

“Jesus Visits His Hometown”

Mark 6:1-6

Sermon for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost 2021; July 4, 2021

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rifle, Colorado

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In the the Gospel reading today, we see that Jesus visits His hometown. He leaves the area around Capernaum and goes to Nazareth. His disciples are with Him. It’s kind of surprising how it went for Him, because it didn’t go so good.

When the Sabbath came, Jesus went to the synagogue. As He usually did, He began to teach them. The main part of this story is the response of the hometown folk to Jesus.

At first, they recognize Jesus’ wisdom. When Jesus taught, it became apparent that He had great wisdom regarding the kingdom of God. They were so impressed with His wisdom, that they were prompted to ask about where He got it from.

They also recognize that “mighty works are done by his hands” (Mark 6:2). These are wonderful miracles of healing.

Now the miracles being talked about were not done by Jesus at Nazareth, for we are told at the end of this story that Jesus could not do any mighty work there because of their unbelief (Matthew 13:58). But they must have heard about what Jesus was doing. News about Jesus was getting around. Earlier in Mark’s Gospel, it says that Jesus’s fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee (Mark 1:28). The region of Galilee would have included Nazareth, which was up in the hill country of Galilee. Mark tells about how at Capernaum the people had brought may who were sick and tormented by demons to Jesus. It says that the whole town was gathered together at the door of the house (Mark 1:33).

On another day, many people gathered together again at the house were Jesus was. There were so many people there that they could not even find the time or the space to eat (Mark 3:20). It was on that occasion that some of “His own people” came to take Jesus away because they thought “He was out of His mind” (Mark 3:21). Maybe some of His own people were from Nazareth. Mark also tells us that on that occasion, Jesus’s mother and His brothers were outside the house calling for Him. Apparently, they had come down from Nazareth to fetch Him. In any event, we can see that the people in Nazareth had heard about what Jesus was doing. And now here He is speaking to them in their own synagogue. They recognize Him as having done many mighty deeds “by His hands.”

They ask where He got these things from: this wisdom and these miracles. The answer would seem to be obvious; He got them from God.

But then the hometown folk see something else when they look at Jesus. They recognize Him as the carpenter, as a craftsman. They say, “Hey, isn’t this Mary’s son. We know Mary.” They also know who Jesus’ brothers are: James, Joses, Judas, Simon. They know Jesus’ sisters.

By the way, this tells us that Joseph and Mary had other children after Jesus.

So we see two things in the reaction of the hometown folk to Jesus. They see His great wisdom. They recognize the divine miracles that had been done by His hands. They also see the things about Jesus that they knew because He had grown up there.

The hard part of this story is what they did when they recognized Jesus as the carpenter and son of Mary and the brother of his brothers and sisters. They took offense at Him (Mark 6:3). They found Jesus offensive. So He could do no mighty work there.

That is really startling. Wouldn’t we anticipate an opposite sort of response? We would

think that the hometown folk would have rejoiced at Jesus being there; rejoicing in who Jesus was showing Himself to be; God's Messiah. There should have been a triumphal entry and headlines: "Hometown boy does well."

But we see that the hometown folk took offense at Him.

This challenges us to ask why and what we can take away from this.

As to why, the key is in what Jesus says: "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household" (Matt 6:4 ESV).

Jesus speaks here of being a prophet, someone through whom God gives His word. It makes me think that if Jesus had come back after making a fortune, or as some sort of hero, then there probably would have been a triumphal entry or that headline. But when He comes back as a prophet, it is another matter.

When He comes back as a prophet, He brings a dimension into the situation that can make the hometown folk quite uncomfortable. That other dimension is God, and that immediately puts them on the defensive. And then they begin to think like this: "Hey wait a minute Jesus. We know all about you. You grew up on our streets. You grew up under our authority. Who are you now to tell us anything about God?" So they did not receive Him.

And as for what we can take away from this, there seems to be something going on that we could call God's mystery of the ordinary. He works in and through ordinary things to reveal Himself, bring His kingdom, and give us salvation. We can see this in Jesus Himself. Jesus was an ordinary human being, yet without sin. He had ordinary flesh and blood. And maybe the hometown folk thought they knew just how ordinary He was, since Jesus grew up with them.

Yet God comes to us in Him. God works salvation through Him. We have all of God's blessings in Him. God comes to us in grace and humility in Him.

It is a supremely wonderful thing that God comes to us in Jesus, in the mystery of the ordinary. This is wonderful because if He did not come to us like this, then we would have to deal with God in His divine invisible, majesty; majesty that we cannot find; majesty that is not humility and grace but all knowing, raw power.

But the mystery of the ordinary is that we can know Jesus' hands as the hands of the carpenter that made things. But now we see those same hands doing God's mighty deeds of grace and mercy; building and making in another way; building and making God's kingdom.

And Christ comes to us now, here today, in the mystery of the ordinary. For we find Him in His word, in His Sacraments, as means of grace. His word comes to us also through ordinary men, written and spoken in human language that we understand. Baptism involves ordinary water, yet when combined with God's word becomes the washing of new birth in the Holy Spirit, where it gives forgiveness of sins, puts God's name on us, and calls us to the Christian life.

The Lord's supper involves ordinary bread and wine. We know where such things come from. We make them ourselves. Yet, Jesus meets us with His body and blood in them according to His word to give life and salvation, for where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation (Luther's Small Catechism; Sacrament of the Altar).

And then there is the ordinariness and regularity of our life as the church. But Christ promises that He is with us as we are gathered in His Name and go about His business.

But then we can also grasp this. We ourselves are ordinary; beset by weakness; engaged in struggle; just trying to do our best and keep up; and also sinners. Yet, beneath the surface of us gathered here, beneath our weakness, beneath our not better conduct in word and deed, there are saints. You are saints; made holy by Christ's word; sanctified by the Spirit and faith; those in whom Christ's power is being made perfect in weakness; those for whom Christ's grace is

sufficient. Beneath the ordinary people of this world, you and I, there are the people of God in Christ; something extraordinary indeed. This is all true because you live in the mystery of the ordinary in which Christ comes to you and you put on Christ. This is the reality in which you live and rejoice and have peace.

So let us embrace the mystery of the ordinary in Christ Himself and in His things in and through which God works. For in these things Christ does the extraordinary, He forgives your sins and blesses you with His kingdom; and through them He makes you extraordinary in Himself. He makes you a child of God and calls you to follow Him. Amen.