

The Hardest Place to Follow Jesus

The Gospel of Mark #21

Mark 6:1-6

But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my home — my household — we will serve the Lord.

Home. It's where the heart is. It's that spot of earth supremely blessed — a dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest. Dorothy says: "there's no place like it." Soldiers say: "I can't wait to go back to it." It's that place where children are allowed to dream. It's that place where mom and dad are allowed to scream. It's where you hang your hat. It's where you lay your head. It's where the shelter is. And it's where the hearthstone is set.

Adam and Eve got kicked out of it. Joshua fought for it. The priests and judges of Israel couldn't manage it. David yearned for it. Solomon built it. Hezekiah got trapped in it. Manasseh almost managed to kill it. James and John left it. Andrew and Peter retreated to it. But Jesus had the hardest of times going back to it. For foxes had holes, and birds had nests. But the Son of Man had no place to hang His hat, to lay His head, and to call home. Like Dorothy, but for completely different reasons, "there was no place like home" for Jesus.

Church, I want to suggest to you this morning that the hardest place to follow Jesus is not in the world, though it's exceedingly difficult. The hardest place to follow Jesus is not in the highways and byways of life, though it's exceedingly difficult. The hardest place to follow Jesus is not in your place of employment or place of education. The hardest place to follow Jesus is not even in your community, state, or country. Instead, the hardest place to follow Jesus is in that spot of earth supremely blessed that you call home. It certainly was for Jesus.

In Capernaum, Jesus did things like heal drive out impure spirits (1:21), heal mother-in-law's (1:29-31), lepers (1:40), and paralytics who entered the building through a roof (2:3). As a result, people wanted to have Jesus over for dinner. In Galilee, Jesus did things like forgive tax collectors (2:14), heal on the Sabbath (3:3), and call disciples (3:13). As a result, the masses gathered just to catch a glimpse of him. In the region of the Gerasenes, he even exorcised a demon possessed man who ended up begging Jesus to go with him (5:19). But in His hometown of Nazareth, they not only rejected their native Messianic son, but they also laughed and mocked Him. Some even attempted to kill Jesus (Luke 4:28-30). For this prophet who also happened to be the Son of God had no honor in His hometown.

So, friend, if the home was the most troublesome battleground for Jesus, so will it be for you, His follower. The home was the hardest place to follow Jesus yesterday. It is the hardest place to follow Jesus today. And it will be the hardest place to follow Jesus tomorrow. So today, I'm going to show you from the Word of God today why the home is the hardest place to follow Jesus and what you can do about. To do that please turn with me to Mark 6:1-6. It's an important passage in Mark because it is a transition away from the Son of Man's popularity of Jesus towards his rejection that will eventually culminate in his crucifixion.

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² 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? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?" ³ 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. ⁴ Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Why the Home is the Hardest Place to Follow Jesus:

1. Familiarity (2-3a)

- **The Preacher's Mannerisms:** (1) For those who have been attending church any length of time, you know well by now that all preachers have certain mannerisms that you can almost set your watch by. (2) Some of them say things like: "that's a great question, I'm glad you asked." (3) Some even have nervous ticks and tells like rocking sides on moving their right leg up and down while preaching. (4) Some in the audience don't pay it much attention anymore because it's familiar. For others, those things breed contempt.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** For the Nazarenes, familiarity with Jesus bred contempt. They rejected Jesus as Messiah because they knew him as a carpenter's son.
- **Textual Emphasis: What They Knew of Jesus' Training vs How Rabbis Were Trained:** (1) In verse 2, the Nazarenes were familiar enough with Jesus' miracles that they acknowledged them as good things: "Where did he get these things?" / "What's this wisdom?" / "What are these remarkable miracles" But they couldn't determine the source of them. (2) What they couldn't get past was what they knew of Jesus' background: he was the carpenter's son. Jesus worked with his hands. He was blue collar. His dad was blue collar. Rabbis on the other hand, spent much of their formative years in study under the feet of another Rabbi (Gamaliel with Paul, for example). (3) As a result, their familiarity with Jesus created a blind spot. They couldn't reconcile the anointing with the carpenter who made stuff for them.

- **App:** When familiarity breeds contempt, don't become contemptible yourself.

2. History (3b)

- **The Doctor's First Order for Discovery:** (1) When you go to the doctor to try to figure out what's going on, several things happen when the doctor gets in the room. (2) He or she greets you while looking at your medical chart. (3) And then the doctor always asks about not only your medical history, but the medical history of your family members.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The Nazarenes lived in a land where history never dies. They "thought" they knew the history of Jesus' mother and father. And they rejected Jesus because of what they thought they knew.
- **Textual Emphasis: The Insult of All Insults:** (1) There are numerous labels and insults people directed to Jesus in the New Testament (Beelzebub; King of the Jews on the cross, etc.) (2) But the worst insult directed to Jesus came from what should have been friendly fire. It came from the Nazarenes: "Isn't this the son of Mary..." (3) In the biblical world, sons were always referred to by their fathers. But not here. (4) The Nazarene's refer to him in a way that suggests they think Mary played the role of the harlot. (5) Mary had to live with that accusation, as did Joseph, and Jesus. But they knew the truth.
- **App:** The most damaging barbs come from friendly fire. They are designed by the devil to wound you. But they are overseen by God to confirm you. They are signs he is at work in your life.

3. Misconception

- **The Spider in Greece:** (1) In 300 BC, the Greek Philosopher Aristotle wrote that spiders had six legs. (2) People in Greece believed him and classified them as having six legs because they were comfortable with Aristotle's knowledge of the spider. (3) For 1700 years in Greek culture, the spider was classified as an insect with six legs. (4) Until someone dared to challenge this in the 1400s by counting the legs on a spider and came up with the number eight. (5) Living with misconceptions of spider was easier for Greeks than living with the truth.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The Nazarenes were more comfortable living with misconceptions of Jesus' identity – as well as His brothers – than they were living with the truth. They rejected Him because they didn't care to know Him.
- **Textual Emphasis: What Jesus' Brothers Names Reveal About What They Wanted and Missed:** (1) Nazareth was a small town in Galilee of less than 200 people. (2) We know from Josephus that it had a history of being one of those towns where people desired revolution and freedom from the Romans. (3) Two of Mary and Joseph's sons reveal this way of thinking. They were Judas and Simon. Both brothers of Jesus were named after two famous Jews from the Intertestamental times: Judas and Simon Maccabaeus. They successfully organized and rebelled a Greek rebellion known as the Maccabean Revolt. (4) Mary and Joseph wanted freedom from the Romans. That's why they named them Judas and Simon. The Nazarenes would have picked up on this. (5) What they didn't pick up on was the one who could and would deliver them was also in the family: Jesus, Yeshua, "the Lord Saves." He is our salvation.
- **App:** When you feel like you are misunderstood through misconception among people you know the best, remember this: reputation is what people think about you. Character, however, is what God knows about you.

What to Do About It:

4. Living Illustration

- **The Best Christian Advice:** (1) We get advice every day, most of it is unsolicited. (2) But some of the best advice we can ever take to heart about how to live as a follower of Jesus in the hardest place to follow Him is this: "Preach the Gospel at all times. And use words when necessary." (3) For the best way to live as a follower of Jesus among people who know you best is to be a living illustration of the grace of God.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** For Jesus, the solution to being rejected in the hardest place to be faithful to His Father was to be a living illustration and demonstration of the grace of God. For us, the solution to being rejected in the hardest place to follow Jesus is to be the very same thing in the lives of the ones who know us best.
- **Textual Emphasis: Going Back to Nazareth Again as a Sign:** (1) Jesus was born in Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth. (2) The first act of Jesus' public ministry started when he stood up in the middle of a Nazarene synagogue, read from Isaiah that the "Spirit of the Lord is upon me...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Lk 4:18-19) and said, "today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (3) As a result, they drove him out of town and tried to throw Jesus off a cliff. (4) In our passage, Jesus returns to Nazareth, this time with His disciples. (5) Though they would respond again with rejection, it didn't stop Jesus from offering his mercy and grace to it. (6) His presence there once again was a living illustration of it.
- **App:** "Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary. Pure and holy, tried and true. With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you." The best thing to do in the hardest place to follow Jesus is to be that presence of grace and mercy in the Nazareth of your life that needs it, even if they don't know it.