

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church  
Shobonier, Illinois  
Pentecost 6B (Proper 9B)  
July 4, 2021  
Mark 6:1-13

Offended by Jesus

He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were astonished, . . . And they took offense at Him. (Mark 6:1-3 ESV)

Dearly Beloved,

We prayed earlier, “O God, Your almighty power is made known chiefly in showing mercy. Grant us the fullness of Your grace that we may be called to repentance and made partakers of Your heavenly treasures.” The call to repentance is a loving work of God, yet, it’s not always welcome, especially when it comes from someone close to you. And that’s what we see in today’s Gospel.

Now, it’s said, “you can’t go home again” and “familiarity breeds contempt.” That’s what we see happening in the synagogue that day. Jesus had done mighty things and spoken mighty words, and word of Him had gotten back to His hometown. And as He taught in the synagogue that day the people who heard him “were astonished.” “Where did this man get these things? [they said]. What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 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?” Their familiarity with Jesus led to contempt for Him.

This was precisely the problem, though. They *\*thought\** they knew Jesus. They’d seen Him grow from a small boy, through adolescence, into manhood. They knew Mary, His mother, and His siblings. They thought of Him as being no different from themselves and certainly no better. So how is it that He speaks about the things of God as though He is an authority? From where did He receive such wisdom? And how could He possibly do such great acts? Yes, they were offended because they saw Jesus as an ordinary man and no more. Familiarity breeds contempt.

Let us not be so deceived. Though the world might proclaim Jesus to be merely an ordinary man, He is anything but ordinary. For Jesus is God-with-us in the flesh. He casts out illness and demons with a word. He commands nature and it obeys. He raised the dead by a word, and He will raise us from the dead as well. Yes, He is true God, and He is true man. Yet, by outward appearances He seemed ordinary. And later on, having convinced many that He was the promised Messiah, He died on a cross. He was crucified as an ordinary criminal. What an offense that was to see Jesus hanging on that cross, wearing a crown of thorns, gasping for air.

What a scandal that \*this One\* is our Savior from sin and death. But looks are deceiving, for as Jesus hung dying on that cross, He \*was\* saving the world from her sins. He suffered the torment of hell as His Father forsook Him. His almighty power was, and is, known chiefly in showing mercy. Jesus looked like any other man dying, but when He died the curtain in the temple was torn in two. Man is no longer separated from God by sin, for Jesus has taken them all away.

And here's where "familiarity breeds contempt" fails to hold. For Christ Jesus is intimately familiar with us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our every weakness, our every frailty, our every thought, our every desire, our every word, our every deed, our every sin. Yet, His familiarity with us does not lead to contempt, but to the cross. In His unending love for us He laid down His life for us that we might live with Him forever. Imagine that! He knows us so well, and He still wants us to live with Him forever.

. Yet, we are all too often like those who were offended at Jesus that day, for we too are often offended at the ordinary. For example, we may see the water in the baptismal font as simply water - from the tap into the pitcher and from the pitcher into the font. It looks like ordinary water, nothing special. But Jesus says that that water kills and makes alive as the Old Adam is drowned and a new man comes forth. For together with God's Word that water is a life-giving flood as we are buried with Christ and raised with Him to a new life.

Or we may consider the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper to be nothing special. It looks so ordinary. But when taken from the altar and given into the mouths of repentant sinners that bread and wine are the Body and Blood of Jesus. That bread and wine forgives sins! They bestow eternal life! And it happens because Jesus says it happens. Indeed, the Word of God joins the Body and Blood of Christ to that bread and wine making it a divine meal unto salvation.

Or even consider Holy Absolution. The pastor appears no different from you. He is every bit a sinner as you are. Yet, He has been called by God to do something extraordinary - preach repentance and forgive sins. When He speaks those words, "I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," he is speaking for the One whose death earned that forgiveness for you. So the words are not his own, but Christ's, and they do what they say.

Yes, my friends, Jesus has come to be with us too. We are His brothers and sisters by virtue of our Baptism. Yet, such familiarity may breed contempt even as it did for those in Nazareth. Their unbelief, their refusal to see who Jesus really is, prevented them from receiving the fullness of the gifts Jesus had come to bring to them. We're told, "Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them."

You see, Jesus does not force Himself on anyone. He does not force anyone to believe in Him. Rather, He came to give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). And this too is offensive to some people, because they don't want everyone to be saved or they are offended by God's

Law. They are offended to hear that they are sinners deserving nothing but an eternity in hell. But if one doesn't realize that he is held hostage by sin, death, and the devil, then he has no use for the ransom that Jesus paid. If one doesn't realize his need for forgiveness, he will have no use for the means by which our Lord bestows forgiveness. If one does not realize that he is sick, then He has no use for the Great Physician who seeks to heal him of all his diseases, especially his disease of sin.

And yet, if by God's grace one does realize his great need, there is but one Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. For while He could lay His hands on only a few sick people and heal them in Nazareth, the unbelief of the people did not prevent Him from going around to the other villages and preaching to them. The unbelief of the Nazarenes prevented \*them\* from receiving Jesus and His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation, but it didn't keep Jesus from His saving work. Instead, Jesus kept proclaiming the kingdom of God, repentance, and forgiveness to all, and He gave authority to His disciples and sent them to do the same. He didn't let the unbelief of His hometown keep Him from the cross on which He died for the sins of the world, including those of the Nazarenes, and yours.

The same Jesus who died for your salvation also sits beside you here this morning. The same Jesus who listened to the repentant thief on the cross listens to your words of repentance. The same Jesus who forgave the unbelief of His disciples also forgives you. The same Jesus who heard the plea for mercy from a man named Jairus also hears your pleas. The same Jesus who gave Himself to His disciples in the upper room as food and drink gives Himself to you in like manner. Indeed, the salvation that was poured out from the cross - the water and blood that flowed from Jesus' side - that salvation flows over you. You have been included in the promise of God. God holds you in His loving arms and not in contempt. You are not forgotten. You have been forgiven. You have been given a new life. You have been freed from your sins. God grant that you never be offended by Jesus or hold Him in contempt, but rather that you believe in Him and His saving work for you, now and forever. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener