

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: July 26, 2009

## The Dampening Effect of Prejudice and Disbelief

by Dan Trygg

“Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. <sup>2</sup> 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? <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household.’ <sup>5</sup> And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6</sup> And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the surrounding villages teaching.”

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus again moves away from the intensity of ministry activity surrounding the Capernaum area. Things were *so* hot, and the demands *so* high, that it was not only extremely taxing, but possibly even counter-productive. He could not move around freely, and it was keeping Him from the quality time He desired with His disciples. We do not know what may have prompted His visit, but **He returned to Nazareth, His boyhood home.** It may be His answer to the visit of His family members, who had come to see Him out of concern that He was out of control (Mk. 3:20,21;31-35). At the time of their visit, He was in the middle of ministering to the crowds, and He was unwilling to leave what He was doing to talk with them or spend time with them. It was an important precedent to set, namely that God’s work comes first. Extended family relations or visiting friends, important as they are, should not interfere with the flow of what God is doing. (It is important to note that Jesus was *not* shirking any *responsibilities* as a care-giver or a partner. These relatives stopped in unannounced, and He was unwilling to break off what He was doing to meet with them. He went against *social convention*, but did not ignore any actual *responsibilities*. No one was truly hurt or injured by His choice, though they may have been miffed by His apparent disregard of them.) By travelling the 20 mile journey to Nazareth, Jesus was able to pay His respects to His mother, and other family relations, at a time of *His* choosing and under circumstances where there could be no basis to accuse Him of instability. He showed respect for family, and cultivated the relationships, but was not going to be coerced by them.

**The last time that Jesus had been in Nazareth was more than a year earlier, at the beginning of His Galilean ministry (Lk. 4:16-31).** That encounter did not end well. He spoke in the synagogue, declaring the call and anointing of the Spirit in His life. He had already been ministering primarily in Judea, and people had heard of the miracles He had been doing there, and in Capernaum. As He taught, they were amazed at His teaching, and He knew they wanted Him to do miracles there in Nazareth such as He had done elsewhere. However, their familiarity with Him and His family made it difficult for them to take Him too seriously. He addressed that issue, saying that no prophet is welcome in his home town. He then cited two OT examples of how God had used His prophets to minister to Gentiles rather than Israelites. They had been disregarded by Israel, but the Gentiles were open to trust God, and saw Him act. The listeners flew into a rage at this admonition, and seized Jesus. They dragged Him to the brow of a nearby cliff, intending to throw Him down. He was able to walk away from that, however, and moved to Capernaum (Matt. 4:13).

**A lot had happened in the time that had passed since that day. Jesus’ ministry had virtually exploded. Great crowds followed Him, and the reports of His miracles were endless.** So, when He returned to Nazareth, He was asked to speak in the very synagogue He had been expelled from a year before. It may be that some of those from Nazareth had been warming up to Him throughout the year, and they regretted their previous outburst. They undoubtedly would have seen Him at the feasts in Jerusalem, a safe and neutral environment for “mending fences”. People tended to use the feasts as a time of gathering as family, and catching up with one another. Possibly they had *asked* Him to return for a visit, and to speak in their synagogue once again. He was a controversial figure, but He was one of their native sons, and they probably had come to be somewhat proud of His success. As Proverbs 18:16 says, “A man’s gift makes room for him...”. **Jesus’ success and reputation opened the way for another chance to speak in the very synagogue that had put Him out only a year before.** From this, we can learn that *temporary rejection by family and friends does not mean we should have nothing more to do with them.* Jesus made repeated efforts

to reach out to those who had rejected Him. Note, however, that this time He did not come alone. He arrived with His own security detail, His disciples. Even though He was walking into possible danger, He was not foolhardy about facing His detractors alone. They undoubtedly knew of His previous experience, and were on alert for any hint of trouble.

**When He did teach, the crowd was blown away. The Greek word says “they were being struck out (as by a blow)”, a descriptive way of communicating the shock and amazement.** They were “smacked out of their self-composure”, “struck with amazement or astonishment” at both the content of what He was saying, the skill with which He spoke, and the miracles happening through His hands. From this, we see that *initially His ministering was with the same power and skill as He had expressed elsewhere.* This was soon to change, however. **Once the crowd recovered from their initial shock, instead of being delighted in what God was doing through Jesus, they began to let their former opinions of Him affect their response.** Instead of highly regarding and valuing what was the obvious presence of God working at that moment through their native son, they allowed their disregard of Jesus and His family to dishonor what God was doing. **Instead of engaging in hungry, open-hearted faith, they disengaged from what was happening and withdrew the openness of their hearts. They began to disbelieve and distrust what was happening, challenging it in their own thinking.** They began to think that this was some kind of show, or act, or that the miracles were some kind of trickery. **With disdain they said, “From where did *this one* get these things? And what is the wisdom being given to *this one*, and these kind of miracles happening through the hands of *Him*?”** They are still astonished by what He was saying and doing, but they feel like they knew Him, and this *couldn't be* something *He* was saying and doing. “Isn't this the builder, the son of Mary, and brother of Jacob, Joseph, Judah and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” The word for “builder, carpenter” is not just a wood worker, but could also be a stone mason or metal worker. **The thrust of the question was that Jesus was a blue collar worker, not a rabbi or sideshow entertainer.** He had followed in the footsteps of His earthly father, and learned to work with His hands. They knew His entire family. He had brothers and sisters, who were still living there in town. He had grown up there among them. **There was nothing in His family background, His training or His early life that would have indicated that He could or would ever preach and act as He was doing this day.** “And they were stumbling over/ taking offense at Him.” The verb here refers to ongoing action. They couldn't get past their perception of *Him* to hear and receive what He was saying and doing.

**Jesus recognized what was happening, and repeated to them the proverb which He had spoken of twice before, namely that a prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, among his own relatives and in his own household (Lk. 4:24; Jn. 4:44).** This is a spiritual truth, an observable general principle which corresponds to life experiences. Thus, **we should not be surprised when we run face to face into this kind of resistance or opposition.** In one sense, it is *not* about us, ...at least not about who we really are, *now*. On the other hand, it *is* specifically about us, ... who we were *in the past*. **Sometimes, people can't get over the change in our lives.** They are limiting their ideas of who we now are and how we might presently behave, based upon who they perceived us to be in the past.

**The interesting thing is the effect that this had on Jesus' ministry.** The text says, “And He was not able to do not even one miracle there, except that He laid hands upon a few sick people and they were healed.” Apparently, **the level of power and the number of things He was able to do was severely stunted or dampened.** (We would probably be excited at the “leftovers” of even this “dampened” level of power!) **Why did this happen?** This goes right back to that fundamental principle of relationship stated in I Sam. 2:30, “...those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me (i.e., disregard, devalue or think little of Me) will be lightly esteemed.” **When the people of Nazareth chose to disregard Jesus, and doubt that it was God at work in Him, then the Holy Spirit was grieved, and began to withdraw.** Since Jesus' miracles were done by the power of the Spirit operating through Him (Lk. 5:17; Acts 2:22; 10:38), when the Spirit withdrew Jesus was not able to continue to operate in the miraculous. The needs were still there, and Jesus was still willing, but the Spirit was grieved and had withdrawn. **Furthermore, the disbelief of the people meant that the people were not eagerly, desperately seeking God's favor for healing.** They did not receive, because they did not ask, or did not ask in faith (Jas. 1:6-8; 4:2,3). Because they were not seeking Him, to draw near to Him, He did not draw near to them to extend His grace to them (Jas. 4:8).

**The amazing thing is that initially Jesus had been ministering with freedom and power, so much so that the people were shocked with astonishment.** That rapidly changed, as they began to process the events they were witnessing in light of their negative opinions about Jesus. The flow of power and liberty from the Spirit all but ceased, and the change was notable to all. **Jesus Himself was marveling at their unbelief. They had experienced the power of God, and then rejected it by rejecting Him, the messenger.** He was amazed that they were so resistant. To them, however, *things appeared as they expected.* **Jesus was not able to minister powerfully, partly because they would not permit Him to do so. They were unwilling to trust Him or receive what He said. Consequently, they lost out on the effective power of God working through Him.** Meditate on this scenario. Where are you in your faith? Are you eager and expectant, even desperate? Or, are you doubting, resistant and not really expecting God to act. **It is clear from this incident that our faith, or lack of it, can determine what we may receive from God.**

**What did Jesus do, then? He went *elsewhere*, ...to the surrounding villages.** As Matthew Henry observed, “If we cannot do good where we *would*, we must do it where we *can*, and be glad if we may have *any* opportunity.”