

Unit II. Wisdom in the Gospels

Wisdom that Astounds and Offends

DEVOTIONAL READING: Mark 7:14-23

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 6:1-6; 7:1-23

PRINT PASSAGE: Mark 6:1-6

Key Verses—When the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.
(Mark 6:2-3, KJV)

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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? 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. (Mark 6:2-3, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Identify the reason or reasons why the people in Nazareth could not accept the wisdom with which Jesus spoke.
- Repent of occasions when Jesus’ words resulted in your taking offense rather than in accepting the wisdom inherent in those words.
- Commit to accepting the words of Jesus even when His words are challenging and stretching.

*Key Terms

Hometown (verse 1)—Greek: *patris* (pat-rece’): of one’s father’s homeland; fatherland; “own country” (KJV).

Miracles (verse 2)—Greek: *dunamis* (doo’-nam-is): might, power, marvelous works; “mighty works” (KJV).



The Biblical Context

Nazareth. According to *Bibleplaces.com*, Nazareth was a village situated inside a bowl atop the Nazareth ridge north of the Jezreel valley. Nazareth was a relatively isolated village in the time of Jesus with a population of less than two hundred. Jesus spent His boyhood years in Nazareth before beginning His ministry when He was about thirty years old. After moving His home to Capernaum, Jesus returned to teach in the synagogue of Nazareth twice more but was rejected both times. On one occasion, the townspeople were so outraged at Jesus that they tried to throw Him off a cliff to His death (see Luke 4:29).

Jesus' siblings. According to *GotQuestions.org*, Jesus' brothers are mentioned in several Bible verses. Matthew 12:46, Luke 8:19, and Mark 3:31 say that Jesus' mother and brothers came to see Him. The Bible tells us that Jesus had four brothers: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (see Matthew 13:55). The Bible also tells us that Jesus had sisters, but they are not named or numbered (see Matthew 13:56). In John 7:1-10, His brothers go on to the festival, while Jesus stays behind. In Acts 1:14, His brothers and mother are described as praying with the disciples. Galatians 1:19 mentions that James was Jesus' brother.

Prophet (verse 4)—Greek: *prophétés* (prof-ay'-tace): a prophet, poet; a person gifted at expositing divine truth.

Synagogue (verse 2)—Greek: *sunagóge* (soon-ag-o-gay'): an assembly; congregation; synagogue.

Teach (verse 2)—Greek: *didaskó* (did-as'-ko): to teach, direct, admonish.

Took Offense (verse 3)—Greek: *skandalizó* (skan-dal-id'-zo): was made to stumble, sin; became indignant, shocked, offended; "were offended" (KJV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

Martavious returned home after ten years living abroad. Everyone was surprised to see him. They thought that after being gone so long, he was gone for good. So, the "speculation mill" went into overtime. Everyone had their own theory as to why he had returned. Had he been a failure and had no other place to go? Was he in trouble and came home to hide? Did he come home to sell drugs?

On his first Sunday back home, Martavious attended Sunday school and worship at his childhood church. During Sunday school, Martavious made several enlightening

comments about the lesson. Those attending were astonished. They remembered the young Martavious who was polite but did not say much.

After a few more Sundays, the superintendent asked Martavious to teach the adult class. He was excited about the opportunity. He prayed and prepared all week long. When Sunday came, he felt ready to share with the congregation.

Wow! Martavious's teaching method was radically different. He had them sit in a circle. He made the session interactive. He interjected "wisdom nuggets" no one had thought about before. He moved people out of their comfort zone, challenging them in their study. He really did a great job. He did so well until he regularly taught.

Still, several of the people who grew up with Martavious could only remember him from his childhood days. They discounted his teaching and rejected the notion that he was doing a good job. Eventually, they stopped attending Sunday school and started

stirring up others against him. When the pastor finally got wind of this “uprising,” he met with the disgruntled Sunday school participants. He listened to their complaints then responded, “I wasn’t here ten years ago. All I know is that Bro. Martavious is doing a great job. Could it be that you’re upset because his teaching is moving you out of your comfort zone? Isn’t that a good thing? Don’t you want to grow in your Christian walk?”

How many times have we heard stories like Martavious’s?

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

They Were Amazed! (Mark 6:1-2a)

KJV

AND HE went out from thence, and came into his *own country*; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to *teach* in the *synagogue*: and many hearing him were astonished, saying,

NIV

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.

After a series of miraculous healings in the region of Gerasenes as recorded in Mark 5, Jesus returned to the other side of the Sea of Galilee to visit His hometown (verse 1a). In some sense, Jesus’ return to His hometown was not unlike a victorious athlete returning home after winning the big game. He was accompanied by His disciples who were, no doubt, still amazed at what they had seen their Master do (verse 1b). We should note that since His disciples were present, Jesus was not making a personal visit home. He was there for ministry work. Although Mark did not specifically give the name of Jesus’ hometown, he had already identified Nazareth as Jesus’ hometown in Mark 1:9. Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Nazareth was Joseph’s hometown. It made sense for Jesus to want to share with the people He grew up with. He had not been warmly received previously (see Luke 4:16-30). Perhaps this time would be different.

Finally, Jesus had the chance to share with His hometown community. It was the Sabbath, and everyone was assembled in the local synagogue. We may infer that the Sabbath was the only time of the week for formal religious instruction. They did not have mid-week Bible study. On that day, they had a guest speaker—Joseph’s boy Jesus. Mark does not indicate the expectations of those assembled. However, we can judge from their later comments that they did not expect much. Perhaps Jesus would share some basic comments using His experience in the carpentry trade as a frame of reference. Yet, that was not the case. As Jesus began to teach, they were astonished (verse 2a).

What Do You Think? When someone you know has displayed surprising insights and knowledge, what were yours and others' reactions?

Wisdom from Where? (Mark 6:2b-3)

KJV

2 From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such *mighty works* are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they *were offended* at him.

NIV

2 "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.

The people of Nazareth were in an uproar. In their minds, there was no way that Jesus could be speaking with such authority (verse 2a). He was speaking on a level they had never heard before (verse 2b). Jesus' words were not the monotonous repetition of the Law. They were soul-stirring, life-challenging. If that wasn't enough, Jesus was performing miracles (verse 2b). Since the Gospel writers made no mention of Him after the twelve-year-old Jesus' Temple visit, we assume that Joseph was dead at the time of Jesus' teaching on this Sabbath. Otherwise, as one of the men of the community, Joseph would have been present to hear his Stepson.

Those witnessing Jesus' ministry mockingly referred to Him as a carpenter because of His lack of formal learning (verse 3a). If that weren't bad enough, they referred to Jesus as Mary's Son (verse 3b). It was customary to refer to children by their father's name. We can only assume they chose to use His mother's name because some knew that Joseph wasn't Jesus' father. We should note that the negative reaction of these people is proof positive that folks in the present-day church did not just start being mean to their fellow congregants. They even included Jesus' siblings (verse 3b). Since they had been mocking Him, we must assume they mentioned Jesus' siblings as a further act of ridicule. It could have been that His siblings had not attained a certain level of stature in the community or were just guilty by association. We know that James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem (see Acts 12:17) and wrote the epistle that bears his name. Many Bible scholars accept Judas as the author of the Epistle of Jude. We know nothing more about His other brothers and not even the names of His sisters (verse 3c). When we sum up the reactions of Jesus' hometown crowd, we can only reach one conclusion: they were highly offended at Jesus (verse 3d); in their minds, He was parading as a rabbi.

What Do You Think? What are some traditions held by people today that Jesus' teachings may strongly challenge?

A Prophet without Honor (Mark 6:4-6)

KJV

4 But Jesus, said unto them, *A prophet* is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

NIV

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. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

After listening to the taunts and slights, Jesus finally addressed those assembled in the synagogue (verse 4). Anyone other than Jesus in that same situation might have had some strong words to share. Instead, Jesus modified a common saying of that time to convey His disappointment in His family and hometown. Since Nazareth was a small village, Jesus likely had other relatives present besides His siblings. The saying was “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town” (verse 4). Jesus added “among his relatives and in his own home” (verse 4). Jesus’ family was already on record as having issues with Jesus’ ministry (see Mark 3:21, 31-35). We may view Jesus’ statement as a major turning point in His earthly ministry. He was now making a formal break with His hometown. We see parallels in Jesus’ instructions when He commissioned the Twelve to minister in Jewish towns: “And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet” (Matthew 10:14, NKJV).

The people of Nazareth were so hardhearted toward Jesus until He could only heal “a few sick people” (verse 5). In verse 6, Jesus gave the reason why those healed were healed and why others were not. It was because of a lack of faith. Just like the woman with an issue of blood in the previous chapter, those healed had faith in Jesus. Jesus was amazed at the lack of faith of the people in His hometown (verse 6a). Since He was God the Son, Jesus knew that they were not going to believe. Still, He was amazed at the state of human nature—that people would not believe what their ears heard and their eyes saw from one they had known from birth. After this episode, Jesus left and began teaching across the region (verse 6b).

 **What Do You Think?** Why is there often tension between a person and his or her family/hometown?

A Closing Thought


Some people amaze us by displaying unexpected wisdom. What happens when people show such extraordinary wisdom? Mark tells us that the people in Jesus' hometown were both astounded and offended by Jesus' wise teachings, and the religious leaders were incensed when Jesus' wisdom challenged their traditions.

Your Life

We can't be too hard on the people of Jesus' hometown. We've had situations where we had our doubts about the "class cut-up" who became a respected pastor and community leader, or the "worst person in math class" who is now a distinguished physics professor. This week, let's work to remove any "Nazareth" thinking in our hearts.

Your World!

I remember growing up listening to Walter Cronkite on the evening news. Whatever he said our family accepted as true. Today, we can no longer employ that type of trust. Polls show that people in America are more skeptical than ever before, even of organized religion. This week, be on the lookout for "skeptics" to minister to, keeping in mind that it might be someone in your own home.

 **Closing Prayer** Lord God, we thank You for freewill to trust in You. We know times arise when we have our doubts. We ask You in advance for Your Holy Spirit to strengthen us in those times of weakness. It's in Jesus' name we make this request. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

In preparation for next week's lesson, compare and contrast the description of Jesus in the prologue to John's gospel (1:1-9) with Wisdom's description of herself in Proverbs 8:1-36.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY , July 20	"Wisdom—the Source of Abundant Life"	(Proverbs 3:13-18)
TUESDAY , July 21	"Jesus Does What the Father Does"	(John 5:19-24)
WEDNESDAY , July 22	"Love as I Loved You"	(John 13:31-35)
THURSDAY , July 23	"The Spirit of Truth Dwells in You"	(John 14:15-17)
FRIDAY , July 24	"Love Binds Believers to God"	(John 14:18-24)
SATURDAY , July 25	"The Spirit of Wisdom Is Promised to All"	(John 14:25-31)
SUNDAY , July 26	"Jesus, the Way to the Father"	(John 14:1-14)