

## Jason Upchurch - Mark 6:1-6 - The Good News is Rejected

I don't know if you've noticed this in your life, but oftentimes the people who are closest to you are the ones that are the hardest to tell about Jesus.

Whether it's friends or family, neighbors, co workers. Basically all the people we usually have the biggest burden for are the very ones that it's most difficult talk to about spiritual things. That's not always the case - there are exceptions.

But that's often the case and just know that's how it's always been.

We have to understand that the gospel message we hold is foolishness to those who are perishing. That's what Paul says in **1 Cor. 1**. The unbelieving world doesn't see the gospel as riches. It doesn't see it as valuable.

We see it as the treasure buried in the field and we'd go sell absolutely everything we have to buy the field. They see it as a field filled with weeds.

The complication is that with those who are close to us they know us. They've seen our failures. They've seen our hypocrisies. And because of that many times it's almost as though it's easier to tell the gospel to people we don't know very well than family. At least it is to me, maybe some of you would pass out if you had to talk to strangers. But trying to have conversations about Jesus with those close to us is often hard.

And Jesus himself illustrates that here. Jesus had a rough go with those who knew him best. We've already seen Jesus be rejected by his own family. Remember they thought he was crazy back in **Chap 3:31-35** and tried to get him to stop talking. But here it's the whole town.

Big take away: If Jesus's was rejected by those close to him, don't be surprised when you're rejected by your close friends because of Jesus.

Side: Luke also records this incident. Luke adds a whole bunch of detail that Mark chose not to include. This week, if you're interested, go read Luke's version in **Luke 4:16-30**.

The crash course is that we find out from Luke that this is where Jesus entered the synagogue and read from the scroll of Isaiah. Remember: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news..." Jesus was saying he's the Messiah - he's the guy they've been waiting for. But Jesus goes on to talk about how God in the OT included gentiles into his people. He gave oil and grain during a famine, not to widows in Israel, but to gentile woman in Sidon. And there were a lot of lepers in Israel but he healed Naaman, a Syrian. He often worked through and showed mercy to believing Gentiles.

The people of Nazareth didn't like that at all. The response was so bad that they actually tried to kill Jesus by throwing him off a cliff. They didn't want God's mercy poured out on the Gentiles, that's not what Messiah was supposed to do. Messiah is supposed to restore Israel to worldwide glory. Well, Jesus does, just not the way the Jews thought. That's Luke's version.

But Mark's focus is different. Mark doesn't even mention what Jesus taught about. Actually, he doesn't even mention that they tried to kill Jesus. That's not what Mark is trying to help us understand.

Remember we talked about sometimes 2 people can relay a similar story highlighting or leaving out details to suit their purposes. If you and your wife had an amazing dinner on the beach, you might tell your friend about the amazing dinner you had - ignoring the beach completely. But your wife might mention the beach and who cares about the dinner? Mark and Luke have different purposes.

Luke's purpose is to highlight Gentile inclusion. Mark's purpose is to show the contrast between how people react to Jesus. We just got done with over a chapter of incredible miracle after incredible miracle. Jesus's divine power and glory have been on full display in the calming the storm, casting out the Legion of demons, healing the woman and raising the little girl from the dead. Everyone is amazed. The crowds are so intense and

the people love Jesus so much he has to hide from them just to get away from the people to move on to the next town.

Even then, his reputation precedes him and crowds are often waiting for him when he gets there. Everyone loves Jesus, everyone is in absolute awe of Jesus. They are overcome with amazement, they are falling down before him begging him to do things that only God can do.

Then he goes back home. And everything changes.

### 1) The Setting of Rejection. **Read 1-2a**

So Jesus goes away from where he had raised the little girl from the dead. We don't know exactly where that was - Mark doesn't seem too interested in giving us the details - but it's probably the western side of the lake somewhere. And he comes to his hometown. Interestingly, Mark doesn't tell us where that is either. What's Jesus's hometown? Nazareth. Mark told us that back in chapter 1, he doesn't need to remind us 5 chapters later. Pay attention, people. Nazareth was just about 15 miles west of the lake. **Map 1**

He gets to Nazareth and like he usually does, he enters the synagogue and begins teaching. **Pic 2**

A little show and tell here. This is a life size replica synagogue in Nazareth that we got to visit a couple of months ago. Nazareth used to be the backwoods town out in the middle of nowhere. It's now a city of with almost 100,000 people. In the middle of the city there is a little village that Christians have made that replicates life in Jesus's day and the people who are there help maintain the grounds and teach about life during this time.

This synagogue we visited is almost the same size as our church and would have seated about 300 people. The pulpit in the center is where the main teacher would have read from the scroll that he was teaching from that day. Once he read from that scroll he would have sat down on that little stool off to the left and taught the whole congregation while sitting. This is actually what Luke tells us happened.

If you can see, there's a vase behind the pulpit. The scrolls were kept inside vases to protect the scrolls and then all the vases were kept in a back room to keep them out of the light and keep them at a constant temperature. Just think about how amazing it is you have the entire word of God sitting in your lap whereas for thousands of years only synagogues and the Temple had portions of the Bible. **Pic 3**

This is a group of about 50 people sitting on the stadium seating. So this little synagogue could hold a lot of people. But this is where Jesus is. Again, he wasn't in this exact synagogue but something very much like this.

And in Jesus's day, if someone was a recognized teacher they could just come in and start teaching. And that's what he did. This was common practice.

So this is the setting of rejection.

### 2) The reasons for rejection. **Read 2-3**

So this is an interesting tension here. Mark says that the people were astonished at his teaching. Astonished. Isn't that good? Well not always.

Imagine you get a letter in the mail from the IRS. You open it up and it says they owe you \$25,000 and a check drops out. You'd be astonished. How can this be and where are we going to eat?

But...what if you got a letter instead from the IRS and you opened it and it said you owed them \$25,000. You might also be described as astonished. How can this be?

This word is both ways in the NT. When Jesus says in **Mark 10:26** that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich person to enter the Kingdom, Mark uses this word of the reaction: they were exceedingly astonished "Who then can be saved?"

When Jesus heals the deaf and mute man in **Mark 7:37** he uses the same word: astonished beyond measure: Jesus has done all things well.

That's exactly what's happening here. Mark doesn't tell us right away which of these the people are. He will in a few verses. But for now he leaves us hanging.

Why is there tension? Because on the one hand they recognize the amazing things Jesus is doing. We see 3 things that are astonishing to them. **Read 2**

Where did he get these things? What things? The teaching he has. How does Jesus know all this stuff? We'll see in a minute, Jesus was not trained as a rabbi or a scribe. He didn't sit at the feet of Gamaliel like Paul did or study under Caiaphas or Annas the priests.

There's some hint from Luke's gospel that as early as 12 years old Jesus knew a lot because he was holding his own with the religious leaders in the Temple when he stayed behind in Jerusalem. But beyond that it seems like Jesus lived a fairly normal life up until his baptism. There was no formal training at all.

But Jesus preaches with power and authority that not even the scribes or Pharisees have. How does he do that without formal education?

And where does he get this wisdom? Wisdom is often the application of God's truth. He knows the Scripture but he can also apply it accurately and with power. It's what Jesus did in the Sermon on the Mount - he took the Law of God and applied it to the heart.

Quite simply: Jesus is the most profound teacher they have ever had and it's not even close. Because here is God in the flesh unpacking God's own word to them. This is a barn burner sermon because Jesus only preaches barn burner sermons because it's God preaching sermons at them.

How are such mighty works done by his hands? How's he doing all these miracles? No one is denying the miracles. Now later, Mark tells us that Jesus didn't do a lot of miracles in Nazareth. So this might just mean they heard about all the miracles or it could mean that Jesus was doing miracles before he got to the synagogue that Saturday and now he's not doing any more. We're not 100% sure.

But what we do know is that Jesus did some miracles, they were authentic, everyone believed they were real, no one doubted. The objection is not "Jesus didn't really do the miracles." No one ever doubts the reality of the miracles Jesus does. The objection is on what basis he does them.

That's what they say "How does Jesus do these things?" Jesus is flat out amazing. But...Jesus is the boy from next door. **Read 3**

This is the classic: "Who are you and what did you do with our Jesus?" That's the problem they're having. They're having a problem reconciling that Jesus for 30 years was just an average person. No miracles, no grand teaching, no healing, no great wisdom.

Again, this section is part of the reason I believe that the self-actualization of Jesus as Messiah happened at his baptism. It's not like he was trying to keep it a secret. Practicing miracles in the backyard while his parents weren't looking. No. He was a normal kid, normal teenager, normal young adult. He grew in wisdom, grew in stature. He probably had some idea along the way that there was something special about himself. He surely knew he never sinned, surely had heard of the scandal and also miracles surrounding his conception and birth.

But he lived a basically normal life. Which is why the people are pointing this out. Here's a brilliant teacher and healer.

Is this not the carpenter?

That's interesting. Jesus's occupation is a carpenter. In Greek a τέκτων - where we get our word textiles. It's often used for woodworking but could be any domestic trade: metal worker, a mason, a craftsman. Jesus is the local contractor in Nazareth.

Luke's version says he was the son of τέκτων - son of a carpenter. Jesus followed in Joseph's footsteps. That's what most kids did. If your father was a farmer you were a farmer. If your father had a vineyard, you were a vinedresser. Rancher, so forth.

Joseph was a carpenter. A very normal job. A very average job. But Jesus just came in here and preached the daylight out of **Isa. 61** and they are going "where did he get that?"

Can I give you a little application here? You don't have to go to Bible college or seminary to be useful for the Kingdom. You don't have to go to Bible college or seminary to be a dynamite preacher. If you think God is calling you to full time ministry I think you should consider those options, but don't underestimate the blessing you can be teaching and preaching the word in the context you're in.

I think it's amazing that Jesus was a tradesman for his whole life. I mean, you'd think if God was going to prep Jesus for preaching he would have made it that Joseph was a scribe or a Pharisee so Jesus would have that training. Or that Jesus would live closer to the Temple so he could be more involved in the religious world around Jerusalem.

No, God appointed Jesus to be the son of a τέκτων so he could learn a skilled trade. Don't ever think that trades or "secular" job is somehow less important for the Kingdom. Jesus worked as a tradesman for 20 years before he was in ministry for 3 years.

Wherever God has placed you - and he's placed you there on purpose - do that for his glory.

But they are surprised at his ability. The rest of **Vs. 3** deserves some attention. **Read 3**

Two things to note. First, 'the son of Mary' might be a little bit of a dig. It's true, of course he was the son of Mary but no one in Jesus's day was identified with their mother. Everyone was identified with their father.

It could simply be that Joseph was dead so she the only one living, but it might be a subtle jab at the fact that there was controversy surrounding her pregnancy. They're hinting that Jesus is an illegitimate child: she's Mary's son, not Joseph's son. There seems to be something going on with that language.

But nevertheless, they know this family. This isn't the weird family on the outskirts of town that no one knows. This isn't the nobility who living in the castle away from view of everyone. No, this is the family down the street. "We know these guys."

And then, secondly, they know them so well they name all family. **Read 3**

Now, I'm going to take a little detour here for a few minutes because I would be remiss if I didn't mention the false teaching of the Catholic Church called the perpetual virginity of Mary. This verse is foundational for refuting the error called the Perpetual virginity of Mary.

The Catholic Church believes that Mary was always a virgin, not just before conceiving Jesus but also afterward. They believe she never came to know Joseph in sexual intimacy even after they were fully married and that she never had more children. The names here, according to the Catholic Church are cousins of Jesus not brothers and sisters.

This was decided by the Catholic Church in 553AD at the Second Council of Constantinople where basically the church issued anathemas to anyone who rejected this doctrine. And they still believe it to this day.

Now there is absolutely nothing in the Bible to support that view. Nothing. And even the church fathers who lived at the time were mixed on this and many admitted there was no biblical evidence at all. But the conclusion of the church council was that these were cousins of Jesus.

But, think about just this passage. It would be really unusual for the townsfolk of Nazareth to point to Jesus's **cousins** as supporting that they knew Jesus and his family. Why would anyone bring up cousins? Why not uncle and aunts? That's closer direct family relation. How do cousins establish any basis of knowledge? They don't.

But more importantly - the words here (ἀδελφός, ἀδελφή) simply mean brother and sister. The Greek lexicon says "a male" or "female who comes from the same womb as the reference." It's the plain old word you use for brother and sister.

What they're saying is "We know Mary, we know all the BarJosph kids. There's nothing special about any of them, certainly not Jesus."

And by the way, we know Mary knew Joseph and had intimacy and other kids because the Bible explicitly teaches that.

**Luke 2:7:** Jesus is called their firstborn. Not their only child. Their first born, implying what? More that followed.

**Matt. 1:25** says that Joseph knew Mary not until she had given birth. Meaning, he knew her after Jesus was born. It's plain as day.

There's also a different word that can be used for cousin - ἀνεψιός. That's which literally means cousin. Why would someone use the word brother or sister when they could simply use cousin?

We don't see any evidence of this teaching in Scripture. It's a really weird teaching that requires twisting very clear passages for no apparent reason.

In fact this idea of perpetual virginity is first mentioned almost 200 years after Jesus in an apocryphal work called the Protoevangelium of James. And as the Catholic Church became more monastic - meaning they had monasteries and monks who took vows of celibacy - they used this apocryphal work to justify their position. And tried to reframe the Scripture.

The argument would go: If Mary and Joseph could be celibate within marriage, then certainly the monks could be celibate too. So this became an important factor. Later the Catholics claimed it added theological support to the sinlessness of Jesus. And there were even some reformers who held to this doctrine.

But nowhere does the Bible teach this. It teaches the opposite. It teaches that Joseph and Mary had normal intimate relations with each other after Jesus was born. And as a result of those relations they had a whole bunch of kids. There were 4 other brothers and at least 2 sisters, possibly more.

By the way, it was actually a good thing that Joseph and Mary were intimate. Why? Because that's what's supposed to happen in marriage. That's God's design in marriage. It's actually obedience to the Lord to be intimate in marriage because that's part of the purpose of marriage. Joseph and Mary were obeying God to be intimate and be fruitful and multiply.

That's a big rabbit trail, but underline this passage a place to go to take your Catholic friends when they talk about the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Now, one other note on the brothers. There was nothing remarkable about them either. They were also likely τέκτων like Jesus and Joseph. But we know later that the Holy Spirit appointed them as apostles. James was an apostle in Jerusalem basically in charge of the church their as the gospel spread. And Jude, the brother of James, who wrote the epistle also likely an apostle.

God uses obscure people and obscure families to proclaim the gospel for his glory.

But this is why they reject Jesus: they can't reconcile the power of Jesus's message and his miracles with the boy from next door. And so they take offense at Jesus.

The astonishment we saw earlier wasn't like the IRS gave us money, it's like we owe the IRS money. They are offended that Jesus from down the road would dare come in here acting like he knows some stuff and presume to preach at them.

3) Here's the principle of Rejection. **Read 4**

This is something of an axiom, a proverb or a saying that Jesus comes up with. And it's a double negative which happens all the time in Greek so they're used to it. We don't like double negatives. So for us it would be like:

A prophet is honored everywhere, but in his home and hometown.

Or, if you prefer, familiarity breeds what? Contempt. If you know someone well, you tend not to put them on a pedestal. In fact you're suspicious if other people do.

This has always been the case, especially of prophets. Jeremiah, Elijah, whole schools of prophets were rejected in the OT by those close to them.

Even we look at them as amazing. Jeremiah! Elijah! Moses! All rejected by those close to them. As was Jesus. As we might be.

It shouldn't surprise us when our family rejects us. It should surprise us when our family hears the Word of the Lord and believes.

4) Here's the Root of Rejection. **Read 5-6**

The root of the rejection is unbelief. In fact, the unbelief is so oppressive Jesus can't do much in Nazareth. He does no mighty work there.

That's pretty amazing given the last chapter: calming storms, casting out Legion, healing chronic bleeding and raising the dead. Here, in his hometown he can't do much. And that's an interesting thought: the Greek says he is not able to do this. Jesus? Not able? Yes, in his humanity - in his Messianic mission - he is not able to do many mighty works. He can do some, there's some healing going on.

Why can't he do this? Unbelief. **Read 6**

The last couple of chapters we've had people marvel at Jesus. Here, the table is turned: Jesus is the one marveling. And not in a good way. He is marveling at their unbelief.

Just in the last story we saw the woman who believed all she had to do was touch his garment. And she got what she wanted. Then we saw parents who all Jesus told them to do was believe, and their daughter was raised.

The unbelief here is so deafening, so thick, God is not demonstrating much power. And so Jesus just moves on to the next towns.

Let me ask you: are you asking God for things in faith? Do you truly believe that the omnipotent, all knowing, kind and gracious God of the universe could do what you ask him if you ask in faith? Do you actually believe that? Or does Jesus marvel at your unbelief?

God isn't done in Nazareth. By the way. Even though the unbelief is thick, eventually Mary comes to faith in Jesus. James and Jude come to faith in Jesus. His family believes.

Let me leave you with an encouragement: just because those closest to you reject now, they might not always. Be fearless and faithful when you tell them the Word, and walk in faithfulness and leave the rest up to God. He may do some amazing things yet. **Pray**