

# The Power of Unbelief

Mark 6:1-6

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## Transcript

Well, we have the opportunity now to open up the Word of God, so please take your Bible and turn to Mark chapter 6. We completed our study of chapter 5 with the healing of the woman with the flow of blood and the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead, and now in chapter 6 we see Jesus leaving there and coming to his hometown of Nazareth. Mark chapter 6. We're only going to focus on the first six verses. The parallel account is found in Matthew 13, 54 to 58.

There is no parallel account in Luke, and this morning I'm going to read once again both accounts harmonized into one from the book One Perfect Life. And he went out from there and came to his own country, and his disciples followed him. And when the Sabbath had come, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many hearing him were astonished, saying, Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? What wisdom is this which is given to him that such mighty works are performed by his hands? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? And are not his sisters here with us? Where then did this man get all these things? So they were offended at him.

But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, among his own relatives, and his own house. Now he could do no mighty work there because of their unbelief, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them, and he marveled because of their unbelief. Unbelief is a powerful force that has devastating results in this life as well as in the life to come.

And it all began back in Genesis, in the Garden of Eden with our first parents, Adam and Eve. They were given a command in Genesis 2, 16 and 17. God said to Adam, And Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, From any tree of the garden you may surely eat, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat from it.

For in the day that you eat from it, you will surely die. That was the command. And then in chapter 3, we find Eve being tempted by the devil and disobeying God's command and Adam joining her.

And after their disobedience to what God said, they were cursed. And then they were driven out of the garden. But before he drove them out, they were told the consequences of their disobedience, or ultimately their unbelief.

God would multiply Eve's pain and childbirth, and Adam would struggle to grow food from a cursed ground. But the ultimate of their punishment, the ultimate of unbelief, is death. What is, as if God is not true to His word? You eat of this, you will die.

Now we see mercy and grace in the beginning of this, don't we? Because they didn't die immediately. But they did die. They and every person born to them would now die.

That's why we experience death. That's why we see death everywhere. That's why we see disease and destruction.

It's all because of sin. And not only would they physically die, but also spiritually, unless God saved them. Chapter 3 records the first death in verse 21, with them being clothed with animal skins.

The first human death wouldn't be until the next chapter, with the death of one of their sons, Abel, at the hands of their other son, Cain. And then chapter 5, it lists the death of Adam's descendants, as it lists each one of them, tells how long they lived, and then it says they died. That's the consequences of unbelief.

And unbelief is at the heart of every person. The same is true throughout the history of the Old and New Testament. The same is true today.

It has devastating consequences. What's the ultimate consequence? Hell. So as we look at the story here in Mark, chapter 6, we see unbelief at such a pinnacle that even Jesus is amazed by it.

Mark begins chapter 6 by giving us the setting in verse 1. He says in verse 1, And Jesus went out from there and came into his hometown, and his disciples followed him. So in verse 1, we see Jesus returns to his hometown. He leaves Capernaum, and now he comes to Nazareth, and this is where he grew up.

Over in Luke chapter 2, after they had went into Jerusalem, the whole family, it says in verse 39, When they had finished everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. And the child continued to grow. That's speaking of Jesus.

He became strong, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. So he grew up in Nazareth. Now, what do we know about Nazareth? We've talked about Nazareth before.

Let me just remind you of a few things about that place. It was a very small, insignificant town in Galilee. It was about 15 to 20 miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee.

It was a very small village. It only had about 500 people. It was so insignificant that it's never mentioned in the Old Testament or in any other historical records of the time.

It was considered an unimportant place and even looked down upon by the Jews from Judea. Many Jews expected the Messiah to come from a more prominent place like Jerusalem or Bethlehem, but not Nazareth. Even Nathaniel, when he was told by Philip that they had found the Messiah, he identified him as Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

And Nathaniel responds, and he says, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Well, Nathaniel was referring to anything of value, anything of significance. And so Philip challenged him. He said, Come and see.

Nathaniel's response to Nazareth, it demonstrates the kind of reputation Nazareth had, or at least how people viewed it. Well, also in verse 1, it says that his disciples had followed him. They play no role in this story, but it did prepare them for the mission that Jesus gave them in verses 7 to 13.

Notice there it says that they followed him. The word followed means to walk the same road. Early in the history of the Greek language, the word follow came to mean to imitate or to follow someone's example.

And that meaning had colored the New Testament. Most of the uses of the word are in the Gospels, and this verb is firmly linked with the life of Jesus because he's the one to follow, right? And when Jesus issued a call to follow me, that word was always used, and it was always used in the present tense and also as an imperative, indicating that Jesus is calling for this to be one's continued lifelong path, and he's commanding them to follow him. Let me just use that word followed in a figurative sense and just ask you this question.

Are you walking the same road that Jesus walked? I mean, that's essentially the same question that Jesus asked two of his disciples in Matthew 20. After their mother came to Jesus, bowing down and making a request, you remember what she said? Command that in your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit on your right hand and one on your left. You remember that? And Jesus said, you do not know what you are asking.

Are you able to drink the cup that I'm about to drink? See, he's talking to the two sons now, James and John. And what did they say? We're able. They didn't know what they were saying.

So he said, my cup you shall drink. And that cup was speaking of suffering and death. But to sit on my right and on my left, this is not mine to give, but it is for those to whom it has been prepared by my father.

See, walking the same road that Jesus walked, that's following his example. Peter speaks of this in 1 Peter 2.21 when he said this, for to this you have been called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. The apostle John in 1 John 2.6 said it this way, the one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.

Well, Mark says in verse two, that when the Sabbath came, Jesus was teaching in their synagogue. This was a common practice for him and it was probably the very synagogue that he sat in and had been taught as a little boy. And the idea of teach, it speaks of ongoing action.

That's what Jesus did. He constantly taught. Same is true in verse six when it says that he was going around the villages teaching.

Both of those words express a continuous and ongoing action. Now, what he taught is not stated, though we can assume it was the gospel. And if you look at verse two, we see their reaction.

First, they were astonished. That's the same response they had the last time he was in Nazareth. Did you know that? Look with me over at Luke chapter four.

Luke four, 16 to 30, records the last time he was in Nazareth. Tells us that he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and he read from the scroll of Isaiah 61, one and two, and also Isaiah 58 in verse six. And what Jesus read, as his hearers were well aware, was a messianic prophecy.

Look at verse 17. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him, and he opened the book and found the place where it was written. The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. After he read it, it says he closed the book, he gave it back to the attendant, sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And then he began to say to them, today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Could you imagine hearing those words? He just said that he was the Messiah. He just said, what I read to you that was prophesied from Isaiah is talking about me. And at first, verse 22 says that they were speaking well of him, and they were wondering at the gracious words which were falling from his lips, but that quickly changed.

You know why? Because they knew him. They knew who he was. He grew up right there in Nazareth.

They knew his father. They asked, is this not Joseph's son? Who does he think he is saying that he's the Messiah? Well, Jesus responded in verse 23. He said to them, no doubt you will quote this proverb to me, physician, heal yourself, whatever we heard took place at Capernaum, do also here in your hometown as well.

And he said, truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown, but I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land, and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elijah the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things.

And they stood up and drove him out of the city and led him to the edge of the hill on which their city had been built in order to throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, Jesus went on his way. Listen, they understood what he was saying.

His point was clear and unmistakable. God had brought salvation by his arrival, but as always, it is only for those who know that they are spiritually poor, those who are spiritual prisoners, blind and oppressed. And unless his hearers were willing to humble themselves like the outcast Gentile widow and that Syrian leper terrorist did, and admit their spiritual need, they couldn't be saved.

That was too much for them to hear. They went from wonder to rage and then attempted to murder him. Now, if you go back to the account in Mark 6, they were once again astonished at his teaching.

The word refers to a state of amazement. In other words, it was mind-blowing for those who heard Jesus. Yet their amazement didn't leave them to put their faith in him as Lord and Messiah.

Instead, they hardened their hearts and continued in rejection. Their astonishment was replaced again with their unbelief as they questioned the origin of his teaching. Notice in verse 2, their first question.

Where did this man get these things? They knew that he hadn't been trained as a rabbi. John 7, 15, they even asked, How has this man become learned, not having been educated? But yet his teaching stunned the most learned scribes of the day. Luke 2, 47 says, All who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

That was even as a teenager. Then they questioned the origin of his wisdom. Notice the second question in verse 2. What is this wisdom given to him? See, he didn't teach like the scribes.

The scribes were the religious teachers and the interpreters of the law. Typically, they taught by quoting other rabbis and by relying heavily on tradition. But Jesus, on the other hand, spoke directly and authoritatively.

When you look at the Sermon on the Mount, covers chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew, it says in verse 29 of chapter 7, after he had taught, that Matthew records that his teaching was teaching them as one having authority and not as the scribes. And then, of course, third, they questioned the origin of his miracles. Notice the third question.

They said, What is this wisdom given to him and such miracles as these performed by his hands? They would have been well aware of the miracles he had performed at Capernaum since it was less than a day's journey away. And then, of course, last, they questioned the origin of his background. Now, think about this.

Familiarity breeds contempt. Look at verse 3. They asked, Is this man not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, and not his sisters here with us? And they were taking offense at him. You see, they couldn't get past the fact that they knew him and his family.

And even though they referred to him as this man, they knew his name. They knew his occupation. They knew the occupation of his father.

Matthew's account says in Matthew 13, 55, Is not this the carpenter's son? So they knew who his father was. It was usual for fathers to teach their children to follow their trade. And Jesus learned to be a carpenter from Joseph and likely took over the family business after Joseph died.

The term carpenter is a very broad term, meaning a builder or a craftsman. It could refer to a carpenter, a stonemason, a metalsmith, a shipbuilder. Some early church tradition suggests that Joseph and Jesus specialized in making yokes and plows.

And with him growing up in Nazareth, Jesus had likely crafted many farming implements and perhaps done other building projects for his neighbors. Those same people found it hard to believe that a woodworker from the humble hometown who had not previously revealed his divine nature could suddenly exhibit such profundity and power. I mean, all during his growing up, he never showed his power.

Had he done that, they wouldn't have been shocked at this point. So no one in his hometown of Nazareth believed in him, even within his home family, both among his own relatives and in his own household. It was only his mother who believed.

It wasn't till later that his brothers would come to saving faith. But many people outside of Nazareth regarded him as a prophet. Matthew 21, 11 says, and the crowds were saying, this is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

But in his hometown, he was rejected with hostility and antagonism. But notice his response. His response is in verse four, responding to their offense.

And by the way, the word offense means scandalous. It was a scandal. He claimed to be the Messiah.

It was a scandal of all the things he was doing. Verse four says, the prophet is without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household. And he could do no miracle there except that he had laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

His response is really paramount. His response is to their unbelief. He chose not to do any miracles in Nazareth with the exception of a few healings.

John MacArthur says, the issue was not that he lacked the supernatural power to perform miracles. Rather, there was no reason to do miracles there since the purpose of his miracles was to attest to the truth and reveal himself as the Lord and Messiah and thus to lead sinners to saving faith. Because the people of Nazareth had already set their rejection in stone, miracles were unnecessary.

See, he wasn't dependent on their faith to do miracles. You hear the charismatic movement basically say that the reason why people aren't healed is because they don't believe. Well, again, he wasn't dependent on their faith.

He frequently healed people who did not express any faith in him at all. For example, when he healed 10 lepers, only one confessed in him and was saved. He healed a cripple man at the pool of Bethesda who did not know Jesus when he was healed in John 5. The man that was born blind in John 9, he didn't speak of his faith in Jesus until after he was given his sight.

The demoniacs whom Jesus delivered also made no profession of faith before being liberated. When Jesus raised people from the dead, he obviously did so without first requiring faith from them. Jesus' power was not at all diminished by unbelief.

Nonetheless, the hard-hearted rejection at Nazareth was such that there was no reason to do any miracles there. Verse 6 says, and he wandered at their unbelief. He was amazed.

There are only two places recorded where Jesus was amazed by people. Here in verse 6 and in Luke 7, 9, where he marveled at the strong faith expressed by a Roman centurion in Capernaum. Once it became clear that Nazareth had rejected Jesus, he rejected them.

He left and was going around the villages teaching. He began a teaching tour in more receptive towns in Galilee. But for the inhabitants of his hometown, the outcome was horrific and forever tragic.

We could say it this way, Ichabod was written on Nazareth. The glory had departed. What about you? There are some that are rejecting and keep rejecting him.

And there's going to come a time where he's going to reject you. Ichabod will be written on you. So you need to come to him now.

Today is the day of salvation. There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved than the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Put your faith in him.

Listen to his words. Observe his works. No one has ever come like him.

He's the Messiah. He's the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Lord.

And the Bible says to believe in him and to confess his name. The word confess in Romans 10 9, it means to say the same thing. And when you're confessing that Jesus is Lord, you're saying the same thing that the scriptures say about Jesus.

You're agreeing with scripture. The Bible says he is Lord and you're agreeing that he is Lord. And you're coming humbly before him and receiving him.

The Bible gives us all kinds of terms when it talks about our response to the gospel, talks about believing in him, talks about repenting, talks about trust, faith, talks about reception. Or like Romans 10 9, believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead. You have to believe in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Some people only talk about his death, never talk about his resurrection. I'm not really interested in having a little cross in my house or hanging around my neck that's got Jesus still on it. He's not on the cross anymore.

I'd rather have an empty tomb hanging around my neck if that was the case. So he came out of that tomb. He raised himself from the dead.

He gave his life freely for you and me. And he died suffering our sin. And his own body on the cross.

This morning as we conclude our time, we're going to share together in the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper gives us that picture and that reminder of what Jesus did for us. My only prayer for you this morning as you take it is that you examine yourself.

Make sure that you're in the faith. Make sure that you don't come to the table and eat it in an unworthy manner. That's why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, to examine yourselves first.

The other time he talked about that was in 2 Corinthians 13. And when he said to examine yourselves there, he said to examine yourself to make sure that you are in the faith, that you are even a Christian. So I'm going to ask Larry if he will go ahead and do that.

Make his way up here. And as we do, let's go ahead and pray as we prepare to receive the Lord's Supper. Father, we thank you for this opportunity.

We thank you for this moment that we have had to be able to come to your word or to be able to share in it together. And we pray now, Lord God, as we, Lord, prepare our hearts and our minds for taking of from your table, we pray, Heavenly Father, that we too will examine ourselves. We too will come to your table, not in an unworthy manner, but in a worthy manner, having examined ourselves.

And as we come to the table, that we will remember.