

Text: Matthew 13:53-58

Title: Offended and Unbelieving

Truth: Do not let familiarity with Jesus cause you to be offended at Him.

Date/Location: Wednesday January 19, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

Matthew 13:53-58 ⁵³ Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there.

⁵⁴ When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?" ⁵⁷ So they were offended at Him.

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." ⁵⁸ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

In the last section of chapter 13, author Matthew moves from recording Jesus's parable teaching method to a narrative form, and recounts how Jesus taught in his hometown but was not accepted by the people there.

I. Teaching in the Hometown Synagogue, v. 53-54a

A. "His own country" refers to Nazareth, where He was brought up. Luke 4:16 verifies this fact. But what you might not have realized is that this is the second time Jesus was rejected by his own neighbors. Luke 4:16-32 records the first time this happened, which would have been in 27 A.D. The second time, in Matthew 13, was maybe a year later. This makes the rejection all the more galling because it was a repeated pattern.

B. Jesus taught. What did he teach? Same thing He always taught, namely the gospel of the kingdom, repentance, the need to be born again, etc. The **method** and the **content** are both models for us: we need to teach, and we need to teach the right stuff in the right amount.

1. Teaching is the method of communicating divine truth. It can be in a group setting (a synagogue or with the group of disciples) or in an individual setting (like with Nicodemus), but it is teaching, not conversing, dialoguing, collaborating to figure out the truth, etc. This is connected to preaching—which I understand to be teaching with exhortation.
2. There is an authoritative gold-standard that must be taught. The content of that gold-standard is the gospel of Christ. It is not political; it is not medical; it is not scientific; it is not economic; it is not social; it is spiritual. It has to do with God and the Holy Spirit and the gospel and the Bible. It has to do with God’s program; with man’s sin; with repentance and confession; today with the death and resurrection of Jesus; the second coming, etc. These are things that people need desperately to know.

II. The Attitude of the People in Jesus’s Hometown, v. 54b-57a

- A. At first, their response seems positive. They were astonished. They wondered where all the wisdom and might works came from. They could not deny that the Lord had some serious stuff going for Him. But....
- B. They began to reflect on His family connections. With a common type of prejudice, they spoke of Jesus as a carpenter’s son. He would not be able to achieve much beyond carpentry in life, since he was not born into the right social status or—effectively—caste. They saw his mother and how his siblings turned out. They were just regular people like themselves, doing what they were expected to do for people in their social standing. Evidently Joseph was already gone by now.

I am thankful that we live in an very different culture which says, “you can do whatever you want even if your family is of low estate.” Public education helps enable that. Of course, that philosophy swings the pendulum perhaps a bit too far (not everyone has the ability or can gather the resources to do whatever they want), but it is correct in that it breaks the prejudicial bond of ancestral history as if it is ultimately determinative of one’s lot in life.

- C. This despising and family-based judgment turned to a feeling of disgust or something similar, where they asked, “Where then did He get all this stuff?” How could He come up with this? This is not real. He is a fraud. He is a pretender. He’s putting on airs. He thinks He is better than us. Nothing of the sort was true, but they thought it was.
- D. This turned finally into “offense.” They were, because of their own sin, repelled from Jesus like two magnets with the same pole pointed toward each other. They refused to believe in Him; they were angered; they were “scandalized” by Jesus. They thought His behavior was scandalous, but it was their unbelief that was the awful thing.

III. Jesus Diagnoses the People’s Problem, v. 57b-58

- A. Jesus applied a proverbial statement to their attitude: “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” By taking out the double-negative, we clarify that Jesus was saying this: “A prophet is honored everywhere except his hometown.” It is a kind of hard pill to swallow when the boy who grew up in your town goes away for a little while and then returns but with a new ability, confidence, authority, knowledge, etc. and makes you look like you have not made much progress in the past few years!

As a proverb, it has some general truth to it. There was enough truth in the proverb to give it some sting.

Jesus’s “house” is the world now because He is so well known everywhere. As a result, He does not find an easy reception or honor in many places in this world.

- B. What was the ultimate diagnosis of the people in Nazareth? The text reports this: unbelief. They turned away from Jesus. Tragic.
- C. What was the result of this unbelief? He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. They cut themselves off from the great opportunity of the Lord’s presence. Notice how Mark 6:5 expresses the idea: “He was not able/could not do any miracles there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.” The unbelief of the people did not make Jesus

powerless or break His omnipotence. But it creates an atmosphere and demonstrates a lack of inter-personal connection that there is no impetus for powerful work. There are a couple of ways this might work:

1. Unbelief implies that people will not seek help from Jesus. If help is not sought, it is not generally given. No demand, no supply.
2. God has chosen to limit his primary work to those who believe in Him. In other words, it was not a matter of power, but of will on the part of Jesus to do miraculous works. God does not provide His gifts to ungrateful wretches.
3. Doing mighty works would heighten the condemnation of those who do not believe, so not doing such works is an act of mercy.

Conclusion

How does this apply to us in the church?

1. We need to follow Jesus's model of teaching and preaching as well as the content of it.
2. We must discard the prejudicial approach in how we look at people. Also, we must resist the sinful natural tendency to be offended at Jesus when He tells us things that we do not want to hear. But we should be ready to receive such rejection when we tell others of Christ because it is all too common.

Do not let familiarity with Jesus cause you to be offended at Him. "I know all that" or "how does He get off saying that stuff?" You will be eternally sorry if you do that.

3. If we do not trust in the Lord, we do not have to wonder why nothing of spiritual import happens in our lives. With our unbelief, Jesus does not and in effect cannot do many mighty works. If your life and work is not oriented toward belief in Jesus, you will experience a lot of nothing. Let us ask God to help our unbelief that it would be good, strong belief and go on and live for Him. Let Him sort out the things He wants to do in your life, but don't blockade God's work with a lack of faith.