

Reflection Mark 6: 1 – 6a

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This morning, we hear of Jesus returning to his hometown of Nazareth, only to be met with rejection and disbelief. He's no longer the young boy they remembered. Now he's a teacher, a healer, and someone performing mighty works. He's not just a carpenter's son anymore; he's a man with authority, with power.

It's the Sabbath, and Jesus, as was his custom, begins teaching in the synagogue. The people who hear him are amazed, astounded by his wisdom, insight and ability to speak with authority. But as they listen, instead of embracing his message, instead of rejoicing in his ministry, they begin to ask, "*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!?*" (Mark 6:2)

They are amazed, yes, but they are also deeply sceptical. And then, one of them questions: "*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?*" (Mark 6:3)

I suppose it's a bit ironical that the people who have known Jesus the longest, who have seen him grow up, are the ones who struggle the most to believe in him. For some reason they don't see the God reflected in him. In fact, they're too familiar with him to see him as anything more than the boy they knew. How could someone they watched grow up—someone so ordinary in their eyes—be capable of such extraordinary things?

Sadly, the people of Nazareth not only fail to recognize Jesus' divinity—they reject him too. Mark tells us, "*And they took offence at him*" (Mark 6:3). This is a devastating moment. They can't get past their own preconceptions of who Jesus is. They let their familiarity, their small-mindedness, cloud their ability to see the real truth of who he is.

Jesus, in turn, comments on this rejection: "*Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.*" (Mark 6:4). He knows that those who are closest to him—the ones who should be the first to understand and believe—are often the ones who struggle the most to receive him.

I think we need to understand this isn't Jesus' sulking because of lack of popularity. Or being upset because he isn't receiving the praise he thinks he deserves. Here he is recognizing the truth: that, familiarity with someone can sometimes blind us to the profound things God wants to do in our lives through them. And when we fail to recognize the work of God, we close ourselves off to the gifts he would like to give us.

Verse 5 of Mark 6 is particularly telling: "*And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them*" (Mark 6:6). This doesn't mean that Jesus lacked power. We know from other parts of the gospel that Jesus could heal anyone. But here, in his own hometown, he chooses not to perform the mighty works he's done elsewhere because of their lack of faith. Their refusal to believe, really limits what they are able to receive from him.

We are reminded that Jesus wants to do incredible things in our lives—to heal, restore, and make us whole. But if we don't have faith in him, it can hold us back. Just like the people of Nazareth, if we're not open to truly understanding who Jesus is, we could miss out on all he has to offer.

Finally, we see Jesus' response to this rejection: *"He was amazed at their lack of faith"* (Mark 6:6). I feel that this might have been felt with a deep sadness. He is amazed not because of their rejection, but because he knows what they are turning away from. He knows that their lack of faith is keeping them from all that God has to offer to them. Jesus' amazement isn't about disappointment in them. It's sadness over their refusal to open their hearts to the God who stands before them, offering them his grace.

So, what does this passage mean for us today? It calls us to examine our own hearts. Are there areas where we've grown too familiar with Jesus? Have we become so accustomed to hearing his words that we've stopped hearing his voice? Do we still approach him with awe and wonder, or have we grown indifferent?

Jesus invites us to come to him in faith, to trust that he is capable of doing far more in our lives than we can imagine. Like the people of Nazareth, we may have heard the stories, but we're invited to move beyond the familiarity of what we know and to encounter the living Christ, who is always at work in our lives.

Let's not miss out on what God wants to do in us, because we're too familiar, or too set in our ways. Let's approach Jesus with open hearts, ready to receive all he has for us.