

Mark 6:1-6

It's a popular image in our present society: the welcome home parade. The local boy returns an Iraq war veteran and decorated hero. He saved a truck load of men from a roadside bomb. News has spread about what he did and the stage is set for a powerful encounter between the hero and his town. The town turns out in big numbers to greet this hometown hero. The young man steps up to the podium in front of city hall and he thanks everyone for coming to support him. But suddenly the young man changes his message. He starts talking about things in the town and problems everyone is wrestling with. He gets a few nods, but the people aren't really sure what's going on. The hero continues describing problems and moves toward the underlying issues. Then the hometown hero says those fateful words, "It's time for a change around here. I've decided to run for mayor!" and the crowd is not cheering like they were ten minutes ago... Today we see Jesus, the hometown hero, return to Nazareth. He received the honor of speaking in the synagogue and the people turned out to hear him. But the welcome did not turn out like you might expect for the Son of God. **Jesus was rejected by his own...** but why? What went wrong in Nazareth on that Sabbath so many years ago? And what do you and I have to do with this account?

Long before this day in Jesus' hometown, the prophet Isaiah had something to say about the Suffering Servant of the LORD. "He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isaiah 53:2, 3). The people of Nazareth obviously knew this portion of God's Word—any good Jew would have. So, did they decide, "Ok, today is the day to reject Jesus. Isaiah 53 says we have to"? God didn't force them to reject his promised Messiah, did he? Then did Jesus force them to not believe in him? Doesn't God say, I want all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth? Didn't Jesus say, "God so loved *the world* that he gave his one and only Son"?

If we put ourselves in the sandals of those first century residents of Nazareth, maybe we can get to the bottom of this opposition. Maybe the rejection came because Jesus didn't do any solid teaching in Nazareth. If only Jesus would have spoken the true Word of God, then the Nazarites would have believed him. But wait, he's been teaching for almost two years. The Nazarites even confessed, as Mark recorded, "What's this wisdom that's been given him?" The people actually testified Jesus was bringing a message of wisdom...but then why the rejection?

Maybe the rejection came from the Nazarites because Jesus didn't perform an miracles. "We need some proof Jesus if we are going to believe in you!" But wait, he had just raised Jairus' daughter from the dead not too far from here. Mark also reminds us, "Jesus lay his hands on a few sick people and healed them" (Mk 6:5). The citizens even confessed Jesus did work miracles. They asked themselves, "What's this that he even does miracles?" ... but then why the rejection? Why did the people of Nazareth take offense at Jesus? Taking offense means they took the words and actions of Jesus as an excuse for sinning. It's not the normal way we talk about offense. Normally when we see or hear something inappropriate, we might say "I'm offended". But God's Word uses the phrase "to take offense" as a technical term. The Nazarites took Jesus' words and actions as an excuse to sin and reject Jesus. But why?

Fast forward to today at First German. I have never met a person who said to me, "I think today I'm going to reject Jesus and take offense at him." But the Savior still faces battles against our sinful flesh on different levels. *Teenagers* are confirmed and are never seen or heard from again. Why? Did we not teach them enough about God's Word? Is the solution longer confirmation classes and more testing? *Young people* get married, have kids, and suddenly it's too hard to get up for church on Sunday mornings. Why? *Seasoned Christians* know God's Word is the fountain refreshing our faith, but no time is taken for Bible study. Why? Is it because all these people are lazy? As if they just need to pick themselves up by their boot straps, then we wouldn't have any problems around here! Is it because we don't offer enough worship opportunities or classes on how to study your Bible? Or is the problem deeper? It was a deep problem for the inhabitants of Nazareth. It went far deeper than superficial answers. The problem is deeper for us, too. It goes far beyond superficial laziness.

Look at what the people of Nazareth said, "Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" The rejection we see in Nazareth didn't have its roots in the lack of teaching or the lack of miracles. The people of Nazareth knew who Jesus was. He was the carpenter. He had fixed Bob's roof and made a new kitchen table for Joan. He had helped Larry with the floor and always had a wood dreydl for little Susie. Everyone knew his mother, Mary, and his brothers and sisters. They knew him, so why would they reject him? Why? **Jesus was rejected by his own, because they knew him.** Familiarity breeds contempt. The townspeople saw his humble beginnings and his everyday occupation. And now

he returned as the one who amazed them with his teaching and his miracles. But they knew who he was! Or better stated, they knew who they thought he was. This time the man is the message! And the people rejected him, as Jesus said, “Only in his hometown, among his relatives and friends and in his own house is a prophet without honor” (Mk 6:4).

In our lives familiarity sometimes breeds contempt. The teenager has learned the keys truths of God’s Word as explained in Martin Luther’s Small Catechism. But you can almost hear the excuses: “We know the truth, we’ve been confirmed in this church. Nobody’s going to tell me I should go to Bible Class and worship every Sunday!” Young parents are not missing church because they are lazy. They have little ones who take up so much time and energy. Schedules are hectic, and they might say to themselves, “If I miss church what’s the big deal. No one will notice.” Seasoned Christians aren’t indifferent to God’s Word, but when you are spending so much time doing other things, the familiar truths of God’s Word take a back seat. Familiarity breeds contempt, and Jesus is slowly pushed to the background.

At the beginning of our text for today the people were amazed. They were astonished at the things they heard and saw from Jesus. But by the end, their rejection had amazed Jesus. In his state of humiliation, he was amazed that people who knew him so well could act so foolishly. But what did Jesus do? Did he say, “What’s the use? Why should I preach and teach at all if even the people who know me will reject me?” No, not at all. In fact Jesus continued teaching and performing miracles. He continued to live and serve as the promised Messiah. He did this for the sake of the people in Nazareth. He did it for you and me! He never stopped loving and living as our Perfect Savior. We know Jesus’ ministry continued even after the rejection in his hometown. Mark tells us, “Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.”

Jesus’ work would last for another year. That final year is known as the year of opposition. He was opposed by leaders and people, just as he was in Nazareth. Yet, he was undeterred. His focus was on the cross and his sacrifice. The blood he poured out in Jerusalem, paid for the sins committed in Nazareth and the sins committed in Manitowoc. The sins in your heart and soul have been paid in full and removed as far as the east is from the west. You are not going to die but live forever with the LORD. **Jesus was rejected by his own, so that we are not left alone.** We are not left alone in eternity, because we will spend it with the Lord. We are not left alone in our walk on this earth either.

Because Jesus suffered rejection, be prepared for your own rejection. Paul said, “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” There is no room for exceptions. Our Lord Jesus faced hardship and persecution, we should expect nothing less. If you haven’t experienced the same intensity as the Lord, thank God! Keep your head in all situations because you never know when the evil foe will attack. As Christians we will face battles from outside and from within. There will be people trying to lead us astray, trying to tell us what our sinful nature wants to hear. A co-worker tells you, “Oh there’s no such thing as sin. If it feels good, do it!” Oprah tells us, “All spiritual paths lead to the same god.” Our society has exchanged the Christ Child for Santa Clause and the Risen Jesus for the Easter Bunny. Rejection is out there and it is real.

We have come to expect the world outside these walls will not want to hear what God’s Word has to say, haven’t we? But have we prepared ourselves to consider what happens when false teaching and rejection come inside these walls and even into our own homes? “Be prepared” Paul said, “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine.” And how do we prepare to meet these challenges? The Lord himself prepares us! **Jesus was rejected by his own, so we are not left alone.** Our Savior’s rejection happened for our good. It was part of his suffering as our Substitute. Everything he did and experienced was part of his work for us. To assure us and strengthen us he has given us his Word. The God-breathed Scriptures equip us thoroughly to meet the challenges we face. Thank God for his Word! Thank God, **we are not left alone.** AMEN.

---

Pastor Benjamin P. Schaefer  
revschaef@yahoo.com  
July 19, 2009