaks through the prophet Malachi “*A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor?*” Malachi 1:6.

You see, those who have a disdain, a contempt, a scorn for Christ or for the Word of God have very little desire to honor God. When we look at some churches today – they are infiltrated with feminism, wokeism, progressivism, social/political activism and all kinds of ideologies. None of these will matter for eternity. Man’s ideas and philosophies are lifted higher than God’s. How did we get here? Disdain for Christ and His word! God asks “Where is my honor?”

And what are consequences of such disdain?

⁵ And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

Jesus has no desire to do any mighty work in Nazareth. The people of Nazareth rejected him by being offended by him. Consequently, Jesus will not give any proof of His identity or His saving power. Yes, God can and will withhold blessing when He is dishonored.

Mark ends the passage by showing us the root of the problem. Jesus gives us the diagnosis of the heart condition.

Verse 6.

⁶ And he marveled because of their unbelief.

Jesus marveled at their unbelief.

Let’s go back to verse one before we conclude.

He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.

The disciples *followed* Jesus Christ because they *believed* Him.

Believing implies *following* Jesus Christ.

And *following* Jesus Christ implies *obeying* Him.

Follow Jesus in spite of how you may be treated by the unbelieving world.

What the Bible teaches may challenge you. But the implication of being a follower of Jesus Christ is that his teaching ought to make you love Jesus more with a growing desire to obey him more. Obeying Jesus implies that you will also desire to win others to Christ. Should you be offended for the sake of Christ, know that Christ was offended and hated too.

Jesus was despised and was led to be crucified. And those hands of Christ that touched and healed the lame, the lepers, the demon possessed, the sick and the oppressed are the same hands that received those sharp nails. With each hammer blow Jesus received, the pain he endured, the shame he faced was for you. By his blood stained hands and wounds, you were made well.

May the Lord give us strength to honor him!

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: A Prophet Without Honor! Mark 6:1-6

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What do you observe between the disciples of Jesus (in verse 1) and the people in Nazareth? Compare and contrast.

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. What is your response when God's Word speaks in your life situation? Offense or repentance? Go around and share.

3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: What will you change to honor Christ more?