

**Mark 6:1-6**

1 He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being 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 Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." 5 And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. 6 And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching.

Jesus has a crowd problem. When he was at his home, he couldn't even eat due to the crowds. Whenever he was by the sea he had to get into a boat in order to be able to preach to the crowd. The only way he could escape from the crowd was to cross the sea into the area of the Gerasenes. But then he encounters another problem. Jesus encounters a man that is possessed by demons he sends the spirits into a herd of pigs and they rush down a steep bank and drown in the lake. The community is scared they don't understand the power of Jesus and its source. So, they ask Jesus to leave their area. When Jesus overcomes demonic possession, it demonstrates his divine power by immediately recognizing him as the Son of God, So, Jesus goes back across sea and returns to Galilee. Once again we find Jesus by the sea and once again he has a problem of a very large crowd.

While Jesus is in the midst of the crowd by the sea, a synagogue leader seeks out Jesus and begs him to come and lay his hands on his dying daughter. So, Jesus heads out to the home of the synagogue leader, which is several miles away, and the large crowd continues to follow him. While he is traveling within this huge crowd a woman who can't stop bleeding sees Jesus and seizes the opportunity to fight her way through the crowd just to touch his garments in the hopes that she will be healed. Jesus, being sensitive to human suffering, wants to know who it was that touched him. Then he tells the woman that it is her faith caused her to be well. While all of this is going on people arrive to report that the daughter of the synagogue leader has died. Jesus continues to travel to the house of the synagogue leader and when he arrives he commands the little girl to get up. She is alive, the word of Christ has the power to heal, praise God, hallelujah, amen. Again Jesus connects the healing to faith. The healing ministry of Jesus displays his power and his compassion, and it also demonstrates his divinity status. It shows how much he cares for the needy and illustrates God's good news.

Jesus leaves the house of the synagogue leader and goes to his hometown of Nazareth. While he is teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath he astonishes the audience with his teaching skills and healing ability. The people there experience and recognize his wisdom and his healing power. However, the people challenge the source of power and his divine status. Everywhere that Jesus has been, the people are amazed at Jesus' healing power and the wisdom of his teaching. However, here in his hometown of Nazareth he is rejected. At this particular point in the scripture he is not rejected by the religious leaders but by ordinary people. They have heard his teaching and witnessed his healing yet they have unbelief. Jesus is amazed at their unbelief. Their sin is unbelief.

This brings us to our lesson for today, in contemporary society, the sin is unbelief. We recognize Jesus. We know him to be the Son of God. We are impressed by his teaching and we know the power is divine. We value our faith but this leaves us amazed at the extent of unbelief in our communities. The Gospel of Mark distinguishes Jesus as the Son of God. The mighty works of Jesus are attributed to his divine power. But faith comes first. Faith is a matter of trust. Faith is a human response to the calamity of hopeless situations. When the disciples are in the middle of a violent storm when they are out on the sea, they look to Jesus for help. When a man is possessed by demons the legion of demons immediately recognizes Jesus as the Son of God. The father of a dying girl came looking for Jesus. A woman who can't stop bleeding, maneuvers through a crowd to get to Jesus. They all want help from Jesus but it is their faith that comes first. It is faith that leads people to Jesus in the first place. Faith is what directs them to seek help from the divine source. Faith is what is most important. When Jesus was in his hometown he encountered a problem of the faith. In spite of his supreme knowledge and profound teaching skills, and in spite of them witnessing his healings, their problem was a lack of faith. This leaves Jesus amazed at their unbelief.

The rejection of Jesus by his own people provides a lesson for us today. It presents us with a warning and a challenge. The family of Jesus is the church. We are his disciples. The lesson provides an invitation for us to reflect on the dimension of church's unbelief. We are united together in Jesus Christ, adopted by him into the family of God. When we confess to believe in Jesus we begin to identify with his title Christ. We are to focus our lives on his teaching, the things that he did, and the will of God. The lesson is a warning to those who know whom Jesus is but end up rejecting him in their daily lives. The implication is that when you truly believe, then Jesus can do great things. The spiritual climate of the congregation can experience exponential growth compounding upon itself with the power of God. The extent of your belief is a positive correlation with your spiritual growth, spiritual nourishment, faith development, and mission success.