

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

February 23, 2020

Sermon Title: “Hometown Prejudice – When Familiarity Breeds Contempt for the Gospel” from Matthew 13 and Mark 6.

Today’s Scripture: See insert

Introduction: Why is it that family, especially parents often think they know more than their adult aged professionally trained children? Me and Mom. Pre-marital counseling.

Main point: Don’t give up sharing your faith even when people initially reject your first approach.

Context:

1. This is Jesus’ second return visit to Nazareth. Previously he had been rejected so violently they wanted to throw him off the cliff. **Luke 4:28–30 [28] When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. [29] And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. [30] But passing through their midst, he went away. (ESV)**
2. Nazareth was a town of about 500 people built on a rocky hillside on a road that we hardly traveled. Growing up and spending thirty years in a small town like that Jesus would have known every single family including all the children. It is not hard to remember 500 names. It can be done. And everyone knew him.

Second Chances and Stubborn Hearts

1. Jesus never missed a chance to train his disciples. **And Jesus withdrew from there and came to his boyhood town; and his disciples were following him.**
 - The content was going to be taught in the synagogue shortly but before that Jesus taught them compassion, and perseverance. They had to be thinking, “Why go back to that mob that nearly killed you by pushing you off the cliff?”
 - We need to admit to ourselves that we wouldn’t keep going back to the same people who rejected our witness and unfriended us on Facebook. Why invite them to your next Bible study? Right? Wrong!
 - But, Jesus is simply displaying the Father’s character of patience and steadfast love. Moses reminded God of his character when the people refused to enter the land. **Numbers 14:18 ‘The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty,**

visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.’ (ESV)

- Paul learned that same lesson. 1 Corinthians 10:31–33 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. (ESV) Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (ESV)
 - After having been stoned in the city of Lystra and left for dead, look what Paul decides to do. . .Acts 16:1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. (ESV) Had Paul turned his back on the citizens of Lystra who failed to protect him from the Jews from Antioch and Iconium, he would never have enlisted Timothy to become a vice-apostle.
 - But, what about Jesus’ words to wipe the dust off our feet from a city that refuses to listen? Matthew 10:14–15 And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. (ESV) I think Jesus was teaching a different lesson, not a contradictory one. Returning to Nazareth was about perseverance and love. Leaving a town by wiping the dust off their feet was about don’t get discouraged. Move on. Time is short. Don’t let one town’s rejection keep you from going to the next.
2. Sunday/Sabbaths are for studying God’s word. And with the coming of the Sabbath he began to teach them in their synagogue.
- The word for teach is didaskein and is used when Jesus is explaining the Scriptures and various doctrines. In contrast is the word preach which is karussow, and is usually used when Jesus or John the Baptist proclaimed the Good News and called for repentance.
 - These are two different approaches to the same ends. One uses the mind to lead people to see Jesus and grow in their appreciation for God the other uses emotions to speak to the heart. Both are needed and used. All teaching leads to academic sterility, all emotions lead to a feeling only type of Christianity where anything goes.
3. Even the best arguments and the most amazing displays of power are not enough to penetrate hardened hearts. And many on hearing him were astonished, saying “Where did he get all these things?” and, “What is the wisdom that is given him, that such mighty works are wrought by his hands?”

- The greatest teacher in all the world could not get his teaching to enter the hardened hearts of his hometown people.
 - And we think a tract or a book or a sermon will magically produce results. They won't unless the Holy Spirit empowers those tracts, or books or sermons. Dead hearts can't appreciate sound doctrine.
 - Best example of the opposite of this is Lydia. **Acts 16:14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. (ESV)**
 - Another example is the two on the road to Emmaus. Luke 24:44–45 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (ESV)
 - Or the Psalmist Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. (ESV)
4. Reason and rational thinking are faith killers. Is not this the carpenter, the son of the carpenter? Is not his mother Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? And his sisters, are they not all here with us?"
- The brothers and sisters of Jesus all had the same parents therefore they all had the same genes. There was nothing supernatural about James and Jude. Nothing spectacular about his sisters. In fact, they all knew they were sinners. They heard them tell lies or cheat at games or do whatever children do to one another. You get the picture.
 - Therefore Jesus could not possibly be who he says he is because they know that despite appearances he is no different James Joseph Simon and Jude.
 - When people say they have to have a reasonable and logical explanation for how this world came to be, because believing an eternal God spoke it into existence simply doesn't fit their paradigms- their logic and totally fallible minds are killing any kind of faith.
 - My answer to their reasoning minds is a simple question; "Where did the matter come from if it didn't come from the breath of God?"
 - Carpenter (Techo) (Votech, architect builders) demeaning. He's not a scholar, he's blue collar. If he was anything he wouldn't be using his hands.
 - Oh, and then he's the son of Mary. And we all know what kind of girl she was. Pregnant before she got married that's who she is, that makes Jesus a bastard child don't you know.

5. Seeing only a human being calling himself to be God made them furious with Jesus. And to them he was a cause of stumbling.
 - They could not get past what their earthly eyes saw and when they heard him earlier proclaim himself to be the Messiah and now much the same they hated him even more. They stumbled over him and went straight to hell.

Then said Jesus to them, “A prophet is not without honor but in his home town, and among his kinsfolk, and in his own home!” And he could not perform there any ¹ mighty works, because of their unbelief, ² except that he laid his hands on a few sick folk and healed them. And he marveled over and over at their unbelief.

Application

There were very few things Jesus marveled at. This unbelief ranked in the top three at least. So much evidence to believe in yet so much resistance to faith. The damage was eternal. To try to illustrate this it would be like a prisoner such as Rob Blagojevich being offered his freedom as well as 100,000,000 dollars by President Trump, and the prisoner saying I can't believe it is true, I'll stay right here and die in prison. Only the Nazarenes perished in hell for eternity. Unbelief, what a costly vice. Eve practiced it and plunged the human race into sin. The Israelites practiced it and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. The Northern tribes practiced it and went into exile into Assyria and never returned the promised land and Judah followed right behind them and practiced unbelief and went into exile into Babylon to be cleansed of their unbelief and disobedience by a hostile government.

Only God knows the earthly setbacks and penalties we have incurred because we refused to believe his promises. Those cannot be redeemed. But, let none of us ever leave this world in a state of unbelief or we will perish an eternity in hell that cannot be escaped. I can't think of that for more than 2-3 minutes at a time. Then I have to change the subject in my mind. To think that some of my loved ones may perish and spend eternity in hell. I better make my life a life of faith and obedience so that my grandchildren see Nana and Bapa living the life in front of them so they too will be inclined to follow our walk of faith.