

The 6th Sunday after Pentecost
July 4, 2021

“Belief in ‘this Man’, Jesus – Son of Mary, Son of God”

(Mark 6:2)

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LSB 548

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this 6th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading - Mark 6:2.

“And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. 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!”

Here ends our text.

Has anything astonished you this past month? A visit by President Trump to Weslaco? Athletic feats of skill at the Olympic trials? Amazing putts at the U.S. Open? Yes, I caught all the action of round 4, as we waited in Houston for our connecting flight back down to the Valley.

What has caused you to pause for a moment and marvel? I enjoyed a week with my family at our biannual reunion which turned into 3 years because of Covid last summer. And I was astonished at how my young nephews had grown up so much. Yes, they had all gotten bigger in 3 years, but they also had grown in much wisdom, maturity and faith in the Lord.

As we gathered for worship together, we read the same readings that you had a couple Sundays ago - of the mustard seed tree that grew large. We marvel at how the New Testament church grew from a dozen apostles to thousands of people in a short time by the spreading of the Gospel. People repented and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. The branches kept growing.

Your own Christian families continue to grow by the same Holy Spirit that began the New Testament church on Pentecost. Two of my nephews were confirmed this summer. It is joyful for all of the family to see their dedication to the Lord, their belief in Jesus – true God and true Man.

Wherever Jesus went, He made sure that He went to the Synagogue and preached. He preached the Gospel – the wisdom of God that this Man, known in His hometown as the Son of Mary, the Son of a carpenter is also True God – the Son of God – God in the flesh.

I. Astonished but unbelieving

There in Nazareth, Jesus preached in the Synagogue and the people were astonished at His wisdom and the miracles that He did. You'd think that in a Synagogue, in church, Jesus would be preaching to the choir? Yet, the people who were astonished, rejected the message of salvation found only in Jesus. Instead, they were offended by Him. They became hardened in unbelief. Not everyone who comes to church is a believer. Everyone in the church is a sinner. But it is not the sinner who is damned but the rejecter.

And these Jewish listeners were offended by Jesus. We hear this word thrown around so much these days. "I'm offended by what you said." Everyone is offended by something. On this 4th of July weekend, an Olympic athlete was offended that the National Anthem was played at the medal ceremony. What nerve to play the National Anthem as our U.S. athletes receive their medals! How preposterous is it to play the National Anthem with the athletes who will be represent our country at the Olympic games in Japan! It was just too much! And this athlete, instead of facing the flag and placing her hand on her heart, she turned her back to the flag.

Turned her back to the flag, that men and women have fought and died, that drapes the coffins of heroes who paid the price of freedom with their lives, so that we can enjoy freedom to worship here, and participate in sports should we desire.

We will sing "God bless America" for our final hymn. May God bless our state! How many people have turned their backs to God in unbelief? Jesus marveled not at their belief, but their unbelief! Jesus was giving them what they needed – Himself – the Messiah, but they only saw a carpenter's son.

This Man, this fellow, how did He get this wisdom and do these miracles? They got it half right. Jesus is true Man, born of Mary. “Is this Carpenter not the Son of Mary?” our Gospel says. Yes, Jesus was true Man. He had to be a True Man in order to pay for our sins on the cross. But, He was also True God. If you get half the answers right on a test, that means you fail. And that’s what these people did. They failed. Matthew 13, the parallel text for today’s Gospel, says, “**Now, He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.**”

They wouldn’t even say Jesus’ name. But referred to Him as just another guy. And Jesus, who marveled at the faith of the Centurion, who said, “Just say the word” and my servant would be healed, now marveled at their unbelief.

Jesus wanted to give and give, but the people refused Him. Jesus comes to our “synagogue”, our church this morning through His word and through the Lord’s Supper, and invites us to believe in Him and receive His gift of forgiveness for our souls.

II. Jesus gives salvation so that we would marvel in belief in Him

Last Sunday, we heard the story in the previous chapter of the woman who thought to herself that if I only touch Him, then I will be healed. And she did. Jesus felt His power healing her. “Who touched Me?” And she gladly admitted it, because she had personally seen Jesus’ mighty work when she was healed from the flow of blood. “**Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace.**” As we eat Jesus’ body and drink His blood in the Sacrament of the Altar, we are made well, over and over again.

And each of us marvel that His New Testament church has reached me, 20 centuries later with the Gospel. We marvel that through our baptisms, our sins were washed away and we became children of God. We marvel that God continues to give and give to us to keep us in the one true faith so that we would not fall into unbelief.

“Thanks to Thee O Christ Victorious”, we sang in our hymn of the day – “for the joy Thine advent gave me, for Thy Holy precious Word”. Yes, Jesus came into our world as a true Man to give us the joy of complete forgiveness at the cross! His Word confirms it over and over again. “For Thy baptism which doth save me, for Thy blest communion board.” We thank God for His sacraments that cleanse us from sin and make us part of His church. “For Thy death, the bitter scorn, for Thy resurrection morn. Lord, I thank Thee and extol Thee, and in heav’n I shall behold

Thee.” Yes, we walk by faith until the day we will see the Son of Man, the Son of God, Jesus, face to face!

III. Unbelief cannot stop the proclamation of the Gospel

Yes, Jesus very hometown rejected Him. Do you think Jesus’ disciples who were with Him felt discouraged because their Master was treated like this by the very people He grew up with? But Jesus was not discouraged but doubled down on His efforts to reach the lost with the Gospel. **“He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”**

And not only that, Jesus sent His disciples to go out and do the same. **“He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.”** What did they do? Tell Jesus “no” because people might be “offended” by the Gospel?

“So they went out and preached that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.”

Repentance and forgiveness of sins must be preached while there is still time. One never knows when one’s last day will come. All those people who slept in the condominium in Miami thought they would wake up the next morning, but they didn’t. But if one goes to sleep in Christ, one does not fear death.

In our epistle reading from 2 Corinthians 12, Paul saw inexpressible things in the heavens. Yet, to keep Paul focused on his mission to preach Christ crucified to the Gentiles, Paul was given a thorn in the flesh. It kept him humble and always reminded him

““My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

It wasn’t about Paul, but it’s about the great need to preach the Gospel to the lost! So just as Jesus marveled at the unbelief of the people in Nazareth, Paul similarly said to the Galatians.

“6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,” (Galatians 1:16)

The Gospel is being saved by grace alone through faith in Christ. Listen to Paul summarize this in the next chapter, chapter 2 to the Galatians.

“20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” (Galatians 2:20)

Marveling at His mighty works in you, proclaim Jesus’ death and resurrection to unbelievers that they would believe! As God provided for the disciples that He sent out, so He will provide for you to do His work of telling the Good News to repentant souls. Don’t be discouraged if some reject Jesus. Keep shining the light of Jesus’ work of redeeming the world from sin that by the power of the Holy Spirit, unbelief would be turned to belief and sinners rescued from eternal condemnation. **Amen.**

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