

## **“Is This Not the Carpenter, the Son of Mary?”**

(Mark 6:1-6 – Epiphany 4 – February 2, 2025)

Mark 6:1-6 – <sup>1</sup>*Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. <sup>2</sup>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! <sup>3</sup>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?” And they were offended at Him. <sup>4</sup>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.” <sup>5</sup>Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6</sup>And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.*

Dear Redeemed by the grace of God in Jesus Christ:

“Why, I remember when Jesus was just a little toddler, clinging to Mary’s hand.” “Yeah, it seems like just yesterday He was growing up in the home of Joseph, such a respectful young man.” “Well, whenever I see Him, I think of the wooden furniture He made for me.” Imagine the kind of conversations there might have been among the folks at Nazareth where Jesus had grown, lived, and worked all those years.

At age 30, Jesus had left home. Now He was a rabbi with a following of disciples. His reputation preceded Him as He preached with authority and miraculous power. Some were believing His teaching about the Kingdom of God and who He claimed to be. The people at Nazareth had heard about these things. Now, as Jesus returned to His hometown, they heard His wisdom as He preached in their synagogue.

How did they react? As you might expect from hometown folks who could not see past the young man whose family they had always known, and the craftsman whose rough hands had worked with wood: **“Is This Not the Carpenter, the Son of Mary?”** Behind their words, we hear incredulous questions: **1) Can He truly be the One He claims to be?** And **2) Can His coming this way truly be for our good?**

### **1) Can He truly be the One He claims to be?**

On the Sabbath, the people of Nazareth gathered at the synagogue for worship. Jesus was invited to read the Scripture for the day. Luke’s account says that as He stood up to read, the scroll was opened to Isaiah 61:1-2, where the prophet spoke of the coming Messiah, the Anointed One of God: *“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; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”* Then, as the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Jesus, He declared: *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”* (Luke 4:18-21).

Today in their presence stood that long-awaited Messiah God had promised to send to His people. He had been publicly anointed by the Holy Spirit in His Baptism. Now here He was, the heaven-sent Savior come to preach the Gospel to poor sinners, declaring forgiveness of sins with authority as only God can do. Here He was, the divine Healer come to restore fallen children of Adam living with the effects of sin; proving His power by giving sight to the blind, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Here He was, the Deliverer come to set at liberty those oppressed by the devil; demonstrating His almighty strength over Satan’s kingdom by casting out demons. Here He was, the Savior of the world, come to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the time of God’s grace and favor; holding out the promise to all: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16)!

Imagine the wide-eyed silence that filled the synagogue at Nazareth when Jesus finished preaching. Then the local folks began to whisper: *“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! 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?”* (vs. 2-3). They could not understand how the little boy who had learned Scripture in the synagogue like any other, now spoke with wisdom and authority unlike any teacher they had known. They could not understand how the carpenter who had created ordinary articles from wood, now performed great miracles with the same hands. They could not understand how Jesus, who had grown up among brothers and sisters as the Son of Mary, now claimed to be the Son of God.

*“And they were offended at Him”* (vs. 3). It should have been plain that Jesus’ wisdom and power was of God; but they stumbled over familiarity with Him. As He explained: *“A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house”* (vs. 4). At least they should have received Him as a prophet; but they would not even give Him that honor, for Luke’s account says that when they heard Jesus preach, they were furious and tried to kill Him (4:28-29).

Isn’t this how unbelief always responds to the ways of God? It takes offense at the plain and ordinary way He comes into the world and carries out His saving work.

Ultimately, unbelief takes offense at the message of Jesus' cross, saying: "Would a just God let Himself be crucified by guilty sinners to bear their punishment? Would a loving God require the blood of His Son to save us from our sin? Are we to believe in a crucified, dead, and buried Man to give us eternal life?" Unbelief despises the lowliness and humility of Christ and His cross, calling it weak and foolish.

Today, Jesus still comes to us in humble form, bringing His salvation in Word and Sacrament. As He once sent prophets, He sends preachers to proclaim His Word, saying "*He who hears you hears Me, and he who rejects you rejects Me*" (Luke 10:16). Yet unbelief takes offense. It focuses on the plain looks of a pastor or teacher, or any Christian who shares God's Word, and says: "Who are they to tell me what God's will is for my life? Who are they to proclaim forgiveness in Jesus' name?" Jesus comes to us in Baptism, cleansing away our sin in that washing of water with His Word (Ephesians 5:26). He is present in His Holy Supper, giving His true body and blood for the remission of our sins. Yet again unbelief takes offense. It focuses on the plain outward forms of the Sacraments and asks: "What good is a splash of water, or a wafer of bread and sip of wine? How can these do such great things?"

As we see in the hometown folks at Nazareth, familiarity bred contempt for Jesus. Sinful pride takes offense at the humble form He chooses to come to us and the means He uses to serve us. Unbelief looks for something greater and more glorious. It asks with contempt: "Is this not the Carpenter, the Son of Mary? Can He truly be the One He claims to be? Can His coming this way truly be for our good?"

## **2) Can His coming this way truly be for our good?**

Imagine the alternative. What if God had not come into the world as the humble and lowly born Son of Mary? What if He did not deal with us sinners in the humble form of Word and Sacrament? What if, every time we sinned, He appeared in blazing fire and a thundering voice from heaven: "I heard that evil thought in your mind! I saw that shameful act you did in secret! I can see right through your wrong motives!" If Jesus dealt with us in the blinding light of all His glory, who of us could stand? If He had come as almighty Judge of the world, who of us would escape destruction?

Instead, He came as the Savior, to bear our sin and bring us salvation. Therefore, He chose to come in humble form. This was prophesied about the Messiah. God told Moses He would be raised up among the people like a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:18). Isaiah said He would have nothing majestic or attractive in appearance (Isaiah 53:2). The divine nature of Christ was veiled in the ordinary look of a prophet. His heavenly majesty was veiled in the ordinary look of "*the carpenter, the Son of Mary.*"

In humbling Himself this way, He came as the one who could be despised and rejected by men (Isaiah 53:3). Yet through His very rejection, He won our acceptance with God. Those hands which had become rough in working with wood, would one day be nailed to the rough wood beam of His cross. In deep humiliation, Jesus bore the guilt and shame, the punishment and suffering for our sin. He bore the consequences for our sinful nature, and every way we have sinned in our daily lives against God and man. Jesus died for us, to take away all our sin.

His coming this way truly is for our good, so He could work out our salvation in every way. The Son of God who became the Son of Mary and grew up in the home, honored and obeyed His earthly parents in a way that counts for us as the children of God. The heavenly King who became an earthly Citizen and lived in the world, honored every God-given authority in a way that counts for us as citizens of His Kingdom. The Creator of all who became the Carpenter, used His hands to serve His neighbor in love in a way that counts for us whom He came to serve and save. All that Jesus did from His conception to His cross, God counts to us for righteousness.

Now as our risen Savior, it is for our good that Jesus still comes to serve us in the humble form of His Word and Sacraments. In these means of grace, He is present to give us all the benefits of His salvation. So we confess our sins and take to heart His Absolution; for though it is spoken by the lips of an unworthy servant of His Word, it is the Word of Jesus who is present to declare to us with all His authority: "I forgive you all your sins." We come to Baptism with our children; knowing Jesus is present to cleanse away our sins in this washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). We come to the Lord's Table in faith; knowing Jesus is present to give us His true Body and Blood for the remission of our sin, as His Word declares.

"Is This Not the Carpenter, the Son of Mary?" Yes He is; and thanks be to God! Behind that mask of humility, Jesus truly is the One He claims to be; and His coming this way is for our highest good. As our almighty God and Brother, Jesus comes to us where we live, even in our humble home. He comes to us in our little church, even if few are gathered in His name. The Savior who walked in our shoes is in the midst of us, understanding our daily needs, fully able to sympathize with our weaknesses. He is here with His all-sufficient grace to strengthen our faith and answer our prayers in the best way. As our humble and yet glorified Savior, He will always be here for us with His saving grace and power. Until at last, He lifts us from our humble abode in this world to share in His heavenly Kingdom and glory without end.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.