

*The Seventh Sunday After Pentecost*  
July 15, 2012  
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Mark 6:1-6

*Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 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, that he even does miracles! 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. Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. (NIV)*

Have you and your words ever been rejected? If so you are in good company. Many famous people and their words have been rejected over the years. Did you know that only seven of Emily Dickinson's poems were ever published during her lifetime? A rejection early in her career said, "*Your poems are quite remarkable for defects...and are generally devoid of true poetical qualities.*" One of the rejection letters sent to Dr. Seuss read: "*too different from other juveniles on the market to warrant its selling.*" THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT was turned down so many times, Beatrix Potter initially self-published it. Herman Melville, who had written a manuscript entitled "Moby Dick," was told, "*We regret to say that our united opinion is entirely against the book as we do not think it would be at all suitable for the Market in (England). It is very long, rather old-fashioned...*" Edgar Allen Poe was told, "*Readers in this country have a decided and strong preference for works in which a single and connected story occupies the entire volume.*" One more example is Ernest Hemingway, regarding his novel, "The Torrents of Spring" was rejected with, "*It would be extremely rotten taste, to say nothing of being horribly cruel, should we want to publish it.*"

I wonder how many of those publishing editors kept their jobs after some of those reviews. But the truth is rejection is common and often cruel. We see this once again as the Name above all names is turned away. We watch as sadly the only words which give life are ignored. Jesus is rejected and by the very people who should have known Him best. As Jesus returns home I pray we learn from this account and with the Holy Spirit's guidance and aide avoid the same fate as the people here in Nazareth. For in Jesus' own hometown we witness **Unreasonable Rejection & Amazing Unbelief.**

As for Jesus' hometown you might be asking: wasn't Jesus was born in Bethlehem? Yet, recall when Jesus was a baby His family fled to Egypt for a short time and then returned to Nazareth where Jesus grew up. This is why Nazareth is called Jesus' hometown. Many things have happened since Jesus left Nazareth. He called His disciples, taught many truths, performed mighty miracles, and had gained a large gathering of followers. Jesus has become highly famous. Still, Jesus does not forget where He came from. His heart yearns for the salvation of the people He has known

from childhood - His own family, friends and people with whom He grew up and associated. So ***“Jesus went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue.”*** How great is this? Jesus is in the synagogue He used to go to as a boy. Now Jesus returns as a great prophet, healer, and teacher. Jesus is back in His hometown to speak God’s truths.

Luke’s gospel fills us in on the message Jesus gives to them. Jesus quotes a prophecy from Isaiah: ***“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*** Then after reading these Scriptures, Jesus proclaims: ***“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”***

At first: ***“many who heard him were amazed.”*** Some even ask, ***“What’s the wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles?”*** They could not deny that Jesus was an amazing teacher filled with wisdom. They could not explain away the miracles Jesus did. No one could or ever would be able to point to any sin Jesus ever committed. But they were not even ready to receive Jesus as a prophet let alone the Messiah and promised Savior. After all: ***“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?”*** They looked at each other and asked: where did ***“this man”*** get these things? They knew Jesus’ mother Mary. They remembered that Jesus was (at least what they thought to be) Joseph’s son and a carpenter by trade. Perhaps some of them even owned furniture made by Joseph and his son Jesus. They knew the names of Jesus’ half brothers & sisters - brothers who too rejected Jesus’ claim and didn’t become believers until after His resurrection – sisters who were right there with them. They were probably married & settled in the Nazareth area.

Although these people are amazed with Jesus’ teaching and in awe of His miracles, in their eyes He is no more than a carpenter and a son of Mary. How could He claim to be the fulfillment of Scripture? It made them sick. ***“They took offense at him.”*** Literally, they were tripped up. They stumbled over the clear truths in God’s Word and they refused to listen to Jesus’ words because they could not believe ***this man*** could be the Messiah. In Luke’s gospel, we read the people in the synagogue’s anger boils over to the point they take Jesus to the edge of town and attempt to toss Him from a cliff. Jesus quotes a familiar proverb that is certainly true in this case: ***“Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.”***

Talk about being unreasonable! This could have been a wonderful homecoming but instead we read: ***“Jesus could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.”*** I’m sure Nazareth too has its share of sick and suffering, lame and crippled, weak and blind. Jesus had the same ability and power to perform the same miraculous deeds He did elsewhere. But here in Nazareth he healed only a few because nobody asked Him. Nobody wanted this Jesus to drive out their demons, heal their sick or make their crippled legs walk. Miracles would only intensify their anger toward Jesus, instead of strengthen their trust in Jesus as it did in other places. ***“Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith.”*** What amazing unbelief! It is quite bad enough when Jesus is rejected by those who do not know Him. But how painful to our Savior, so much so He is amazed by it, when those who should have been first to recognize Him instead reject Him.

I wonder if Jesus is ever amazed as He sees more of the same today. The world, even our own so richly blessed country, exchanges the Child in Bethlehem for Santa Claus and the Risen Christ for the Easter bunny. No surprise there. But what of those in our own churches and families who think they know Him so well that they no longer know Him at all? He could do nothing there in Nazareth because in their unbelief; no one asked him to do anything. And in our midst? Would He be surprised at us who have had his Word for so long and still think so little of it? Do we come up with reasons to avoid church or study of God's Word that are just as unreasonable? Do we ask far too little of Jesus because of our unbelief? It is hard enough to face rejection, but even worse to be rejected by those who should know you and love you the most.

Yet, dear friends Jesus came into our world, and as John writes: ***“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.”*** (1) The fact is Jesus came to face rejection even worse than what He dealt with here in Nazareth. Jesus on a number of occasions told His disciples: ***“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, after that he must be killed”*** (Mark 8). But not even that rejection would be the worst of it for this Jesus from Nazareth. The worst rejection Jesus received was the rejection which should have been ours. God forsook His only Son. God rejected Jesus because laid upon Jesus was sin. On the cross the Lord laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. God rejected Jesus to suffer hell.

This is the rejection Jesus, in amazing love, willingly faces in order to save you and me! This is why Jesus keeps speaking to us His life giving words. This is why Jesus never gives up on us despite our sometimes unreasonable rejections and amazing unbelief. Jesus loves us and wants us to know Him as our Savior. He loves us and wants us in heaven.

So what will we do with Jesus and His Word today? We have heard much more of Jesus' teaching than the people in Nazareth. We have witnessed already the greatest of all Jesus' miracles – His standing outside of His own grave alive with sin paid for and death and the devil defeated. I pray we don't ever find unreasonable excuses to ignore God's Word or deny this greatest miracle. I also pray that we are willing to face rejection to tell others about our Savior. Yes rejection can be painful; it especially hurts from those who know us well. But because of Jesus we never have to be concerned about being rejected by our God and Savior who knows us best and loves us most of all. So go boldly with His Word and if and when you face rejection understand you are in very good company indeed! Amen.