

"Hometown"

Mark 6:1-13

5 July 2009, Proper 9B

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Mark 6:1-13

He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 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! 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. Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil any who were sick and cured them.

Prayer.

I. Gospel for Today: Mark 6:1-13.

Two parts: v.1-6 and v.7-13.

First Part: Jesus faces rejection;
rejected by the people of his own hometown.

In our text from Mark this morning we read

That Jesus is in Nazareth, his hometown,

The neighborhood of his youth,

Where he lived in close proximity to family, friends, and neighbors.

We find him teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

How does he get such a gig?

By invitation?

Filling in for a vacationing Rabbi?

Probably not.

He may have simply been a lector for the day,

Much like we have lay members who lead the service

And read the scriptures.

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The text from Mark is
Loosely paralleled by Luke 4:16-30
where Luke provides the two key pieces of additional information.
First, that Jesus read from the Isaiah scroll

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."¹*

Many are astounded: "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!"
After an initial positive reception
Everything begins to change.
Why?

- Did they wonder if Jesus was 'crazy smart,' and then decide that he was just crazy? Earlier in Mark (3:21) Jesus' own family had come to get him because they thought he had 'gone out of his mind.'
- "Where did he get all this?" they asked. Perhaps the crowd believed he got his wisdom from a demonic source.
- In as social system where status was understood as fixed (i.e. your status at birth defined who you would always be), did they simply regard it as impossible for Jesus to amount to anything?²

They question his authority and family heritage: "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?"

No mention of a father, as if to demean his trade.

"They took offense at him."³

They rejected him.

Tried to knock him down a few pegs.

But Jesus makes sense of their conflict:

"Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown."⁴

Jesus could do no deed of power.

Incredible!

Jesus was powerless because the people were faithless.

Remember last Sunday's Gospel, immediately preceding today's passage?

¹ Luke 4:18-19 (RSV)

² With thanks to Mark G. Vitalis Hoffman, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, PA. As found at workingpreacher.org

³ Mark 6:3b

⁴ Mark 6:4

- It was the woman's faith that healed her of her flow of blood: "My daughter, your faith has made you well."

- It was Jarius' belief which brought his 12 year old daughter back to life.

Jesus' power comes to those who believe in him;
have faith in him.

Without faith, even Jesus is powerless.

The second piece we also learn from Luke's supportive text

Is that the crowd reacts angrily,

Not only to his teaching on the prophetic scriptures,

But it turns ugly when

he continues on,

teaches them about lepers, widows, and Gentiles,

suggesting they are better off than any in the crowd.

The crowd of his closest family, neighbors and friends become so enraged

they take him to the brow of the hill

to throw him off the cliff and kill him.

"But passing through the midst of them,

he went away."⁵

On a cold, damp, and overcast February day this year

Our bus discharged us as high as the road would take it,

Leaving us to hike the last half-mile to the top of this very hill in Nazareth.

At the top was view of Nazareth in all directions

Brown stone and plaster houses

Terraced up from the valley floor on all the surrounding hills.

Across the way stands the church of the Annunciation

Built over top of the ancient synagogue mentioned in the text today.

Just beyond, one could see the plain of Migeddo.

The cliff edge is at the top of the hiking path.

In silence, as the wind blew,

It is easy to see the crowding pressing him closer and closer to the edge,

Until he stopped and simply passed through their midst.

II. The 2nd part of today's Gospel: v.7-13.

Jesus goes to the villages teaching. Both Jew and Gentile.

Jesus sends out his disciples to begin his mission.

Jesus sent out his disciples, two by two.

Their mission: to be an extension of Jesus.

6 groups. Safety and strength is compounded by companionship.

Jesus gave them authority over unclean spirits.

'Don't worry about becoming unclean. Cast out uncleanness!'

Be dependent only on God.

⁵ Luke 4:30 (RSV)

Be dependent completely, totally, on your faith:
"Take nothing for the journey..."
Expect rejection.
Not everyone is ready to grow your seed of faith right away.
Just plant it;
that's your job;
that's all I expect you to do.
When you are rejected,
As everyone is, at one time or another,
don't take it personally!
Simply leave,
shake off the dust from their house,
and leave judgment up to God.
Preach repentance, cast out demons, anoint the sick with oil and cure them.
The mission of Jesus' disciples is to be an extension of him.

III. We need to pay attention to the process; the process which Jesus lays out for us. FAITH -> POWER -> MISSION.

Each step is dependent upon the previous step.
Each step assumes an active relationship with Jesus Christ.

FAITH: our response to God warming our heart.

- acknowledging our dependency upon God.
- never stationary. Always moving towards or away from God.
- you will be hurt and rejected. They rejected Jesus. We've been warned! Being faithful means that you will be rejected too.
- keep focused on Jesus. The head of the Body of Christ; the leader. The forgiver of our sins; our redeemer. The healer of our brokenness; our savior.

POWER: God's response to our faith. God's joyful response!

- Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened unto you.
- There is no limit to the power of God, once we release it.

MISSION: Using God's power to extend the reach of Jesus' ministry.

- We are extensions of Jesus' hands, eyes, ears, feet, mind, and heart.
- We are called to do his will.

We are expected to respond to God's call and initiative.

IV. Have faith in Jesus, build faith, grow in faith.

Draw closer to God.

Don't allow rejection to derail you. Focus on Jesus.

Faith releases God's power.

God gives us the power to fulfill God's mission: sharing the ministry of Jesus.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.