

7th Sunday after Pentecost
“Hometown Hero or Heel? Mark 6:4-6
July 7, 2024
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Mark 6:4.

“4 But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” 5 Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”

So far our text.

The Olympic trials have been going on this past month to see who from the United States will represent the team at the Summer Olympics in Paris. And maybe you heard the news that a valley native has made the Olympic team. Shaine Casas from McAllen, a swimmer, has made the team. Hometown hero. People will be rooting him on.

Any other hometown heroes that you know of? A famous one came from Mission Texas. Tom Landry. Who coached the Dallas Cowboys. He was a personal hero of mine as I grew up. What made me admire him was, of course, his success on the football field in the 1970’s with his no nonsense coaching style and his fedora hat. But even more, his witness of his faith in Jesus Christ, especially through the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, had a strong impact on my life.

It was early in his coaching career when Tom Landry began searching for greater meaning in life at a weekly Bible study. He accepted Christ as his Savior and attended the 1962 FCA National Conference at Estes Park where he was inspired to share his faith publicly.

In high school, I was inspired to form a FCA group with my baseball coach. We would meet after school in one of the classrooms and have a Bible study with other students.

At times, I could relate to what happened to Jesus in His hometown of Nazareth where Jesus was amazed at the unbelief of the people and their rejection of Him.

This was the second time that Jesus returned to His hometown to speak at the synagogue and bring the Good News to the people that He was the Messiah.

At the beginning of His Galilean ministry in Luke 4, we hear of Jesus reading from the book of Isaiah.

**“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”**

20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Fulfilled in your hearing. The Savior is in the very midst of the people, captive by sin, oppressed by the devil. And He, Jesus, Himself, true Man and true God, has come to give liberty, spiritual sight and riches to the brokenhearted poor in spirit. Those who repent receive this most glorious gift of salvation.

22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”

Who does He think He is? Joseph the carpenter is His father. We’ve known Him for 30 years was their thinking. And so Jesus prophesies of how He will be treated on the cross.

23 He said to them, “You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’ ” 24 Then He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.

Hometown Hero or heel?

We know what happened next. **“they were filled with wrath, 29 and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. 30 Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.”**

Not much of a hometown hero’s welcome. Jesus was treated with contempt, as a low down scoundrel, a heel, the lowest part of the anatomy of a person.

And yet, Jesus returns and gives them a second chance toward the end of His ministry. So we see in our text and in the parallel account in Matthew 13, that Jesus comes again to the synagogue and speaks with amazing wisdom. We see the love of Jesus that wants all people to be saved.

“And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! 3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him.”

Hometown hero or heel? Once again, Jesus was rejected. Those Jesus words of wisdom were amazing, the people’s unbelief is what filled Jesus with amazement. It is not the sinner who will be condemned but the unbeliever.

But rejection from His own hometown doesn’t stop Jesus from preaching the Good News does it? He went about the circuit teaching. And then Jesus sent His 12 disciples, two by two. **“(they) preached that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.”**

The question remains for each of us and for all who are listening to our livestream today. Is Jesus your hometown Hero or heel? Jesus comes to our hometown, in our church, and speaks His enduring words of wisdom to us today. And the same Holy Spirit calls your heart to trust in Him as your Savior and receive complete freedom from your sins.

For this Jesus, indeed was ultimately rejected and crucified for the sins of the whole world. He was rejected by His own people and they despised Him, mocked Him and killed Him. Jesus indeed became the heel. His heel was bruised as prophesied in Genesis

3 by the serpent. But Jesus crushed the head of serpent. But by His very sacrifice on the cross, the oppression of our sins was removed.

2 Corinthians 5:21

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Three days after His death, Jesus rose again as the hometown Hero who had defeated all the enemies of sin, death and the devil. He had won the greatest Olympic battle against all evil and gives to His church the fruits of victory – peace. Peace - that the wrath of God has been stilled against all our sin. Peace - that this very body and blood of Jesus that we eat and drink today forgives you of all of your sins. Peace comes to your hearts this day, to your house. Jesus invites all to believe in Him and be baptized for the washing away of all our sins – all the times when we have been the heel by breaking His commandments.

As we heard in our Old Testament reading, Ezekiel was sent to the rebellious people of Israel who were captive in Babylon for their unbelief. But, God desired their repentance and gives them this opportunity to believe. The destruction of the temple had to take place in 586 BC to show how far they had fallen. Yet, God holds out His promise of the coming Messiah to them in chapter 34.

“I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. 23 I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.”

Yes, in your hearing, Jesus tells His hometown that the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel are fulfilled. The Shepherd, Jesus, has come, the Prince, who feeds His people with His gracious words of forgiveness, salvation and eternal life! The Servant, whose heel was bruised, has become the Hero! Trust in Jesus today as your Hometown Hero and Savior. Amen!

“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)