



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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July 23, 2006  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Mark 6:1-6  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Ezekiel 2:1-5  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 143  
Second Lesson: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10  
Gospel: Mark 6:1-6

### **A Prophet Without Honor**

When I was in Minnesota—I think it was right after Vacation Bible School just like we had this last week—I was advised by some people in the congregation not to put a list of all the people that helped to thank them. If you were at our closing service yesterday, Paula put together a list of all the students and all the people that helped and she said, “I think I got them all. I hope I have them all.” But I was told back in Minnesota, “Don’t put it in because if you forget anyone, then they will be upset and they won’t ever help again.”

You don’t intentionally forget someone’s name. It may happen. We are sinful. We are going to make mistakes, but you try very hard to always thank everyone for the work they do, especially when they are serving the Lord. You want to acknowledge that their service comes from their love for God and thank them for it. So I ignored the advice and I kept publishing it year after year and if I ever did screw up, I simply said, “I’m sorry. I tried to get everyone.”

It’s one thing to miss a name and forget it absentmindedly, but have you ever been doing something, a few of you doing it, and a person comes up and thanks everyone but you? They look you in the eye and just walk on and don’t say a word after they have profusely thanked everyone. Has that ever happened to you, something like that? How would you feel when that happens? That’s a little different now, isn’t it, than just having been forgotten? To be directly snubbed, to be neglected like that is downright irritating.

But I don’t even think that can begin to compare to what Christ must have felt when he returned to his hometown and they all heard his teaching and thought, “Wow, this is some kind of teaching!” But then they said, “Hey, wait a minute! Isn’t this Joseph’s son from down the block? Didn’t he make some of that furniture in my house? Don’t we know his sisters? Don’t we know his brothers? Where does he get this kind of knowledge from?” And so they rejected him out of hand because unfortunately familiarity breeds contempt. Can you imagine what that must have been like for Christ to go and teach and do all these things and know he is going to be rejected and yet he still does it?

So this morning as we consider these words from Mark 6, we see a prophet without honor. We might shake our heads and say, “How could they do such a thing?” Even when they were amazed at his teaching, how could they still reject him just because of their familiarity? But the other thing we probably want to do that would be very

beneficial for our individual faith is ask ourselves the question—are there times we become so familiar with the message of the Gospel that we treat it with contempt?

The setting for the events that take place here in Nazareth we have been hearing the last few weeks. We have been following Jesus through his Galilean ministry. He calmed the storm. The crowds chased him. They wanted to hear him teach. The people pressed on him so hard that one woman just reached out and touched him and the power went out and he healed her. Then he had to stop and talk about it as Jairus' daughter lay dying and finally died because the crowds were so heavy around him. Then he went to Jairus' home and told the mourners, "She's not dead. She's sleeping." They laughed at him and he had to chase them out of the room. Then he said, "*Talitha koum!*" (Mark 5:41) as we heard last week.

He had demonstrated his power over nature. He had demonstrated his power over death. He taught with incredible, powerful words in ways that people weren't used to hearing, not just what others said but teaching the Word of God directly. So he goes to his hometown and does that again.

Think about it now—Jesus is going to the synagogue that more than likely he had spent the largest portion of his life worshiping at, week after week, Saturday after Saturday, probably seeing some of the same faces sitting there in the room as now this Saturday, when he comes in and he is the visiting rabbi and he starts to teach. Once again the crowd reacts the same way. They are amazed at how he teaches. They are amazed at the power of his words. So they ask the natural question. "We know this Jesus. Where did this teaching come from?" The natural answer should have been the one that was given that night when Nicodemus said, "*Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him*" (John 3:2). But that is not the conclusion the people of Nazareth came to. They were amazed at his teaching alright, but when they heard his teaching, they just tripped over the messenger because they knew him. They had grown up with him. They knew his mother. They knew his brothers. They knew his sisters. They knew him as "*the carpenter*" (Mark 6:3). They referred to him as "the carpenter," a well-known carpenter that they all would have encountered. As they weighed this question—where did he get his wisdom from?—they decided they knew him too well and it couldn't be genuine wisdom so they rejected him out of hand.

Jesus is met with flat out rejection and unbelief, a lack of honor and then some. We are told that he couldn't heal many people, not because he didn't have the power, but no one came to him that was sick there in Nazareth because they had rejected him out of hand. So he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. Familiarity led to contempt. Only in his hometown is a prophet without honor. To a certain degree we can kind of understand some of the things they probably struggled with, but what they really were rejecting was the work of the Holy Spirit among them because the Spirit was working powerfully through those words and those words were completely and absolutely rejected.

We might shake our heads and say, "How could they do that?" We might say, "Isn't that terrible?" But have you ever treated Jesus with contempt yourself? Have you ever

become so familiar with the Gospel, heard it since you were little on, that you go, “Yeah that’s nice.” Then there is a yearning for something new or different, something exciting, something beyond the normal. Isn’t that why a lot of the cults thrive on college campuses because people go off looking for something different and quite often, some of these people that teach some very different things come in and say you’ve been lied to all your life, and it’s a vulnerable point in time when people are looking for something different. The familiar isn’t exciting.

Familiarity I think at times does breed contempt among us, and I think it does it among all of us. Sometimes we don’t trust the simple promises God makes. He tells us that his Gospel *is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes* (Romans 1:16). We say, “That’s nice, but just the simple Word of God isn’t enough.” We have to dress it up to make it more attention grabbing and more entertaining because the simple Word of God itself won’t do it. Is our familiarity with that Word treating it with contempt, acting as though we can somehow improve what the Almighty God who created this world inspired for us? Do we really think we are going to come up with some better way of communicating to us the Gospel than God himself came up with? Are we just so familiar with it that we think if we animate a cucumber and a tomato, now the Gospel will spread like crazy?

Sometimes we become doubtful of the promises God attaches to his Word because we see the Word and sometimes we don’t see the results. We share the Word with someone and they yawn. I’ve watched any number of people in my 16-17 years in the ministry sleep as I told them that Jesus died for their sins. So you say, “Where is the power in this message? There is no power in it. It is putting people to sleep. Get something with more pizzazz than just Jesus.” Jesus, who lived in our place; Jesus, who died in our place.

On Sunday nights this summer we have been looking at the Old Testament, reviewing the Old Testament. I have really enjoyed the class, but one of the things that I have discovered as I have gone through it—maybe you have come across this in your own life also—I’m amazed at how much I’ve forgotten some of the things that I have read earlier. Then I have to ask myself, “Why haven’t I been reading them more often?” Is it because I think I know it all already so I don’t spend that time reading through the Book of Judges and learning what it means when you disregard God and what can happen and seeing how loving God is that he welcomes the people back and forgives them each and every time they turn away from him. Do we have familiarity with the Bible and at times treat it with contempt because we think we know it all and now it is just for the kids? So we don’t know it and we don’t have that power of the Spirit working in our lives because we are so familiar with it that we neglect it. I don’t know about you, but I have to say at times that I have and I do and I can’t understand why, because one of the most enjoyable times in my life in being in the Word was when I was in Europe for six weeks. When you are riding on a train with one other guy and you are sitting next to a bunch of Italians, and you don’t speak Italian, and you can only talk to the guy you are traveling with so much, it leaves a lot of time to read the Bible. I read the Bible, I think three times in those six weeks, and I just found it an amazing joy in doing that. I said, “When I get home, I am going to keep doing this.” Guess what? I didn’t. I cheated myself out of some of that comfort and some of that power that God has for me.

Familiarity with the Gospel—knowing who Jesus is and what he has done for us and taking it for granted that he is always going to be there for us at times leads us to wait until there is this incredible difficulty in our life than to run to God. God wants us to be with him every step of the way so that when those difficulties come, he is already right there, right by our side, strengthening us and lifting us up. That is God's plan. Too often we mess it up because familiarity leads to contempt.

Just imagine how someone treats you with contempt. Let's say you are shopping in a grocery store. You know how it happens every now and then if you are in a grocery store, someone is going up the aisle when you are going down it and all the way around you keep running into them? You see the same person all the time. Let's assume that person coming towards you every aisle is just a jerk. They leave the cart right in the middle of the aisle and stand next to it to look across the aisle and you can't get around them. You know, you have that happen to you and it gets annoying. Pretty soon they are knocking the stuff around in your cart. They run their cart into you because they don't look at you and they start laughing and snickering at you. They are doing all kinds of things that just irritate the dickens out of you, so you finally get out of your pattern just to get away from them.

Now you get up there and they are checking out right in front of you because they pushed your cart aside and shoved their cart in the checkout aisle. They start loading stuff up as they are snickering, and they drop something and it spills all over. Do you help them pick it up and put it in their cart, or do you smile to yourself and say, "That would have been so much cooler if that would have been eggs."

How do you react when someone treats you with contempt? Here is the amazing thing about our God. If you look at that last sentence that I read to you from Mark today, Jesus didn't say, "You don't want me, to hell with all of you." He continued to teach. He went from village to village and shared the Gospel. He continued to proclaim who he was. He continued to point people to himself as the Messiah. In that very day in Nazareth, he had said, "Today these Scriptures are fulfilled in your hearing." He was saying, "I am the Messiah."

If I would have been treated with that kind of contempt, I think I would have just said, "That's it. I've had enough." But when you and I treat God with contempt, he doesn't say, "That's it. I've had enough." In his love, in his Gospel, he forgives our sins, he washes away our sins, and he gives us his very body and blood so that we know our sins are forgiven and that he loves us in spite of how we treat him. This is what makes our God such an amazing and incredible God. He loves us unconditionally, eternally, not dependent upon how we act toward him. When we come to that realization that we have sinned against God and yet God loves us, God forgives us, God washes it all away because he lived in our place and then died as the punishment for our sins, and it just fills us with an incredible and unspeakable joy. Part of this is the key to recognize just how sinful we are and see how the Lord does not treat us with contempt, but he treats us in love day, after day, after day—in good times and in difficult times—he is there at our side longing to say, "I love you. You are my own. I have called you by name."

I remember the first time that this conclusion struck me—the incredible love God has for us. I was in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, something like that, in Confirmation Class, and we were talking about Creation and I said to the pastor, “God knows everything, right?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “He knew we were going to fall into sin before he created us, right?” Pastor said, “Yes.” I said, “Then why in the world did he bother to create us?” Pastor didn’t really have an answer, and there really is only one answer—because he is so incredibly loving that he wants us to be with him for all eternity in spite of all the times that we have shown contempt for him.

**This is the God that loves us.**