Sunday, July 19, 2020

Lesson: Mark 6:1-6; **Time of Action:** 28 A.D.; **Place of Action:** Nazareth and Galilee

**Golden Text:** “And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.” (Mark 6:2-3).

I. THE INTRODUCTION. Even when Jesus demonstrated His wisdom among the teachers in the synagogue, they still rejected Him. We can hinder the work of God in our lives by our unbelief. This week’s lesson tells us that Jesus could not do many miracles in His hometown of Nazareth because of the people’s unbelief. What makes this statement even more striking is that it is found in the Gospel of Mark, the book that emphasizes the many works of Jesus.

II. THE BACKGROUND FOR THE LESSON. While the Gospel of John gives us a considerable amount of information
concerning the early ministry of Jesus, Mark and the other Synoptic Gospels (Matthew and Luke) focus on events that occurred from the middle to the end of His ministry. This week’s lesson takes place during Jesus’ early ministry (see Matthew 4:12-25; Luke 4: 14-15). At the time of our lesson, Jesus had returned to His hometown of Nazareth. His earlier ministry in Nazareth resulted in an attempt by the townspeople to kill Him (see Luke 4:16-30). So Jesus moved on to Capernaum (see Luke 4:31) to minister. Then He crossed over the Sea of Galilee and went into the country of the Gadarenes where He cast out a demon from one of them (see Mark 5:1-19). Later, Jesus crossed back over the sea to Capernaum where He raised Jairus’ daughter and cured the woman with the issue of blood (see Mark 5:21-43). Our lesson begins with Jesus there in Capernaum.

III. THE RETURN HOME (Mark 6:1). Our first verse says “And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.” The phrase “And he went out from thence” refers to Capernaum where Jesus had raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead (see Mark 5:22, 35-43). He left Capernaum “and came into his own country” which was Nazareth, the village where Jesus had grown to manhood. We are also told that “his disciples follow him.” Of course, “his disciples” refer to the Twelve whom Jesus had earlier selected to be with Him as special emissaries (see Mark 3:13-19).
IV. THE NEIGHBORS’ COMMENTS (Mark 6:2-3)

   A. What they didn’t know about Jesus (Mark 6:2). This verse says “And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?” Being a law-abiding Jew, Jesus kept the “Sabbath,” the weekly day of the Jewish worship. Mark writes “And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue.” Jesus, the Son of Man, the LORD of the Sabbath (see Mark 2:28), felt the need to be with His fellow worshipers in “the synagogue.” The word “synagogue” refers literally to a gathering place. It was the local place of worship for Jews at this time. It is believed that the concept of the synagogue came about during the time of the Babylonian Captivity when Jews were unable to worship in the Jerusalem temple. By the time of Jesus, “synagogues” were found in almost all towns and villages not just in Palestine (Israel) but wherever Jews had been dispersed since the Captivity. It was common practice for a visiting rabbi, or teacher to be invited by the local Jewish elders “to teach in the synagogue” (see Luke 4:15-17); so Jesus was given that opportunity. Apparently, Jesus was more welcome in some “synagogues” than others. This was the second and last time that Jesus would come to Nazareth after He began His ministry. The first time is when He was invited “to teach” and He read from Isaiah 61:1-2 confirming that it spoke about Him. This resulted in an attempt by the townspeople to kill Jesus (see Luke
4:16-30). After that episode, Jesus left Nazareth and returned to Capernaum to continue His ministry (see Luke 4:31). Now He returned to Nazareth and “he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things?” We could also translate this question as “Where did this man get these things, this knowledge and spiritual insight?” The fact that the people of Nazareth were “astonished” or amazed at Jesus’ words confirms that His life in the village had been like any other Jewish boy. Everyone in Nazareth who knew Jesus also knew that He never went off to Jerusalem to study under one of the great rabbis of that day. Consequently, they wondered about the “wisdom” with which He spoke, for the people also asked among themselves, “and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?” The fact of the matter was that the people in Jesus’ hometown were surprised when He came back to town and “began to teach in their synagogue.” They knew that Jesus had never been formally trained or educated as a scribe. But He spoke with such “wisdom” and performed “mighty works” or miracles causing them to be “astonished.”

B. What they knew about Jesus (Acts 6:3). This verse says “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.” Like other Jewish boys, Jesus learned the trade of His earthly father, Joseph who was a carpenter. So in their amazement, the people who knew
Jesus’ background said among themselves “Is not this the carpenter?” In Matthew 13:55 this question is worded slightly differently: “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” While being a “carpenter” was certainly an honorable occupation, the townspeople could not understand how a mere “carpenter” from their village was able to perform the miracles that Jesus did. They were impressed by Jesus’ preaching and His “mighty works” but they questioned the source of His power. To further support their amazement with Jesus’ wisdom and mighty works (see verse 2), the people also asked, is He “not the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?” This all led the people to resent the fact that someone as common as they were was being recognized as a great teacher. This entire situation confirms the adage that “familiarity breeds contempt.” This is seen in the words “And they were offended at (by) him.” The people were “offended at (by) him” because they reasoned that Jesus, who taught with “wisdom” (see verse 2) was just a common worker who didn’t have any religious or academic credentials. **Note:** Since Joseph is not mentioned after the incident in the temple when Jesus was twelve (see Luke 2:41-52), he probably had died by this time. However, we do learn that Joseph and Mary had four sons and some daughters. Although Jesus was born of a virgin (see Matthew 1:18-25), afterward she and Joseph had a normal family life that produced several more children. The idea that Mary remained a perpetual virgin throughout her life cannot be supported by Scripture. Indeed, there is no reason to suggest it was necessary for Mary to remain a virgin
once Jesus was born. Of course, Mary should be honored as a godly woman and one who had a unique relationship with Jesus; but she should not be worshiped.

V. THE WORKS OF JESUS HINDERED (Mark 6:4-6)

A. An unaccepted Prophet (Acts 6:4). This verse says “But Jesus, said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” Realizing how the people felt about Him, Jesus quoted a common proverb to the people of Nazareth, His hometown. He said “A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” In other words, “A prophet is honored everywhere except in his hometown and among his relatives and by his own family.” As the greatest prophet (see Acts 3:22) to speak to the human race, Jesus was experiencing a rejection unlike any experienced by those who had come before Him as God’s spokesmen. Even His brothers did not believe in Him at this time (see John 7:1-5). Note: Jesus was not surprised by their rejection of Him. His words indicate that He viewed His rejection by family and friends as more the rule than the exception to the rule. Jesus realized that He would never be “honored” or respected in His own hometown. But this does not mean that a man or woman should never try to serve as the pastor of his or her hometown church. It may be someone’s experience that those
who knew you from childhood—family, friends and neighbors—are the ones most reluctant to accept your Christian values. When we realize that the LORD Jesus was met with this same attitude, as well as an intense hatred by His own countrymen and kinsman, we should be encouraged to continue the work He has sent us to do.

B. The results of unbelief (Acts 6:5-6).

1. (vs. 5). This verse says “And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.” Because of the cold reception Jesus received in Nazareth, His ministry of miracles was limited. Mark wrote “And he could there do no mighty work.” This was certainly not because Jesus didn’t have the power. It was the people’s lack of faith or unbelief that hindered Jesus from doing His “mighty work” of great miracles. Lack of faith often prompts God not to show His power (see James 1:6-7). Even though the people’s unbelief hindered Jesus from doing “mighty works,” He still “laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.” In other words, Jesus still did some good among the people, although through unbelief they had slighted Him. Jesus proved Himself to be kind even to those who were evil and ungrateful for “He laid his hands upon a few sick folks, and healed them.”

2. (vs. 6). Our final verse says “And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.” It’s interesting that while
Jesus once “marvelled” at the great faith of a Gentile (see Matthew 8:8-10), here “he marvelled because of their (Jews’) unbelief.” Notice the irony of the situation. The people should have been marveling at Jesus’ power. Instead, it was Jesus who “marvelled” at the people’s “unbelief.” Obviously, faith does make a difference in what God accomplishes in our lives (see Mark 9:23; Luke 17:6). However, we should not assume that if healing does not occur, it is because faith is lacking on the part of those seeking divine help. Paul and other people of faith in the Bible were not healed, and it is not always God’s will to heal us (see II Corinthians 12:7-9; I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20; I John 5:14). Even though Jesus was rejected in His hometown of Nazareth, He continued His ministry for “he went round about the villages, teaching.” Jesus would not be deterred from His mission just because some rejected Him, and neither should we!

VI. Conclusion. This week’s lesson dealt with Jesus’ short-lived ministry in Nazareth, His hometown. As a result of the people’s unbelief, great things were prevented from happening there. God’s power is withheld wherever there is unbelief, but it abounds when we believe and obey.

***The International Sunday School Lesson