

The Book of Mark
Just a Carpenter? The Deadly Danger of Familiarity (Part 1)
Mark 6:1-6
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Well, I invite you to turn again to the Gospel of Mark and to the amazing record of our Lord's life recorded by Mark, who of course was taking his cue from the Apostle Peter, and we come tonight to Mark 6. I've entitled the message, "Just a Carpenter: The Deadly Danger of Familiarity". Mark 6:1 - 3. As most of you know, just recently, I was over in Italy, and at the end of my trip I spent some time in Rome. And as I was riding around, at one point, in the car, actually, this was earlier on in the trip, I was riding around in the car with a man who lives in Rome, attends the church in Rome, has I think, lived in Rome his entire life. And everywhere we drove we saw amazing ruins from the Roman Empire, like this one for example. We drove past it on our way, a couple of times, to various places.) And I was, of course, enraptured, captivated, by the amazing architecture, by the history, by all those things that I enjoy and love so much.

And it occurred to me that he wasn't equally moved, and so I asked the obvious question. I said, "I suppose that living here in Rome your entire life, that you now drive past all of these amazing pieces of history, and really, they don't affect you at all. You've become used to them." And he looked at me with a smile and he said, "I don't even see them." I thought to myself, you know, that's really true of all of us, isn't it? I mean, I remember when I first moved to Texas after living in Saugus, California, which is something like the surface of the moon. We moved to Texas. And there were trees, and there were seasons. And the drive, the eight-minute drive instead of the forty-five-minute drive on the ten-lane freeway, it was an eight-minute drive down a two-lane road with trees and pastures and horses. And I thought I would never become accustomed to it, I would never get over being amazed by God's goodness in planting us here, for that reason alone with many, many others.

But you know what? I have. Because it's human nature, isn't it? We become accustomed to that which is familiar. It's hard to imagine, seeing the ancient ruins of Rome day after day, can actually because you not to see them at all. But that's exactly what happens. Tragically, familiarity can be even more deadly than merely not seeing, or merely ignoring our surroundings. Familiarity can actually create an active antipathy. We've all heard and used the English proverb, "Familiarity breeds"—what? "Contempt." Sadly, that proverb is very true. And it's built on Jesus' own words to the people in His hometown of Nazareth, in the passage we

come to tonight. Let me read it for you. Mark 6:1,

Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household.” And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

It’s really a remarkable beginning to Mark 6. It’s such a contrast to the previous chapter, because in the previous chapter there was miracle after miracle. Over and over again people came to place their faith in Jesus Christ. There was the demoniac. There was the woman with the flow of blood. There was Jairus and the healing of the raising of his daughter. There was faith after faith after faith in Christ. But Jesus wanted us to know, Mark wanted us to know, ultimately, Peter wanted us to know, that people don’t always believe in Jesus simply because they know about Him or have seen His work in the lives of others. If chapter 5 focuses on those who have faith in Jesus, chapter 6 focuses on those who don’t.

On the issue of unbelief, we meet, first of all, the people of Nazareth in the first six verses. Then as Jesus sends out the twelve, He tells them there will be whole towns into which they go that will not receive them and their message. Herod; much of the chapter 6 is given to the story of Herod. Herod rejects both John the Baptist, the forerunner, and Jesus, the one whom he announced. And even the twelve lack faith, not saving faith. They’re in Christ; they’re redeemed. But their faith is so weak in Christ as we work our way through this chapter. But the focus of this chapter is primarily not on the faith, or lack thereof, of Jesus’ disciples, but of those who would not follow Him. Jesus had already explained to us in the previous passages that not everyone who hears the Good News will receive it; in fact, there would be many who would have absolutely nothing to do with it. You remember the parable of the sower, or the parable of the soils as we called it?

Look back at chapter 4. You remember as He explained this parable to His disciples in verse 13?

“He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word.’” That is, the Word of the Gospel, the Word of God. Someone sows the seed of the Word of God, and there are certain seeds that fall on hard soil. “[They’re] . . . the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.”

You remember this was the hard soil, the hard heart, the soil that was packed down by the foot traffic day after day along the sides of the field. And as the sower sowed, some of the seed would fall over on that hard-packed earth. And it wouldn’t penetrate into the ground, and the devil comes and takes that seed away. That’s a hard heart that is resistant to the Truth. The seed of the Gospel, the seed of the Word, falls on the heart, and there is no penetration. And instead, it’s quickly snatched away and gone.

Jesus said that would happen. But what’s shocking is, the first and most amazing display here in chapter 5 of that kind of hard heart, of totally unreceptive unbelief, comes in Jesus’ hometown, the people He grew up with. It comes from the people who knew Him and among whom He had grown up. Look at verse 1 of chapter 6: “Jesus went out from there [that is, Capernaum] and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him.” Nowhere in this passage or in the parallel passage in Matthew does the name of the town where Jesus goes appear. But the evidence is very clear and undeniable.

The Greek that’s translated “hometown” here is from the Greek word for “father”. It literally means “fatherland” or “the land of his father.” It’s commonly used for one’s home region or one’s hometown. In addition to that, when Jesus gets there, the people in this town know an awful lot about Jesus. They know His former occupation. They know His mother and her name. They know the names of His brothers, and they know His sisters who live in the town where He goes. So, it’s clear then, when you put all the evidence together, that Jesus and His disciples are here returning to His boyhood home. Jesus retraces the exact journey that Mary and His brothers had made just one day before, you remember when they came to Capernaum to seize Him by force and to take Him back to Nazareth? That was just a day before. Now Jesus, on His own, with a different purpose, goes to Nazareth. He returns there on His terms and for His reasons.

Now, Nazareth is located about twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum in the hill country of Galilee. Just to remind you, that’s where Capernaum is, where that red arrow is pointing, right there on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. And there’s a road that runs up through the hill country. There’s a road that’s called the King’s Highway that runs on the east side of the

Jordan. And then there is the Via Maris, the “Way of the Sea,” a major international highway. And you’ll notice it runs just through Capernaum, and it runs right by Nazareth. So, it’s about twenty-five miles journey from the flat land near the coast of Capernaum, near the coast of the Sea of Galilee, up to the hill country of Nazareth. This just gives you a little idea of what Nazareth looks like. Here are some sheep in modern Israel grazing near the ancient town of Nazareth. It would’ve been much smaller than this in Jesus’ day, but that at least lets you see what it’s like.

It’s interesting, because although Jesus had been born in Bethlehem down near Jerusalem, and although throughout most of His ministry He lived and headquartered in Capernaum, He would always be known as Jesus of Nazareth. You see that, even at the end of His life, when the servant girl says to Peter, you’re a friend of Jesus the Nazarene, aren’t you? You see it in John 19:19: Pilate even included the reality that Jesus was from Nazareth in the statement that was nailed to the cross. And in Mark 16:6 at the resurrection, it’s even how the angel referred to Jesus. So, all of His life He was called Jesus from Nazareth. It really makes sense if you think about it: for more than twenty-eight of His thirty-three years Nazareth was Jesus’ home.

Let me just give you a little bit of information about the city, because I think it’s important to put it in context. It was not a large city. It’s not mentioned in the Old Testament. It’s not mentioned by Josephus. It’s not mentioned in the Jewish writings like the Talmud and the Mishnah. However, it’s always called a “polis”; that is, a “city” and not a “village”. So, it would have had, probably, five hundred residents at the absolute most. A more conservative estimate by many is between two and three hundred at the time of Christ. It didn’t have a very good reputation with the culturally sophisticated of Judea.

In fact, you remember when Nathaniel heard that Jesus was from Nazareth he said, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” And Phillip said, “Come and see.” It was kind of secluded up in the hill country. It wasn’t on a main road, but the trade route I just showed you passed just south of it. It was about fifteen miles west of the Sea of Galilee, and about twenty miles east of the Mediterranean. It was kind of isolated up in the hill country, protected, but it was large enough to have a synagogue. So, there were at least ten Jewish men there.

This is where Jesus spent twenty-eight years of His life. You remember that when they came back from Egypt, Jesus and His family, after Herod died, they moved to Nazareth. In fact, His entire life from the time He was twelve. You remember when He went to the temple at twelve? His entire life is summarized in these words in Luke 2:51 - 52: “He went down with them ... to

Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them....” That’s really all we know about the life of Jesus from the time He was twelve till He was thirty and began His ministry. So, He was in Nazareth. That’s where He lived in this small little town. So, Jesus, then, lived out His earthly life—in the eighteen years between twelve years and thirty, He lived out His earthly life in a town that had fewer people in it than are here in this service tonight.

Now Jesus returns to this little hometown. This same event, by the way, that’s recorded here in Mark 6 is also recorded in Matthew 13. This is the second time during Jesus’ ministry that He has returned to Nazareth. The first time, you remember, was early in His ministry. He went to Nazareth. It’s recorded in Luke 4. He went there, and He preached a sermon, and everybody showed up to hear the hometown boy. (We’ll look at that, Lord willing, next time.) Everyone shows up to hear the hometown boy, but then He begins to explain the text of Isaiah to them and to tell them that they are spiritually poor; they are spiritually captive; they are spiritually blind. And they are terribly offended, and they rise up, as it were, one man to take Jesus to a pinnacle and throw Him off. And He passes through them unharmed. That was His first trip. It was about a year before this trip. In spite of all of that, Jesus now returns.

You know, when I think about that, there really is nothing less here than a powerful illustration of the love and patience of God with sinners. People can be glad we’re not God, can’t they? Because we would be so quick to deal with that kind of rebellion. But Jesus, having been threatened with death a year before in His hometown, and then His mother and brothers come to Capernaum to take Him back to Nazareth, to seize Him by force, particularly His brothers because they thought He was insane, a day later, Jesus, on His own returns to Nazareth in spite of all of that. In spite of how they treated Him a year before, He returns to preach the Gospel again. By the way, it’s clearly not a personal trip home. Verse 1 says, “And His disciples followed Him.” That language is classic, first-century language of a rabbi traveling with his students in tow. Jesus has returned to Nazareth with ministry in mind. Now, as Mark unfolds the story of Jesus’ second return to His hometown during His ministry, He provides us with, in verses 2 and 3, the anatomy of unbelief, and in verses 4 - 6, Jesus’ answer to unbelief.

Let’s look first at the anatomy of unbelief. Look at the reason they didn’t believe in Jesus. It begins in verse 2. “When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished.” Now, there’re several things that we can read between the lines in this verse. First of all, apparently the people of Nazareth did not seek Jesus out when He arrived in His hometown. There were no impromptu large gatherings at which Jesus taught like happened often in Capernaum; instead, He waits for the Sabbath. And in spite of the altercation,

when He had spoken a year earlier; in spite of that, the elders invite the city's now famous son to speak on the Sabbath. It's not unlikely that they did so with a great deal of fear and trepidation wondering what would happen this time. But whether you agreed or disagreed with Jesus, you couldn't question the fact that He'd become a very popular teacher. And it would have been the height of rudeness to refuse to invite a visiting teacher of His stature to speak in their synagogue.

So, they extend the invitation, and on the sabbath after the Torah was read, Jesus began to teach. Notice verse 2 implies that there was a big turnout to hear the homegrown Rabbi. Notice, it says there were "many listeners." Again, it was a small town: two hundred, five hundred at the absolute most. But there were many there that day to hear the Rabbi who a year before had created such a stir that they tried to kill Him. "Many listeners." The expression Mark uses is inclusive. He says, basically, everyone who was in that large crowd there to hear Him teach "were astonished". The Greek work literally means "to be struck out of themselves." They were shocked, amazed, surprised, or as our dear friends the English would say, "God-smacked." And the crowds often were by Jesus, but in Nazareth their amazement took a negative slant. Look at verses 2 and 3.

... [They] were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?"

Now, in Greek, these statements are much more biting and hateful than they appear in English. Notice, they never use Jesus' name. And remember, this crowd knew Him very well: small town, famous son, a year earlier created quite a stir, and here He is again. But they never use His name. They know His mother's name, rather. They know His brother's name. They never mention His. Instead, three times in these two verses they refer to Jesus as "this one." In English the Greek expression would be a whole lot like the negative expression "this guy." You know how we say that? Where did "this guy" get these things, and what is the wisdom given to "this guy" and such miracles as He performs? And, is not "this guy" the carpenter? That's really the intent behind their questions.

Now, in their questions we have a portrait of their unbelief. It's unbelief spawned by familiarity with Jesus. Notice their questions.

Question number one: "Where did [this guy] get these things?" This is probably a reference to

His teaching. He begins to teach. In fact, there are some commentators who believe that the expression in verse 2 “He began to teach” means that He didn’t get very far before He was interrupted, and this whole opportunity faded away. We can’t be sure, but certainly, at the very least, as He began to teach there was discussion, whispers, among the crowd. And one of the questions was, where does He get this teaching, these new ideas, these novel interpretations of the Old Testament? You see they recognize that He’s a great teacher, and they’re amazed, but they question the source of His teaching. Where does this come from? Where did He get this? He is, after all, a hometown boy.

Notice the second question: What is this wisdom given to this guy? Again, they acknowledge that He is impressive, that He has wisdom. But at the same time, they know it didn’t come from Him. He’s never been disciplined by a famous rabbi like Paul was. You remember, Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel. They knew Jesus didn’t have that exposure, didn’t have that experience. He’s never been taught in one of the rabbinical schools. So, where does this wisdom come from? Again, the question is about source.

Their third question is: where does He get the power for the miracles He performs with His own hands? Again, they acknowledged that He performed miracles. Remember, Capernaum was just twenty-five miles away; you can bet word spread like wildfire across the countryside of Galilee about what Jesus had done. Where does He get the power to do these things? Now folks, those are the right questions. So, they ask the right questions, but they arrive at the wrong conclusions. Think about it for a moment. There’re only three answers to their questions. They’re all about source. Where does His teaching come from? Where does His wisdom come from? Where does His power come from? There’re only three options.

Option number one is that they come from heaven, that is, from God. They don’t seem to acknowledge that possibility at all.

A second possibility is that they come from earth; that is, they come from His family or from earthly teachers. And they know that’s not true because He grew up there. They saw what happened in His life. They saw what He did, and they’ll make reference to it in a moment.

The third option is that His teaching, His power, His wisdom, came not from God and not from the earth but from below, from the devil himself. And they seem to leave the door open for that possibility, even as the Pharisees had in Capernaum.

Now, their next questions reveal what they thought. The first questions we looked at, these three

questions, reveal what was going on in their minds. And it was all about the source of Jesus' teaching, the source of His power, the source of His wisdom. Their next questions reveal what they think is the answer. Notice their next questions that reveal what they thought.

Question number one: "Is not this the carpenter?" It's interesting, because in Matthew's account he quotes them as saying, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" So, we know that Joseph was a carpenter. And here in Mark 6 is the only time that we're told that Jesus actually followed His earthly father's career path, His earthly father's footsteps. Jesus also became a carpenter. Now, the word "carpenter" literally means "one who makes or produces something." That's what it means. It was used in Greek very broadly: something like the English word "builder". It can include a carpenter in the traditional sense that we think of: someone who constructs a home, someone who builds furniture or wood implements. It can describe a mason, a stone mason who erects buildings. It can describe woodworking. It's a lot like our English word "craftsman". So, we can't be sure exactly what it was Jesus did and Joseph did, but probably in a small village it would've been multifaceted. He would've needed to do a number of those things related to that trade.

There's only one extra-biblical source that gives us a little bit of insight. It comes in about 150 A.D. from the pen of Justin Martyr. Justin Martyr was born about the time John the Apostle died, and so he's very closely connected to the New Testament history. And Justin Martyr, writing about 150 A.D., says this: "When He [that is, Jesus] was among men, He made plows and yokes and other farm implements."

Pretty amazing, isn't it? Think about it for a moment. For most of Jesus' life He worked in wood, probably, building things. He worked as a manual laborer. There's a powerful lesson there, isn't there? God Himself, working, working hard, working by the sweat of His brow to produce something for the good of others. It really sanctifies our work, doesn't it, whatever we do? Jesus Himself gave Himself for most of His life here to hard work on behalf of His family. J. Oswald Sanders writes this:

Jesus saw no incongruity in the Lord of Glory standing in the saw pit laboriously cutting the thick logs into planks or using a plane and hammer. In days when white collar workers tend to despise those who work with their hands, contemplation of the life of Jesus during those silent years would wither such contemptuous pride. He was a carpenter, a working man who earned His living as others of His contemporaries by manual skill. His was no forty-hour week but a

twelve-hour day, doubtless with overtime as well. It if was not beneath the Son of God to work as an artisan, then surely it is beneath none of His children. Because He was no stranger to the dust and sweat of toil, sons of labor are dear to Jesus, and He has imparted to a life of toil both dignity and nobility. [He was a carpenter.]

Now understand that when the people of Nazareth say this about Jesus, they not were opposed to manual labor. The Jewish people of the first century had no problem with manual labor and those who did it. In fact, according to the Talmud, one of the Jewish documents of the time, the duties of a father, the primary duties a father owed his son were circumcision, teaching him the Torah (that is, the Law of God), teaching him a trade, and finding him a wife. So, teaching him a trade was crucial. So, it wasn't that Jesus had a trade like this, but in this context when the people of Nazareth bring up Jesus' past career as a carpenter, they don't mean it well.

They were basically saying something like this: who does this guy think He is? He's just a manual laborer like the rest of us. He has no right to push His views of Scripture on us. In fact, this continued. In the second century, Celsus, the outspoken critic of Christianity, scoffed in one of his writings that Jesus was, quote, "Only a carpenter by trade." He hadn't been taught. He wasn't one of the rabbi's prize pupils. He was just a carpenter. So, they raise this issue, and it's clear what they thought: He has no right to speak like this to us.

They also thought, a second question reveals what they thought: "Is not this ... the son of Mary?" Now, this is a very unusual expression; in fact, this is the only time in the New Testament where this expression occurs. It's possible that it's a rhetorical question about Jesus' mother. Something like this: isn't that Mary's boy from down the street? It's possible that's what they intend. But it's equally possible that this question was, in fact, a less-than-subtle attack on Jesus. In Jewish society, whenever you refer to a son, you mentioned his father. The only two exceptions: if the mother was better known, or if you really didn't know who the father was.

And there were certainly subtle questions raised throughout Jesus' life about who His father was. You remember in John 8:41? Jesus said, "You are doing the deeds of your father." And they responded to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." Many commentators think there was a subtle dig at Jesus here.

A second passage like that's in John 9:29: "We know that [the leaders of the temple said that] God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man [Jesus] we do not know where He is from." So,

here they call Him the “son of Mary.” Now probably Joseph was already dead. But even if the father was dead, in Jewish society, you still referred to the son by his father’s name. As one commentator puts it, James Edwards, “Son of Mary is clearly questionable, probably disrespectful, and may even insinuate illegitimacy. They were, in reality, very possibly calling Mary an immoral woman and Jesus her illegitimate child.” Later, Jewish apologists accuse Jesus of this very thing. They accused Him of being born out of wedlock. They even taught that Mary was seduced by a Gentile named Pandera. “Is this not the ... Son of Mary?”

There’s a third question that reveals, really, what they were thinking. Not only, is this not the carpenter, and is this not the Son of Mary. But thirdly, “Is not this the ... brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And notice, four brothers are listed; they’re listed as well in Matthew 13:55. The first one is James. In Greek and in Hebrew that’s *Jacob*. James is the sort of English version of it. The next oldest brother to Jesus, and the man who would eventually become the leader of the Jerusalem church. You can read Acts 15 as well as his letter and get exposed to this brother. Then there was Judas. Judas is probably the same as the one who wrote the book of Jude. And then there are two others listed of whom we really know nothing. Joses who is Joseph, a variant expression of the name Joseph. And Simon.

And notice that He had sisters, plural. By the way, they’re unnamed. And typically, the fact that they’re unnamed would mean that they were already married. And they say, “His sisters [are] here with us.” That implies that His sisters were married, living in Nazareth with their husbands. Matthew implies that Jesus had at least three sisters. Because in Matthew 13:56, he records, “And His sisters, are they not all with us?” That would seem to imply there were at least three sisters. Put all this together and what it means is that Jesus grew up in a family of at least seven if there were two sisters, and probably eight or more if there were, as it appears, three or more sisters.

The question is, brothers and sisters to Christ in what sense? There’ve been three answers historically offered to that question. The first answer is that they were cousins. This was first proposed by Jerome of the Latin Vulgate. This remains the primary Roman Catholic position. This really doesn’t stand very well, because Greek has a word for “cousin”, and the New Testament writers chose not to use it. In addition to that, the Greek word “brother” that’s used here is never used, ever, anywhere else, to designate a cousin. So, this is really a spurious sort of view.

A second view of who these brothers and sisters were is that they are Joseph’s children by a

previous marriage. That would mean that Jesus was the youngest in the family and the only child of Joseph and Mary. This solution was originally proposed to protect the concept of the perpetual virginity of Mary, a theory that began a couple hundred years after Christ. Now folks, in addition to denigrating the sanctity of the physical relationship in marriage, they want Mary to be a perpetual virgin as if the physical relationship in marriage is something that would taint her. There are many problems with this view. A couple of the obvious ones. There's no mention of this in Scripture. There's no indication that there were previous children of Joseph by a previous marriage.

It also is very important to acknowledge that if this were true, it erases Jesus' rightful claim to the throne through His father which is crucial to His position as Messiah and King. If He wasn't Joseph's first born, then He was not the rightful heir to the throne. In addition to that, it just doesn't match the New Testament picture. In the Gospels, the boys are always tagging along with their mother, and later they're described as having wives. And the implication is that they were younger than Jesus, not older.

The third view of who these brothers and sisters were is the one that I believe the Scripture very clearly presents, and that is that these were children born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus. Jesus was their first born. He was born by Mary as a virgin; that is, she had not known a man as the Scripture says, and He was implanted in her womb by the Holy Spirit. After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had children from the physical relationship that they had in marriage. There're several texts that seem to make this point. Matthew 1:18: "Before [Joseph and Mary] came together she was found to be with child." The implication is that they did eventually come together in a physical sense. Matthew 1:25: "Joseph ... kept her a virgin until she gave birth." Again, the implication seems very clear. Luke 2:7, Jesus is called the "firstborn son," and implies that there were other children that followed. So, these were His brothers and sisters. They were the younger siblings born to Mary and Joseph after the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

Now, there're several other implications of verse 3. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary ... the brother of James ... Joses ... Judas and Simon. Are not His sisters here with us?" The first is that Joseph had died. Joseph is not mentioned here during Jesus' ministry. We know he was still living when Jesus was twelve in the incident at the temple, but there's no mention of Him after that. Jesus had at least six younger siblings and probably seven or more that He led and supported.

Number 2: we learn from this passage that Jesus had taken over the family business. He is now

“the carpenter.” That means that Jesus worked six days a week for all those years to support His family, to support Mary and His younger siblings.

Thirdly, it means that Jesus had by Joseph’s death become the de facto leader of the family of Joseph. His father had died after Jesus’ visit to the temple when He was twelve, but before Jesus began His ministry, as it seems is true, then it would have fallen to Jesus as the oldest man in the home to teach His younger siblings the Scripture, the responsibility outlined in Deuteronomy 6 that I often read when we have a child dedication, to teach them the Word of God. What an amazing home it must have been; to have sat around the table and to have heard Jesus Christ teach His family, His kids if you will, His younger siblings, the truth of God.

But if you think that’s enough to see someone come to faith, it’s not. Because whenever it was that Jesus’ siblings first became aware that their older brother claimed to be more than the human son of Mary and Joseph, they all refused to believe in Him. In fact, as we saw earlier in Mark, they thought He was crazy. They thought He was out of His mind. Their attitude becomes very clear about six months before His crucifixion. In John 7, and we won’t turn there, but verse 5 of John 7 says this: “For not even His brothers were believing [on] Him.”—six months before His crucifixion. He lived His entire earthly life, through His ministry, and His brothers didn’t believe.

So, back to Mark 6. You put all their questions together and it’s clear that the people of Nazareth are amazed at Jesus teaching and His wisdom and His power, but they can’t reconcile those things to what they know of Him from His childhood and His youth, His occupation, His family. In answer to their own questions, they had apparently ruled out the possibility that the source of His teaching and His wisdom and His power was from earth, He’s just a humble carpenter from an ordinary family still living in the tiny little town of Nazareth; most of them. He hadn’t been educated. They also rule out any possibility that He had received this authority from God. There’s no indication they embraced that at all. So, there’s only one other possibility.

They’re left with only one option. There is real reason, in their minds, to be suspicious of Jesus: maybe the rumors we’ve heard are true, maybe the Pharisees are right, maybe His authority and His wisdom and His power comes from the power of darkness itself. Undoubtedly, they’re still resenting, still stinging, from that message a year before when He told them that they were the spiritually bankrupt and slaves and blind. That’s their unbelief, both Jesus’ siblings as well as the people of His hometown: two hundred to five hundred people, most of whom knew Him well. And they cannot believe that He’s anything more than a carpenter.

The result of their unbelief comes in verse 3, the end of verse 3. We've seen the reason for their unbelief. Let's look at the result of their unbelief, as we take their unbelief apart, and we kind of analyze its anatomy. Look at verse 3: "And they took offense at Him." It's how verse 3 ends. Literally, they were "scandalized" by Him. It's the Greek word from which we get the word "scandal". They were scandalized by Him. What they knew about Jesus became a stumbling block, it became a trap. The Greek word for "scandal" is a word that describes the trigger switch on a trap.

When I was growing up in South Alabama, I've probably told you before, we would occasionally make little traps for animals. It maybe it was simple, maybe it was just a little cardboard box, and you would prop it up with a stick, and on that stick, you would tie a string; and you'd put something that would attract the animal into the box at the back of the box. And then you would lay the string across the ground and go hide somewhere over where you couldn't be seen. And there's your string, and there's the stick holding the box open, and you're waiting for that unsuspecting little squirrel or rabbit or whatever it was to find its way in there to get it's food. And then you snatch the string, and it pulls that trigger stick down, and the box falls and traps the animal.

In Greek, the word "skandalon" is the word that describes that "trigger stick". It's the thing that entraps. They are entrapped by what they know of Jesus. He's become a trigger stick for a trap, a stumbling block. This expression is used some eight times in Mark's Gospel in various passages. It always describes something that keeps someone from believing in Jesus in a saving way. In fact, one of the leading Greek lexicons argues that this word describes "deep religious offense".

What was happening in Nazareth when they were, at the end of verse 3 "took offense at Him", this doesn't mean that they just failed to appreciate Jesus, they just failed to appreciate the hometown boy for all that He was. No, it is outright denial and rejection. Their hearts were like stone to the Truth Jesus taught. They had hard, unreceptive hearts. Now, you tell me, what caused, on a human level, their hearts to be hard and unreceptive to Jesus? Ultimately, it was their own sin. But what did their hearts use to justify that choice? Their familiarity with Jesus. In their case, familiarity had bred contempt. At Jesus' first visit a year before they had responded with violent, uncontrollable rage. They tried to kill Him. The second visit a year later, they responded with something that's almost worse: cool indifference and personal insult. He's just a carpenter. We know His family. Who does He think He is? A more frightening response than the year before.

Folks, there is a real warning here for all of us. Intimate knowledge of Jesus and the Gospel is no guarantee of faith in salvation; in fact, familiarity can be an enemy. James Edwards writes, “Exposure to Jesus and the Gospel is no guarantee of faith. Indeed, apart from faith, exposure to the Gospel inoculates as often as it’s enlightens.” That’s my great fear for people sitting here tonight, that sit in our church and other churches week in and week out, for you young people. You grow up in a setting where you’re constantly exposed to Jesus, to the truth about Jesus.

There’s a great danger of growing up in a setting where you’re exposed like that, week in and week out to Jesus. He becomes familiar, and your heart can grow hard to the truth through familiarity. You go to church, and you can sit in thousands of services like this one. You go through thousands of Sunday School classes. You learn hundreds of songs. You memorize hundreds of verses in Awana. And through familiarity, without faith, through familiarity, Jesus becomes common and ordinary and pedestrian. Let me tell you, it’s not true.

Jesus is not ordinary. He’s not common. He’s not pedestrian. Jesus is extraordinary. The Gospel record makes it clear that He is incomparable: He is all-powerful, He is God’s unique Son, and only He has the truth. Only He can rescue you from your sin. He’s the only thing worth living for. He is the only way to God. He is the only truth. He is the only source of life. I plead with you, don’t let your familiarity with Jesus remove either the wonder of who He is from your heart, or cause you not to fear Him with the fear He deserves.

What’s the real answer to their questions? Where did Jesus get His power? Where did He get His teaching? Where did He get His wisdom? Peter answers that powerfully in just a couple of chapters. Let’s take a sneak peak. Turn to 8:27:

Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; [Our group from church visited Caesarea Philippi last year.] and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?” They told Him, saying, “John the Baptist; ... others say ... one of the prophets.” And He continued by questioning them, “But who do you say that I am.” Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.” [You are “Hamashia”, the Messiah. You are the Anointed One of God. You’re the One the Old Testament promised.]

Where did His authority, where did His power, where did His wisdom come from? It came from God, because He is the Anointed One. Tragically, the people of Nazareth were so familiar with Jesus they missed it. Familiarity does indeed breed contempt. We’ll see Jesus’ response to that

familiarity next time.

Let's pray together.

Father, it would be tragic for someone to grow up in this church, go through their adolescence, go off to college and allow their familiarity with Jesus Christ to breed contempt, cool indifference. Father, it would be tragic for someone as an adult to come to this church and sit here and hear the truth week after week in services and Sunday School classes and home fellowships and, Lord, various settings, and to allow that familiarity to breed contempt. Lord, my greatest fear is that there would be someone here who would grow up in unbelief, because of their familiarity with Jesus and with holy things.

Father, break through the hard heart; break it up; prepare it to hear the truth. Lord, may this even be the night when they see the glory and beauty and wonder of Jesus Christ, and they're willing to give up everything else to get Him.

And Father, I pray for all of us who are in Christ, who belong to Him. Lord, don't let our familiarity with Him and with holy things cause us to grow cool and indifferent. Father, light the flame of our hearts afresh. May our passion for Jesus Christ grow. May we be lost in wonder, love, and praise. O God, don't let any of us fall into the danger of familiarity.

We pray in Jesus name and for the glory of His name, Amen.