

Sermon - Mark 6:1-13 - July 4 2021

What do you think about when someone mentions your hometown? Maybe it's the sight of your mother's overabundant garden or running through the backyard to get to your grandparents' house. Maybe your hometown holds fond recollections walking to the corner store—a few coins in hand—with your best friend. Maybe it's a creaky porch that your family used to occupy every Saturday morning, or your father's distinctive recipes, those familiar smells rising from the stove.

A hometown can communicate comfort and security. There is something about driving on well-traveled streets, of walking into a restaurant and seeing people you know or who know your parents or children. There can be profound warmth in such a familiar world.

Sometimes, though, hometowns are less the stuff of dreams than they are of nightmares. Hometowns can trigger instances of deep trauma, resurrecting decades-old anxieties. Maybe the memories of your hometown are not comforting at all.

Hometowns conjure up all kinds of memories and emotions. Over the years, they become saturated with profound import and meaning and can even take on a life of their own. Hometowns can be lifegiving and heart-rending and everything in between. Today, our gospel text from Mark recounts Jesus returning to his hometown with his disciples in tow. And for all the pleasant moments that might have been brought to his mind, there were, we hear, some pretty significant challenges. He was challenged and questioned at every turn. He could not amount to much because he was just the carpenter's son. Jesus knew the hearts of the people and that he would never be accepted as the Messiah so he says, "Prophets are not without honour, except in their own hometown, and among their kin, and in their own house." Then he healed two individuals to prove his worth.

Jesus does not wait for the people to accept his position as the Son of Man but rather he makes his rejection his rejection stir on initiative. Those he was preaching to in the synagogue took

offence to him. Jesus was preaching the gospel message. Imagine the charismatic leader Jesus sharing the good news of the resurrection. Yet as the gospel writer says, "Even though they could see whom he was Jesus was amazed at their unbelief."

Then suddenly the story shifts from Jesus' rejection to the initiative of his disciples. He sends the disciples out two by two giving them power to drive out unclean spirits. He gives them one instruction to take nothing, go out and proclaim to all that they must repent. How is it that they are to live?

When I read the gospel story for today, I could not help but read it from the perspective of us being us: a church coming out of covid. In Jesus ministry there were a lot of highs and lows. Good and bad things happened. It is a roller coaster all throughout the gospels. This past year has been an up and down ride for the entire globe.

At Zion, I am seeing happy faces, excitement, people joyfully talking together in the same room and for me I am happy to be preaching to a congregation of people not just through viral means. I am thrilled to be able to get to meet some of you face-to-face. I have described it to others like so: it is as if the entire church has gone on a year long sabbatical or holiday and is returning reinvigorated with fresh ideas.

As your new pastor I am excited to be here. You seem excited that I am here. I have met with church council and the worship committee. Your leaders are excited to explore new forms of ministry and worship. So much so, the council is retreating together in September to talk about our goals and grow together in faith. Now is the time to pray and explore; to experiment and accept the outcome; to discern what ministries we might try to do together and so much more. We are walking like the disciples with the just the gospel of Jesus in hand. We are being called to mission, and a ministry yet unknown. We don't need anything to share the gospel other than our voices.

It won't always be smooth sailing as we journey together. Some will accept you into their home or lives, and others will not.

That is to be expected. Jesus tells the disciples you know there will be some that don't want to hear you. Just shake the dust off your sandals and move on to visit someone else. It can be really frustrating when you want someone to hear the gospel with the same excitement that you do and they choose not to. We can love them all the same and trust that God will touch their lives another time.

Let us also trike out two by two and reinvigorate the ministry that takes place at Zion. Prepare for new beginnings in the fall. Bring your ideas to the forefront. Programs and such will be different because they have to be. Yet never forget, we live in a resurrection world and we are living in a new resurrection moment with new life; new hope; new dreams; and the same love of God. Thanks be to God for his most glorious inspiration and love. Amen.