

“Too Common to Be Special”

Series: Jesus and His Gospel: Studies in Mark – Part 16

Mark 6:1-6

Introduction: Please take your Bibles and join me in Mark 6, Mark chapter 6.

I suppose for most of you Newton, KS or one of its surrounding bedroom communities, also known as farmhouses, is your hometown. There is something wonderful and nostalgic about our hometown. Especially if you have spent any significant length of time away from what you grew up with then you certainly share the joy with me of a your hometown. There are a few in our church family who share MN with me as a native land. We routinely enjoy reminiscing with one another about the shared memories of growing up “Up North.” The cold winters and warm summers, the beauty of a snow covered field, the refreshment of 20 below air filling your lungs, the long o’s in all the words, the ubetcha’s and tater tot casseroles. For you non-Minnesotans, your specifics are different, but the general joy is the same when you think of your hometown.

In Mark 6, Jesus must have shared some of those most human emotions as he ascended the hills of Galilee from the town of Capernaum on his ascent to his hometown – Nazareth. He must have passed places along the well-worn path that brought back special memories of him and his family. The unique smell of the mountain air must have reminded him of his childhood games played with the other children of Nazareth. The familiar faces, the unchanging buildings, it all must have brought joy to Jesus’ heart as he came to his hometown. But Jesus was not just known as a carpenter anymore. Jesus was not just known as a man from Nazareth. Jesus was gaining fame all throughout Galilee as the Messiah – the Promised Savior sent from God. This would be no simple nostalgic trip down memory lane. This final visit to his hometown before his death would bring pain from rejection as he was stung with the marvel of unbelief.

As Mark has been recording the life of Jesus for us he has most recently told us of Jesus showing his power over the wind and wave, over the demon world, over an otherwise incurable disease, and over death itself. But now as Jesus comes back to Nazareth we will see that Jesus is unwilling to exercise this authority over the people of his own hometown to make them believe in Him. His seemingly unstoppable success is now met with opposition. Let’s read of this opposition in Mark 6:1-6.

From this text I wish to point out to you two truths and their consequence. The first is that Jesus is especially common and this was a stumbling block to faith, and the second is that Jesus is uncommonly special and this makes unbelief astounding.

I. Jesus is Especially Common – vs. 1-4

- a. It has been a tendency of the church for 2000 years to gloss over the commonness of Jesus. We know that Isaiah 53 promised the Messiah to be a man who had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. We understand that he was a baby just like the rest of us were babies being cuddled and cared for by our parents. We know that he was tired like we are tired and we know that he was hungry and ate food like we are hungry and eat food. And yet, the tendency of the church from early on has been to gloss over how especially common Jesus was. We are misled to think that if Jesus is common then this must detract from His glory as our Savior. We surmise that if Jesus was truly like us then he couldn't really be God in the flesh. But in reality, a right understanding of the especially common life of Jesus adds to the glory of our Savior.
- b. There are a few texts in Scripture that make Jesus' very common experience as a man especially known to us, and this is one of those passages. This especially common reality of Jesus is seen right away in verse one. He left Capernaum and headed to his hometown. Jesus has a hometown, and this hometown is a small and very forgettable village in the hills. The current estimates say that probably about 500 people lived in Nazareth at the time of Jesus – which means that this was the iconic and all too common small town that is repeated a million times over all over the globe. In other words, Nazareth is as common and as ordinary as it gets. And in Nazareth everyone knows everyone. So Jesus coming back into town didn't send the townsfolk scrambling to grab their First Century smartphones to check out Facebook to try to remember the name that goes with this familiar face. They all knew who he was and whose family he belonged to – and they will show this in their questions in verses 2-3.
- c. Not only was he common in his hometown, but he was common in his practice. On the Sabbath day he finds himself in the local synagogue with most of the rest of the town. Being recognized as some sort of Rabbi the leaders of the Synagogue agree to let Jesus read the Scriptures and teach. And this is where the confounding unbelief of those who had known Jesus the longest begins in this text. We don't know what he taught them, or what he said. We can only surmise that it was most definitely something relating to the Gospel of the Kingdom which related directly to Him being the Messiah. This was the nature of his message the first time he had visited Nazareth and taught in the Synagogue, and we can guess it was similar here. This hints at our second truth which we have been seeing all over the pages of Mark so far – that Jesus is uncommonly special. There is no one like Jesus. And by the questions in verse 2 these people in Nazareth seem to admit as much. They heard him teach and they were amazed or astonished by this. But this astonishment is not the astonishment that leads to faith, but rather the astonishment of unbelieving hearts that are perplexed by things that should compel their faith.

- d. And so they ask the questions – Where did he get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands?
- e. These were not questions of inquisition, but of accusation. They were not interested in really understanding where it was that he got these things – namely his wisdom and his power. Had they been interested in knowing the truth, they would have waited around for the answer. But instead, these are questions of accusation. This is clear by looking at the two questions that follow in verse 3. So, they do not deny that there is something unique about Jesus' wisdom and power, so much so that they are not sure where it came from or how he got it, but then they remind themselves of who he is. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?
- f. This man was not raised in a Rabbi's home where he was taught the finer points of the Law. This man was raised in a carpenter's home. He is himself a carpenter. This man grew up among us. We know this kid. He is a local yokel just like us – therefore there is no way he can be this great prophet he is proclaiming himself to be.
- g. Take note here of how especially common Jesus was. He was a carpenter. Before he started his public ministry He had a daily job that was something other than preaching and teaching. He swung a hammer and handcrafted furniture and built doorframes. He had an average and common job – just like everyone else. On a side note here – you must fight against the tendency in our Christian culture to differentiate between secular and sacred. We create this false dichotomy where we think that those who have ministry jobs must be so much more spiritual and so much more valuable in God's economy. But this simply is not true. There are many reasons why your daily work matters to God and why your hard and faithful work at Agco or Excel or Spirit or the local farm or the bank matters to God, not the least of which is the fact that our Lord was a carpenter. Jesus himself held down and served faithfully in a very common and run of the mill type of job. And so do the rest of us. Jesus has amazingly identified with us even in our work, and this raises the value of our work.
- h. Jesus was not just common in his work, but he was common in his family. He had a mother whom they all knew – Mary. He had at least four brothers and at least two sisters who are referenced in the text. Joseph, his earthly father is not here mentioned which is most likely because he is no longer alive. Now, on just a plain reading of verse 3, how do these people in Nazareth view Jesus' family? They view Mary as his mother and James and Joses and Judas and Simon as his brothers, and his unnamed sisters as his sisters. The point of the questions is to draw attention to the commonality of Jesus. In other words, in their estimation there is no way he could be the Messiah because his mother is Mary and his brothers are guys we know and his sisters still live among us.

- i. Now, many in the broader Christian church from very early on have tried to elevate Jesus and Mary beyond the common and every day. They have presumed that Jesus and Mary must be especially holy which means they must not be tainted with the commonness of humanity. But the Bible presents a different picture. Jesus was not the only child of Mary, and Mary was not forever a virgin. Mary and Joseph were married and had many more kids after Jesus. Jesus came into the world in a miraculous way through conception in a virgin's womb. But this virgin's womb produced many more babies as a result of her intimate relationship with her husband. Matthew 1:25 makes this clear. It tells us that Joseph did not know his wife intimately until Jesus was born. The clear indication is that after Jesus was born then he did know her intimately. In Mark 6 we have the obvious and all too common product of this intimate relationship between husband and wife – children! And lots of them! Jesus was especially common. Mary was his mother. Her conception of Jesus was exceptional and entirely unique, but her conception of the rest of her children was especially common. She was just like every other mother in Nazareth and Jesus was just like every other adult man in Nazareth in that he had a mother and he had siblings.
- j. *And this was a stumbling block to faith*
 - i. And this was a stumbling block to faith. This was what hung up the people of Nazareth. Their view of Jesus was veiled by his ordinariness and this became the stumbling block that prevents them from believing in Him. Apparently no one in the crowd stood up that day and said – wow Jesus – I always knew when I saw you as a kid that you would grow up to be the Messiah. No one stood up and said – hey Jesus, remember that time when you were 8 and you healed my broken arm – wow, I just knew you would grow up to do great things for God!
 - ii. No one stood up and said those things because Jesus didn't do miracles as a kid. Jesus was especially unique as a child – rather he was especially common. So much so that those who knew him best when he was growing up cannot get it around their small minds how it is that the Jesus they knew is now the Messiah. They can't make sense of it all. His ordinariness has veiled their view and created a stumbling block to their faith.
 - iii. You see, this rise from humble beginnings to great success is lauded and applauded in our culture, but in First Century Judaism it just didn't happen and it certainly wasn't appreciated when it did. You were expected to stay in the lot in life that your birth gave you. And so, it becomes impossible for these folks at Nazareth to understand how it is that Jesus, the carpenter, can be this Great Prophet of God.
 - iv. But don't think for a minute that there is something wrong with Jesus. So, Jesus is especially common and this presents a stumbling block to their

faith. But this does not then make his ordinariness the problem. It is their hearts that are the problem. They were expecting something different in a Messiah. Something more obviously glorious. They wanted a Messiah whose credentials and prestige and pedigree are all through the roof. They simply cannot believe that God would disclose himself to mankind in the humanity of this Jesus. They cannot accept this part of God's plan. Since they can't make sense of it they dismiss it out of hand, and they stumble over Jesus' ordinariness and their faith in him falls flat on its face.

- k. This unbelief dishonored Jesus
 - i. And the result of this unbelief is that it dishonored Jesus. Because they couldn't believe in Him, they instead brought great dishonor to him. You see these are the only two choices when it comes to Jesus. You either accept Him as He is and honor him in your heart and life, or you reject all that He is because you can't make sense of it and you bring great dishonor to him.
 - ii. In Nazareth this dishonor happened in a funnel like fashion which Jesus describes in verse 4. He says that a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household. Do you see the funnel here? The prophet is without honor in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household. The funnel is broad in the sense of his whole hometown and then it narrows with his own relatives, and then it especially narrows with his own household. In other words, in Jesus' hometown this dishonor is an exhaustive reality. There is no segment untouched by this dishonor. No one believes him. They all trip over his ordinariness and this brings him dishonor in the place where it would have been most special for him to be believed and honored.
 - iii. We know from later texts that Jesus' mother and at least two of his brothers become his followers. But it would seem at this point in Jesus' ministry they are tripping over his ordinary and common nature too, and this dishonors Jesus.
 - iv. You see it dishonors Jesus when we only affirm one aspect of his nature to the exclusion of another. So the Bible makes known that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. He was eternally God and will forever be God. At this point in human history He broke through into the existence of mankind and took upon himself the form of Creation and became a man. And he will forever be fully man while still being fully God. The people in Nazareth had no doubt about the first part. They knew he was fully man. Isn't that the point of the questions in verse 3? Aren't they basically saying, "we know this guy and he is just like us – he is a common man"? And yet, while those questions are helpful, they are not enough. Yes, Jesus is all of these things – the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of these

men and the brother of these women – and yet that is not all that he is. He is the Son of God. He is the Great Prophet of God. He is the Wisdom of God Incarnate. He is the Power of God in human flesh. He is fully God and fully man.

- v. They had no doubt of his humanity, but they were unconvinced of his deity and so therefore they couldn't exercise true faith in Him. True faith in Jesus, the kind that saves a soul and redeems them from sin, this faith is marked by full belief in Jesus' humanity and Jesus' divinity. For if Jesus was only man or only God, then we have no hope of forgiveness of sin. These in Nazareth could only believe one part of this and therefore they did not have true faith. Jesus was too common for them to believe that he was anything special.

II. Jesus is Uncommonly Special – vs. 5-6

- a. But the reality was – and is still – that Jesus is uncommonly special. These people in Nazareth missed it. They got it wrong, and Mark is making this point loud and clear in verses 5-6. They knew that Jesus was not normal. They had heard the accounts. They knew he had calmed the wind and the wave with the power of his voice. They certainly knew that he had healed a leper by the touch of his hand. They knew he had mesmerized the crowds with his authoritative and fresh teaching. They had admitted as much in verse 2 when they asked where all of these things came from. They knew he was special, they simply refused to believe that he was special because he was who he said he was – the Son of God. Rather they thought him to be a son of Nazareth and therefore impossible for him to be the Son of God.
- b. The beginning of verse 5 says that he could do no mighty work there because of this rampant unbelief and subsequent dishonor. Except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. Do you see how uncommonly special Jesus is even in this phrase. He was so uncommonly special that the healing of a few sick people by the laying on of his hands has become commonplace. These are considered no great work because he had done so many more amazing works than this.
- c. *Illustration* – Just imagine if the Kansas City Royals went on an amazing streak over the next many years and they became a staple in the Playoffs and they won several World Series Titles. If this were to happen, then getting into the playoffs would not have the significance that it does this year. They haven't been in the playoffs for 29 years and so this year's berth into the playoffs brings great excitement. But if they go on this successful streak over the next 10 years – then simply making the playoffs will no longer be amazing. Greatness will be so common that it will not be so astounding. Jesus was so uncommonly special that even these acts of unbelievable greatness are treated as no big deal. Sure, they

were miracles, but in light of what he had done in other places, he could do no great work in Nazareth.

- d. So, what does this mean that Jesus could do no great work there in Nazareth? Was Jesus unable to do this, or was it a matter of His choice? Mark's point is not that Jesus was unable, but that he was not willing to exercise his great power in these circumstances. In a town that was shrouded in unbelief he was not going to perform great miracles that would make known his unstoppable power. He is not going to do this because if he did these miracles in the absence of faith would most likely have only caused hardness of hearts in those who had already chosen to not believe. Their minds were made up. Jesus was too familiar to them to truly be anything special. So, if he performed those mighty works to somehow prove how special he was, he would have simply propagated and extended their unbelief. He would have simply mounted more evidence against them which would have incurred greater judgment for their unbelief. So, Jesus' decision to not do many mighty works in Nazareth is a decision based in mercy. Their lack of faith is met by his merciful decision to do no mighty work among them.
- e. *And this makes unbelief astounding*
 - i. And all of this makes their unbelief astounding. Jesus is uncommonly special. No other teacher or prophet had ever come through Nazareth and said or done what Jesus has said or done. No one had brought such excitement and angst to the nation as Jesus had. No one had healed a leper with a touch or raised a dead girl back to life or calmed a violent storm with words of command. Not one other man in Israel had ever done anything like this. And yet they do not believe. Though they are astonished by his teaching they are tripped up by his ordinariness, and therefore they chose unbelief over faith.
 - ii. And so now the text tells us that Jesus is the one who is amazed. He marveled because of their unbelief. This is the only time in Mark that this verb is used with Jesus. In fact, this verb is used only one other time in the Gospels in connection with Jesus and this is found in Matthew 8 where the Roman centurion sends the Jewish leaders to request of Jesus to heal his valued servant. As Jesus comes to heal the servant more people from this Centurion's house come and tell Jesus that he doesn't need to come he can just speak the word and the servant will be made well. Jesus is amazed by this faith of the centurion and says that not even among his own people has he found this kind of faith. So, he there marvels at the faith of a Gentile, and here he marvels and the unbelief of those who knew him best. Such blatant unbelief causes Jesus to marvel.
 - iii. God is not astounded by our sin. He is not amazed at our great propensity to evil. God is amazed by the hard heartedness of mankind. Certainly Jesus knew that he would face rejection. Certainly the Trinity understood

before they sent Jesus into the world that he would come to his own and his own would not receive him. Certainly this bold faced rejection was not even new to Jesus by this time in his earthly ministry. So, Jesus is not astounded in the sense that he didn't see this coming.

- iv. Rather he is astounded in the sense that when it is there – right in front of him – it is astounding! You get the sense that Jesus' breath gets taken away by the experience of this bold unbelief. He had been experiencing the vast success of the positive response of people to his ministry for a long time. He has been so successful that he has to work hard to find a way to get away from the massive crowds that always gather. And yet here in his own hometown, among his own people – here in Nazareth they cannot see and enjoy the presence of the God man, the Messiah, because He was too familiar to be believed. This is astounding to Jesus!

III. Therefore:

- a. This Jesus of Nazareth was especially common and uncommonly special. His final visit to his hometown proved to be a most difficult one. What are some things we can walk away from Mark 6 with this morning? First of all we should be astounded by unbelief.
- b. Be Astounded by unbelief
 - i. It is not difficult to be astounded by the unbelief of the people in Nazareth. We too have a hard time making sense of this response. And yet, how easy is it to be unmoved by the rampant unbelief we see around us every day? Are you at peace with the bold rejection of Christ that dismisses him as some religious fantasy? If you are, then you are unlike Jesus. He marveled at it. It astounded Him that people could see all the evidence and yet turn away from it with hearts hardened by unbelief.
 - ii. This hardened unbelief in Nazareth in Mark 6 is but a foreshadow of the national rejection of Jesus that will culminate in his crucifixion. Luke 19 tells us of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the Sunday before his death to shouts of praise and adoration. But Jesus knew this praise was only skin deep and so the text tells us that he wept over the unbelief and rejection of his own people and the future judgment this would bring upon Jerusalem. Does the unbelief of your neighbor bother you? Does the rejection of Jesus in your workplace cause your heart to sorrow? Do your relatives who persist in unbelief bring you to tears in light of their impending and eternal judgment? Like Jesus, we should be astounded by unbelief.
- c. Be Awed by Jesus
 - i. We should also be awed by Jesus. He was not just God in the flesh, but he was God in the common everyday flesh. He did not have a halo glow around his head. He did not perform miracles to make life more

convenient for himself and those he loved. He did not come in the glorious appearance that He is due. Rather, He had no form or majesty that we should be drawn to look at him, and he had no beauty that we should desire him.

- ii. The validity of the message was not wrapped up in the prestige or the human pedigree of the messenger like the people of Nazareth presumed it should be. Rather, the Gospel has the power to save all men and all women because the Gospel was brought to us by God who became the most common of men – a carpenter, a son, and a brother. It was only through this kind of incarnation that Jesus could fully redeem us from our sins. In coming as a common man who grew up in a common place, Jesus faced all the temptations that are common to all men and women everywhere, and yet without sin. He knows our weaknesses and our trouble. He understands our pain and our agony because He came as one of us.
- iii. It was only through this kind of Incarnation that the full redemption of mankind is possible. Had Jesus come in the full display of his glory mankind would have right then and there been forced to bow the knee – whether in the submission of humble belief or in the submission as to one who is Lord and Judge. But on this first coming to the Earth Jesus clouded his majesty in the ordinariness of the human flesh. This brought the Kingdom of God near but prevented it from its full arrival, and this was merciful. Be awed by a Jesus like this. Come and worship the Son of God who was willing to come in all the commonality of a man from Nazareth – a carpenter, the son of Mary, and the older brother to his siblings. That God would do this to redeem our souls should propel life-altering worship in our hearts.

Conclusion: Jesus is especially common and uncommonly special. Paul makes known to us in 1 Corinthians 1 that we too are especially common. Not many mighty and not many noble and not many powerful have been called to follow Jesus Christ. You are not called to follow Jesus because of how great you are. You have not been tasked with the Great Commission of making disciples because of how wise and smart and beautiful and powerful you are. Rather you and I are simply common followers of Jesus who have the privilege of holding forth a powerful message about and uncommonly special Savior. The saving power of this Gospel is never to be found in the messenger, but always in the Gospel – for it is the power of God unto salvation. Therefore – may we never be ashamed! Let's pray.