

**St. Paul Lutheran Church
Grant Park, Illinois
The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 8, 2018
Mark 6:1-6**

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 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, that he even does miracles! 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.

Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

One of the things I've noticed since moving to the area is the sign telling you Momence is the home of two time Super Bowl champion Ted Petersen. I've learned the back way into Momence from our house so the sign I've noticed is the one when you're coming east on 17 from Kankakee. Now, I get why the town has the sign up. It is a huge deal to have someone from a small town play in the NFL and it is an even bigger deal to have this person be a Super Bowl champion.

Now, I want you to imagine you were a person who knew Ted Petersen growing up. Maybe you were a friend of his or a neighbor, but you moved away when he was only 10 years old. You haven't heard from him or heard anything about him after you moved. What would your reaction be when you heard he played on a team that won the Super Bowl? You might be excited, but I would imagine there would also be some people who doubted whether or not it was the same guy.

I could just hear some people saying, "Really, Ted Petersen? You mean the kid I played with won the Super Bowl?" "Ted Petersen won a Super Bowl? I just don't believe it. He was such a scrawny and average looking kid when I knew him. I wonder what changed?" Not everyone would react this way, but I know there would be some people who would because it is human nature to form an opinion about someone and stick to it for the rest of your life.

Our gospel lesson introduces us to a group of people who had formed an opinion about Jesus and were stuck on it. Our story is about Jesus visiting his hometown Nazareth. **"Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 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, that he even does miracles! 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." Jesus has been out teaching when he returns back to his hometown. He has been performing miracles and even has a group of disciples following him, but did you notice what kind of reception he got when he came back home?

The people have nice words to say about him, yet did you detect their tone? Sure, the reports about Jesus had filtered back to Nazareth. He has done miracles. He teaches with authority. They've heard all of that and they acknowledge it, but don't you sense the opinion they're stuck on? This is the same old Jesus we've always known. We know his mom. His brothers and sisters. He might have fooled others, but he won't fool us. The people of Nazareth had formed an opinion about Jesus and were stuck on it.

"Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 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, that he even does miracles! 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 story is tragic. The people of Nazareth had spent 25-30 years with Jesus. They knew him and who he was. He had built up relationships with them. He had given them no reason to doubt him or what he had

to say, but what happens when he comes back home? The people don't believe what he is saying about himself. They can't get past the opinion that this is little old Jesus who we never noticed anything special about during his time with us and therefore we can't believe he is our savior.

Did you notice the phrase at the end of the section I quoted? It says, **"And they took offense at him."** The Greek word for offense has a stronger sense to it. The verb form of the word in our lesson comes from a word which means **"a device for catching something alive, trap."** What kind of trap had the people of Nazareth got caught in? Hadn't they gotten caught in the trap of thinking they knew Jesus and what his mission on earth was better than Jesus did?

Jesus has been out preaching and teaching about God's kingdom. He has been performing miracles to give witness to the fact his testimony is true. The teaching and testimony could only mean one thing from Jesus' perspective: these were the ways he would reveal himself to be the savior of the world. However, the people of Nazareth were caught in the trap which pictured Jesus as nothing more than a simple carpenter who couldn't possibly have the power to do what he claimed.

How does Jesus respond to the people's reaction? **"Jesus said to them, 'Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.' He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village."** Jesus is stunned by their lack of faith and he leaves them behind to go share the gospel where it is appreciated.

What can you and I take away from Jesus visit to Nazareth? This story offers us a serious warning to take to heart. I would guess most of you have known Jesus your whole lives. By God's grace, you were born to Christian parents who brought you to the baptismal font as a small child. They made sure you continued to learn about Jesus while growing up. They brought you to church every week. They took you to Sunday School and to confirmation class.

Yes, you know who Jesus is and what he is all about. You know he is your savior from sin who died on the cross to take away your sins. You know he rose from the dead and you too will one day rise because of Jesus' resurrection. These are all good and wonderful things to know and believe. They are things to be thankful for and appreciate, but this story contains an important warning for lifelong Christians. What is the warning? You can know Jesus your whole life and still get trapped by sin and Satan.

What kind of trap might a lifelong Christian get caught in? Allow me to share a few scenarios. A man has served on the council for a number of years. He has taught Sunday School and serves as an usher on a regular basis. Yet, he gets upset and stops coming to church when his brother has a run in with the pastor about church attendance and life choices. He reasons to himself, "Who is this pastor think he is that he kicked my brother out of the church? Jesus wouldn't do that."

A young girl enjoys playing volleyball. She is even good enough to make a travelling team after the season is over. Yet, the travelling team plays tournaments every weekend for three months after the long volleyball season is over. What should she do? She might lose her spot on the team or even a

chance at a scholarship if she doesn't join the team. Surely, Jesus would understand and want her to use her talents to glorify him even if it takes her away from hearing his voice for three months.

A Christian family owns a small business. They have poured their lives into it. They are making a modest income, but they aren't getting rich either. One day, they discover that they have been calculating taxes wrong for the last five years. They've severely underpaid their taxes and the penalties would be enough to cripple them and take away their business. They know Jesus calls them to be honest, but honesty would bankrupt them. He wouldn't want to see them on the street would he?

I could go on with scenarios, but I think you get the idea. A gigantic trap which lifelong Christians face is becoming complacent in their faith and reasoning themselves into thinking Jesus will endorse their sinful behavior simply because they are lifelong Christians. The people of Nazareth serve as a warning for you and me. Complacency kills faith because it abuses Jesus' love for us by either taking it for granted or treating it with open contempt.

How can we guard against complacency? Look at the story again. Jesus is true God. He knew he was going to be rejected in Nazareth, but what did he do? He went anyway. How come? He went because he loved the people of Nazareth. He knew they would reject him and refuse to believe in him, but their rejection didn't stop him. He went and shared God's love with them and the story of salvation because he wanted them to hear it.

Fast forward to our day. Jesus knows human nature tends to get complacent and abuse his love by treating it with contempt or taking it for granted, but our abuse didn't stop him from going to the cross. He went to the cross to pay for all of your sins. Yes, even your sins of using Jesus' love to excuse your sin and taking his love for granted. Jesus and his selfless love for you is the only thing which will be able to woo you out of your complacent faith and bring a greater appreciation for just how much he loves us.

Jesus loves us even though we treat his love with contempt and often take him for granted. His death covers over our sins and wipes away our abuse of his love and the idol which we try to fashion him into. It is truly amazing when you stop and think about it. Jesus is the exact savior we need and he showers us with love even though we abuse the love he showers on us. Thank you Lord for sending a savior who is strong enough to show us love and to be the savior we need. Amen.