

**Mark 6:1-6**

**Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. <sup>2</sup> When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.**

**“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? <sup>3</sup> 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?” And they took offense at him.**

**<sup>4</sup> Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” <sup>5</sup> He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup> He was amazed at their lack of faith.**

Dear children of God who trust and hope in God alone,

As I was sitting down to write this sermon, fresh in the minds of many sport’s people was the fact that the Golden State Warriors had just won the NBA championship. It was their second championship in three years – with them being in the championship series the last three years in a row. It has been a truly amazing 3 year run and it doesn’t seem like it is going to end any time soon. What kind of reception does a city and its fans give for this extraordinary feat? An estimated 1.5 million fans from the city of Oakland came out to give them a parade through the streets of their hometown. The city where their team has its home wanted to show their appreciation and joy for this team winning the championship and bringing the championship trophy back home to Oakland.

What kind of reception do you think someone who had performed miracles -- not of winning basketball championships, but the recent calming of a storm on the Sea of Galilee and also casting a legion of demons out of a demon-possessed man into a herd of two thousand pigs, and then raising a little twelve year old girl from the dead -- and who on the basis of those miracles claimed to be the promised Christ – what kind of reception do you think someone who did amazing things like that could expect to receive in his hometown? That will be our thought for today:

**SERMON THEME: Jesus – The Hometown Hero!**

- 1. Full of authority**
- 2. Rejected by many**

The people of Nazareth liked the miracle part of Jesus, but they did not like the promised Christ part of that at all, with the result that the great majority of them did not consider Jesus to be a hometown

hero in any way whatsoever. In fact, St. Luke who in his Gospel gives more details about what took place on this Sabbath Day in the Nazareth synagogue tells us what happened at the end of that synagogue service. Do you remember what they did? They drove Jesus out of the synagogue, and then drove him out of the town to the top of the hill on which the town was built, and then they tried to drive Jesus of Nazareth off a Nazareth cliff – only to have their plans come to nothing because Jesus just walked right through the crowd and back on his way to do more miracles, to teach more people and to save the world from its sin, despite the fact that the vast majority of people did not give him any more of a hometown hero's welcome than did the people of his own hometown.

What makes all this all the more sad is that we are told in verse two of our lesson that the people who were with Jesus in the synagogue that day **“were amazed.”** The kind of amazement being referred to here is the amazement that leads you to be wide-eyed with astonishment that you could be hearing or seeing such a thing. Interestingly, what does St. Mark tell us the people of Nazareth were amazed by? His miracles were certainly amazing, but verse 2 is not talking about Jesus' miracles. Look at verse 2 again: **“When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.”** It was his teaching that amazed them. Jesus' teaching was so out of the ordinary, so different from what they were used to hearing, so different than what they expected to hear, that they were wide-eyed with astonishment: “You've got to be kidding! That's what you're saying, Jesus!?”

Well, what was he saying? If you remember a little bit about that day in the Nazareth synagogue, you may remember that this was the day on which Jesus read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah from seven hundred years before and chose the selection where in prophecy the promised Messiah says that the Holy Spirit has anointed him to preach good news to the poor and to give recovery of sight to the blind and to provide release for all the oppressed – and then concluded his reading by rolling up the scroll, sitting down and saying to them as all their eyes were fixed on him: **“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** In other words, “I am the promised Messiah, and I have come to save the world from its sin.”

Wouldn't you be a little wide-eyed with astonishment if Pastor Schultz or I would read those same words from Isaiah and would say that to you? “I am the fulfillment of all those prophecies. I am the Savior of the world. I am the Son of God.” Most likely you would say or at least think, Who do you think you are, Pastor Gartner or Pastor Schultz? You're just like the rest of us. You drive a car, and we know where you live, and we know your family well. The people of Nazareth said the same thing, **“Where did this man get these things? Isn't his dad Joseph the carpenter? Isn't Mary over there his mom, with all her other children being his brothers and sisters.”** As a result, Mark tells us in verse 3 that they **“took offense”** at him. That means that what he said made them trip and fall. It made them trip and fall in their minds and in their hearts because either it did not make sense to them or they just did not want to believe that what he said about who he was – and why he came to earth – could possibly be true.

Is that really any different today? Sometimes TV talk show hosts go out on the streets and ask people questions to get their reactions about world events or their answers to some basic questions. If you would walk up and down the streets of communities throughout the world and would ask their reaction after telling them what Jesus told his hometown people of Nazareth that day, we praise God to know that

many would be wide-eyed with the amazement of faith. “Yes, that’s my Savior,” many would say, because they trust in the Lord and his forgiveness of their sins. But the sad reality is that, according to statistics, about two-thirds – and likely quite a few more -- of all the people you would ask would say, “Who does Jesus think he is to say something like that, and who are you to think that I need his forgiveness of my sins so bad, and why, as you and I heard in our Second Lesson, should I rejoice when I suffer because it makes me depend more on Jesus Christ? Are you crazy?” How hearing those words would make the haunting words of John’s Gospel ring true for us, when he said about the arrival of Jesus in the world: **“Though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”**

While that makes us sad, what also has to make us amazed is that God has allowed you and me to be among the people who do recognize our need for Jesus and his forgiveness of sins, as well as the truth of who Jesus is – the Son of God – meaning that he has the ability to actually cancel out our sins and allow us to be considered holy – just like him – in the eyes of God. Because the reality is that even though Jesus is different from everybody else, unlike what those people in Nazareth said about him, you and I are not different from everybody else.

God could look at us and say, “Who are these people? Aren’t Adam and Eve their sinful parents, and aren’t all the things they have ever done or written or said or thought imprinted on the database of my memory? I take offense at them. They make me trip and fall when it comes to the thought of being kind and loving to them, especially when they keep telling me that I am being unfair to them or that they are better than all the rest or that they are the ones who have accomplished for themselves all they have accomplished. I am amazed at their lack of faith.” What Jesus should say about us is humbling. What Jesus does say about us is amazing.

Mark tells us that Jesus was also amazed that day. He was amazed at the lack of faith of the people in Nazareth, causing him not to do more than just a few miracles there – which is really an amazing statement all by itself, isn’t it: Jesus only healed a few people. What a miracle, obviously, that he could heal any! Jesus didn’t hold back on his miracles because of an inability to do more, of course, but since he was, as he termed it, a **“prophet without honor”** in his hometown, he would not continue to do the kinds of things that were meant to have the opposite effect on people – confirm for them that Jesus was who he truly is – something they would not accept to the point of wanting to throw the Son of God off a cliff, and something that really is a warning for every one of us that we not take for granted the amazing things our Lord God has done for us to give us everything that we have and to make sure that we know that something far better is still to come, comfort and encouragement that we have the privilege of sharing with each other day after day as God’s people, examples of which are in the long list of people in the worship folder for whom we give our special prayers, as well as several others who are going through similar burdens for themselves or dear friends and members of their family.

But what is particularly interesting, I think, is that the word that is used for Jesus being amazed at their lack of faith is different than the amazement of those who did not have faith. Jesus’ amazement was not one of wide-astonishment, but one of sober reflection, an amazement that ends up saying, “I feel so bad for them, because it could be so different for them if only... if only...” That kind of reflective

amazement is also what fills up your heart and mine when we know that God has allowed us to know how different life is for us because of what the one who should have been considered a hometown hero did for us.

What Jesus did as he continued his journey out of Nazareth and made his way to the Jerusalem of his death and resurrection makes everything different for us as we continue our journey out of this sanctuary and on our way to the Jerusalem of life and glory. That Jerusalem, heaven itself, God tells us is where our citizenship is – our real hometown – our real hometown because the one who came from there gave us a place there by making us worthy in God’s sight to live there by removing the guilt of our every sin and by replacing it with the perfection that Jesus has given us simply because he loves us. And when we get there, we will for Jesus’ sake receive from our heavenly Father a truly amazing hero’s welcome that will let us know without any doubt what it really means to be a hometown hero. Until we get there, let’s make sure to honor and praise in every way that we can the one who has done for us that heroic and amazing thing. Amen.