

The Wisdom of Jesus

Bible Background • MARK 6:1–6; 7:1–23

Printed Text • MARK 6:1–6 | Devotional Reading • MARK 7:14–23

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: IDENTIFY the reason or reasons the people in Nazareth could not accept the wisdom of Jesus, REPENT of the occasions when Jesus' words made us feel offended instead of accepting them as wisdom, and COMMIT to accepting the words of Jesus even when they challenge us.

In Focus

Hassan gathered his things, thanked Mrs. Jenkins for her time, and got up to leave. She walked with him to the door and said, "Be sure to tell your mama we're praying for her. See you on Sunday at church."

As he walked down the steps toward his car, Hassan wondered if Mrs. Jenkins had heard a word he said. He was volunteering as a community organizer trying to encourage people to vote. Mrs. Jenkins was on the board of trustees of the biggest church in his territory, and he hoped she would see her way clear to having a meeting there.

Hassan was as personable and charming as he knew how to be, but Mrs. Jenkins, he knew, always looked down on his family. They were considered outsiders; they were renters, not homeowners, and his parents hadn't gone to the same high school as the longtime neighborhood fixtures. People wouldn't see him as anything other than "Foster Edwards' boy." His years away at college and abroad, and his work to show people how to get the most out of their government services didn't count with them.

Hassan sat behind the steering wheel of his car and sighed. He offered a quick prayer that he might find a more open heart and listening ear before his next appointment.

Even if people can't see you for who you have become, God knows what is in your heart. Do we understand that it is more important to please Him than to please others?

Keep in Mind

"The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, 'Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?' ... They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him" (from Mark 6:2–3, NLT).

Words You Should Know

A. Offended (v. 3) skandalizo (Gk.) — Trip up; cause to stumble, or to cause displeasure.

B. Unbelief (v. 6) apistis (Gk.) — Faithlessness, disbelief, unfaithfulness, or disobedience.

Say It Correctly

Joses. JOE-sess.

Gerasenes. GEH-rah-SEENS.

Jairus. JAY-rus.

Gadarenes. GAH-dah-REENS.

Capernaum. cah-PURR-nay-um.

KJV

Mark 6:1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4 But Jesus, said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching the people.

NLT

Mark 6:1 Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown.

2 The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, "Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?"

3 Then they scoffed, "He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us." They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.

4 Then Jesus told them, "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family."

5 And because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them.

6 And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then Jesus went from village to village, teaching the people.

The People, Places, and Times

Nazareth. The name of this city means "branch." Nazareth only gained prominence after the life of Jesus. Located in lower Galilee, it lies halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. In Jesus' day, Nazareth was a small village, having only one spring to supply fresh water to residents. Today that spring is known as Mary's well. Nazareth did not have a good reputation in Jesus' day, as reflected in Nathanael's question, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Jesus was rejected by His townspeople and was thrown out of the synagogue there (Luke 4:16–30; Matthew 13:54–58; Mark 6:1–6). The early church was also looked upon with disdain, being referred to as a sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). Modern Nazareth has about 20,000 residents, most of whom are Muslims and Christians.

Background

Mark, the shortest of the Gospels, emphasizes Jesus' actions more than His teachings, recording eighteen of His miracles, but only one major sermon and four parables. He does not present a biography of Jesus detailing his Jewish family history. In fact, Mark does not quote the Old Testament or reference Jewish culture extensively, leading scholars to believe that he wrote primarily so that Gentile Christians would know Jesus as the Son of Man and Savior- King who conquers everything from storms to demons to death.

Mark 5 begins with Jesus and His disciples arriving on the east side of the Sea of Galilee in the region of Gerasenes and immediately being met by a man possessed with many demons. This demon-possessed man knelt in His presence. The demons within him recognized Jesus and begged Him to be merciful. Jesus cast the demons out of the man and sent them into a herd of two thousand pigs that drowned themselves. Those who witnessed the deliverance and heard about it from the man as he shared his story throughout Decapolis, marveled at Jesus' power.

After crossing back over to the other side, Jairus, a leader of the synagogue confronted Jesus. Falling to Jesus' feet, Jairus asked that He would heal his daughter, who was on the brink of death. On the way to heal the girl, a woman who had been suffering from bleeding for twelve years, in desperation, thought, "If I could touch His garments, I will be made well." She touched them and was healed. When Jesus asked who touched Him, she fell to her knees and confessed that it was she. Before Jesus and His disciples could get to Jairus' daughter, she died. Jesus reassured those present that the girl was only sleeping. Many mocked Him. Unmoved, Jesus took her parents, Peter, James, and John inside. There, He resurrected her.

These are the events directly leading up to Mark 6:1–6.

What commonalities are found in these three accounts from Mark 5?

At-A-Glance

1. A People Offended (Mark 6:1–3)
2. A Prophet Dishonored (vv. 4–6)

In Depth

1. A People Offended (Mark 6:1–3)

Upon healing Jairus' daughter, Jesus and his disciples traveled about twenty miles southwest back to Nazareth, the area where he grew up. On the Sabbath, Jesus did as He would have for years living in the area: He went to the synagogue. However, instead of sitting to learn with others from the community, He returned on this second trip back to Nazareth as a teacher—a rabbi, traveling with His students. Jews were used to educated rabbis speaking with wisdom and authority, but Jesus amazed them.

Their amazement did not lead to honor and respect, however. Instead, they were skeptical and offended. They questioned Him, stumbling over the fact that someone so common and familiar to them could teach with such power.

There was disbelief that a mere carpenter could be so wise and perform miracles, implying that such gifts could not come from God, and thus must be from Satan. They insulted His heritage, calling Him "Mary's son" instead of following the tradition of identifying children by their father.

Finally, they point out that his family is no more special than their own—his four brothers and at least two sisters lived among them. It is worth noting that although His brothers did not believe in Him before the crucifixion (John 7:5), James would go on to become a leader in the church and the author of the book of James. And Jude would write the New Testament book titled after him

2. A Prophet Dishonored (vv. 4–6)

Then Jesus told them, "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family." Simply reflecting on the events immediately prior to this visit proves the accuracy of this statement. A woman had faith that she would be healed if she could just touch his clothes. A leader in the synagogue had faith that his daughter would be healed if Jesus touched her. A man with many demons worshiped him, and even the demons recognized his authority. Yet, in His own hometown, among His own people, Jesus only found a few willing to have enough faith to even come to Him for healing. His inability to work was not because He was limited in power, but because He performed miracles in the presence of faith. There was such a void that even He was astonished by their lack of faith. Sadly, this was a foreshadowing of how others would respond to him in the future.

This experience also served as a teaching moment for the disciples, who witnessed all of these events. This occurred prior to His commissioning of the twelve to go out two by two to teach and perform miracles. His instructions was “If any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet, when you leave, as a testimony against them.” (6:11, NLT) He modeled what He taught, even though it was a verdict against His own people.

Why is it sometimes difficult to accept godly wisdom from people we know well?

Search the Scriptures

1. Regarding the saying “a prophet has no honor in his own hometown”.
2. Read Chronicles 36:16 and Jeremiah 1:1–2 and 11:18–23. Consider a prophet’s calling. Why might they be met with such hostility, especially among their own people? 2. Mark 6:5 notes that even in spite of the lack of faith in the town, a few people who were sick still sought Jesus and were healed. What does this teach us about Jesus? What does this teach us about godly wisdom?

Discuss the Meaning

1. “Familiarity breeds contempt.” Mark 6:1–6 is a perfect illustration of this quotation. In a Gospel written for Gentile Christians, who did not have the perfect Jewish lineage or prior knowledge of Judaism, why might this account be included? What would be an advantage of their lack of familiarity about who the Messiah is (or should be)? 2. How does this passage serve as a warning to those who are followers of Christ, especially those who have followed Him for a number of years?

Liberating Lesson

It is tempting to read Mark 6:1–6 and judge the actions of those in Jesus’ hometown. How can they reject the Savior, having heard of His miracles and witnessed His wisdom and teaching? How could they be so offended by Jesus that they would not even go to Him?

In reality, we have a tendency to do the same. We have access to God’s Word. We read it. Yet, we can get offended when His words convict our hearts and reveal our sin. But because we realize that we should not be offended by the message (His Word), we sometimes lash out at the messenger—the pastor who preaches a convicting message, the spouse who lovingly confronts, the friend who challenges or holds us accountable. We may not ask aloud “Who do you think you are?” But our actions reveal our attitude.

We stop praying and stop seeking Him. As a result, our faith falters and we neglect our relationship with the Lord. Mark reveals that in the end, we are the ones who suffer. We would do well to remember the line from the old hymn, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, “Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer”.

Application for Activation

Sometimes we are so familiar with a passage that we forget to marvel at who God really is. Ask God to give you fresh eyes as you read. Perhaps imagine you are one of the people in a story or one of the first recipients of the Gospel. Consider a recent message, either one received while reading God’s word, or hearing it, in which you have been offended. Consider why you were offended. Pray and, if necessary, repent.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Mark 6:1–6

Jesus has returned to Capernaum on the west side of the Sea of Galilee (5:21) after His teaching and miraculous works on the east side (4:35ff), including the region of Gadarenes (5:1ff). In His return to Capernaum, a great multitude gathers at the seashore to hear Him teach. He heals a woman who has been sick for twelve years and raises a girl from death (5:21ff).

6:1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

Having had a successful ministry in Capernaum and other regions, Jesus returns to His hometown of Nazareth with His disciples. This seems to be His second trip back home and His second mission in the synagogue (Luke 4:16; cf. Matthew 13:53ff). “Country” here is the Greek *patris* (pah-TREECE), which means a fatherland, native town, or city. Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1), he grew up in Nazareth (Matthew 2:23) from which Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to register (Luke 2:4ff).

2 And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

On the Sabbath day, He goes into the synagogue, a habit He has formed from childhood (cf. Luke 2:41–50). Since He grew up in the town, He was therefore a familiar face to the worshipers and rulers of the synagogue. He was also familiar with the worship rituals and was no stranger. According to Jewish customs in synagogue service, which include Scripture reading (cf. Luke 4:17), Jesus reads from the Scriptures and then begins to expound the Word of God. The nature of His teaching is so profound that His audience and worshipers in the synagogue are amazed and dumbfounded at the wisdom with which He is teaching. They begin to question among themselves, “From whence hath this man these things?” Probably many of the people have not heard Him speak before, and so this is their first experience. They are amazed. However, there is an undercurrent of skepticism among some of them regarding the source of His authority and power, as implied in the questions “Where does this man get all this?” and “What sort of wisdom does He possess that all these miracles are wrought through Him?” Many probably thought it was disrespectful for a young man such as Jesus to teach with more authority than the local elders who had more life experience.

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and of Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

The people’s hostile and negative attitudes toward Jesus become more apparent in the following rhetorical and derogatory questions. “Is not this the carpenter?” In Matthew He is referred to as the carpenter’s son; Joseph was a carpenter by trade. Growing up Jesus must have learned carpentry from His adoptive father, Joseph. Before going into His public ministry at age thirty, Jesus must have worked in that trade. Carpenters were regarded as common peasants, unlearned, at least not educated to the degree of the rabbis and scribes. Therefore Jesus, to them, is just an ordinary man who worked with His hands as other common people did. The next question is both derogatory and demeaning: “Isn’t this the son of Mary?” In the Jewish culture, men are not usually described or identified as sons of their mother, even if their fathers were dead. Describing Jesus as the

“son of Mary” here is probably intended as a put-down, and perpetuates the rumor being circulated at that time that He was an illegitimate child because of the nature of His birth (John 9:29, 34). Equally contemptuous are the next questions: “Is not this . . . the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon?” And “Are not his sisters here with us?” All this implies that He is an ordinary person that they know very well and probably grew up with Him. Why does He parade Himself as a rabbi and miracle-worker?

With such knowledge and familiarity of His background, the people became “offended at Him.” “Offended” is the Greek verb *skandalizo* (skan-dah-LEED-zoh) from which the English “scandalize” is derived. It literally means “trip up,” i.e., stumble or to cause displeasure. It is to be offended by someone—that is, to see in another what I disapprove of and what hinders me from acknowledging his authority; it is to cause a person to begin to distrust and desert one whom he ought to trust and obey. The mention of Jesus’ siblings substantiates the fact that subsequent to the birth of Jesus, other biological children were born to Mary and Joseph. James is the one at the council at the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12) and the author of the epistle of James (James 1:1). Juda (Jude) is the author of the book of Jude, but little is known about the rest of His brothers and sisters. The people, therefore, upbraid him with the meanness of His relations and upbringing. Although astonished at His doctrine (v. 2), they are offended at His person (v. 3). Prejudiced against Him, they look at Him with contempt and for that reason reject His teaching.

4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. 5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Jesus acknowledges their unbelief and reproves them with what is phrased like common proverbial saying: that a prophet is not recognized in his own country, among his people, and in his own family. Unlike other places and regions where we see Jesus perform miracles of stilling the storm (4:35ff), casting out demons (5:1ff), and healing the sick (5:21ff), He could not do such miracles in His own homeland because of their obstinate unbelief. However, He is able to lay hands on a few sick people, and they are healed. “Unbelief” is from the Greek *apistia* (ah-peese- TEE-ah). It means faithlessness, i.e., disbelief, unfaithfulness, or disobedience. Their unbelief cost them the privilege of experiencing miracles and healing as other regions had. The wording that Jesus “could there do no mighty work” could be to contradict an Almighty God. However, we read nowhere in the Scriptures that Jesus failed to heal anyone or any case that is brought to Him, nor did unbelief of anyone present prevent Him from healing anyone who came to Him. Indeed, we read repeatedly in the Bible phrases stating that He “healed them all” or “everyone.” Rather, their unbelief and their contempt of His person kept them from bringing their sick to Christ to be healed. Astonished at their unbelief, Jesus goes “round about the villages, teaching,” seeking out those who will hear the Word, even if His own town will not.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Jesus Restores Leader's Daughter to Life
(Mark 5:35–43)

TUESDAY

Samaritans Testify to Wisdom of Jesus
(John 4:27–29, 39–42)

WEDNESDAY

All Wisdom Dwells in Christ
(Colossians 2:1–5)

THURSDAY

Jesus Denounces Human Traditions
(Mark 7:1–8)

FRIDAY

God's Wisdom Trumps Human Commands
(Mark 7:9–15)

SATURDAY

The Heart Not the Stomach Defiles
(Mark 7:17–23)

SUNDAY

Jesus' Wisdom Astonishes His Hometown People
(Mark 6:1–6)