

The Wisdom of Jesus

A Present-Day Illustration

Lawrence says. Lawrence says!" exclaimed Mrs. Simmons. "That's all I hear. Didn't you go to prison for something?" Lawrence was in Mrs. Simmon's living room. He had come to pick up Austin for a men's conference. Lawrence smiled slowly. He did do a short stint in jail 13 years ago for drug possession.

Lawrence had committed his life to the Lord a few years after that. Now, he was gainfully employed as a counselor in a boy's program and was involved in several community projects. He let everyone know, however, that it was only because of Christ that his life turned around.

The Lord had changed and grown him, and Lawrence was grateful. Still, there were people who could not see the good that God had done. Austin and a few other young people were not part of them, and for that, Lawrence was grateful.

"Yes ma'am, that was years ago," Lawrence began.

"It was 13 years ago, Grandma," Austin said, bounding down the stairs, "and the Lord has changed him."

"Where are you all headed again?" asked Mrs. Simmons, dragging on her cigarette.

"A group of five of us are going to Springfield for a conference on how to be godly men," said Lawrence. "I'm paying for the registration, food, and gas. We should be back this evening."

1. *How is having expectations for our lives a positive thing? How could it be negative?*

2. *How much does what we did in the past affect our present?*

3. *Why is it often important to lay aside the expectations of others?*

Going Back Home

Mark 6:1-2a, KJV

1 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.

Mark 6:1-2a, NIV

¹Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ²When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

When Jesus arrived in Nazareth, He and His followers would have likely stayed with Jesus' mother Mary. More than likely, given the culture of hospitality in the Middle East, other neighbors would also have opened their homes if room was needed.

Until the Sabbath, Jesus may not have caused much commotion except for people noticing Him and His entourage. When the Sabbath did arrive, Jesus went to the synagogue with His disciples and began to teach those who were present. Since Jesus had a group of people following Him, He would have been recognized as a rabbi, and thus given a chance to teach.

As we see from other passages in the Gospels, when Jesus taught in the synagogue, He stood out dramatically from other rabbis who were given the pulpit. Instead of quoting other prominent teachers and offering commentary on their views, Jesus spoke as one who had authority—as if He were the one the rabbis should be quoting (Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22)!

4. *With whom did Jesus return to His hometown?*

5. *How did the crowds in Jesus' hometown initially react to His teaching?*

Who Does This Guy Think He Is?

Mark 6:2b-3, KJV

2b From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him,

Mark 6:2b-3, NIV

^{2b}“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these

KJV

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

remarkable miracles he is performing? ³Isn'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.

Despite His authoritative teaching and clearly supernatural miracles, the response of the people in Jesus' hometown to His speaking was (in modern language), "Who does this guy think he is?" He had seemingly exalted Himself over other, respected religious teachers; in fact, it seemed as if Jesus were putting Himself on par with Moses. They were not used to someone speaking to them so boldly.

In the beginning, the crowds were clearly perplexed as to how Jesus got to the point of not only being an itinerant preacher with a huge following, but apparently able to do miracles upon command. Like most small towns, everybody knew what was going on in everybody else's lives. They had seen Jesus growing up, working with his earthly father, playing with his siblings. Isaiah 53 implies that when Jesus was growing up, there was nothing spectacular about Him. He seemed to his neighbors to be absolutely ordinary in every way. And, to have this much learning, He would be expected to come from some noted town such as Jerusalem where a renowned teacher would live. The village had such a non-stellar reputation that Nathanael's response when he first found out about Jesus and where He was from was, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:43-46).

Therefore, the people begin to publicly challenge Jesus' credibility. They had heard Him teach and knew of His reputation for performing miracles, but they seemed unimpressed by all of these things. When many human beings refuse to accept something extraordinary at face-value, they begin to question the origins or power behind what they can plainly see in front of them. In other contexts, the Pharisees plainly accused Him of being in league with the devil, who they said was the real

power behind His miracles (Matt. 12:22-28).

Then they moved from rationalizing the exceptional to appealing to the mundane. They referred to Jesus' ordinary occupation as a carpenter who more than likely did some building projects in the town. They referred to Jesus' "ordinary" family: His mother Mary, His brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas, and some unnamed sisters. It is interesting to note that the people say nothing negative about Jesus' behavior or that of His earthly family. From their statements, however, we see that there was nothing extraordinary about His home.

And so, the townspeople of Nazareth singularly dismissed Jesus. While He had experienced incredible popularity elsewhere, this did not move the people who saw Jesus grow up.

6. *Why were folks in Nazareth perplexed about Jesus' wisdom and miracles?*

7. *Why did these people take offense at Jesus?*

Amazed at Their Lack of Faith

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.

Mark 6:4-6, NIV

⁴Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶He was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

The townspeople took offense at Jesus and refused to give Him the honor any other rabbi would have received from them. The popular phrase "familiarity breeds contempt" was certainly true of the people of Nazareth toward Jesus. They had seen Him grow up as a boy and refused to believe that he had

turned into anything extraordinary.

In response to their condescension, Jesus stated that prophets are usually dishonored in their hometowns, where neighbors and even family members refuse to change their minds about someone who was raised among them.

Because of their spiritual indifference, Jesus refused to do many miracles there—except to heal a few people who seemed to have had faith in Him. This was not because He lacked power. He chose not to do many miracles because of the people's faithlessness. As long as the people were unwilling to believe, Jesus knew no teaching or miracle would persuade them to follow Him. And if He had done more miracles in a climate of unbelief, the people's guilt would have become all the worse. Thus, the Nazarenes missed out on the benefits of Jesus' power because of their unbelief. The same is true for all who refuse to believe.

The text tells us that Jesus was actually surprised at their lack of belief. To cling to alternative interpretations of Jesus' ability to teach with authority and heal the sick absolutely astounded Him. So, after doing what He could for those who truly believed that God was able, and sometimes willing, to heal those who needed it, He moved along. Jesus went to other villages teaching and healing. While the response to His teaching and presence was sometimes mixed, it never seemed to be as dismissive as the reception He received in His hometown.

8. How did Jesus feel about His reception in His hometown?

9. Why didn't Jesus do many miracles in Nazareth?



The traditional site of the synagogue in Nazareth where Jesus spoke.

Not without Honor

As a Christian, one of the most difficult things in life to navigate are relationships. We have family, people, and perceptions that existed prior to our salvation experience. Our history doesn't have to be difficult or steeped in darkness. Rather, it's people's familiarity with our childhood and the unexpected paths that we are called to that can be met with cynicism from others: "How can we believe you have changed? How can you be a different person than when we first knew you?"

Consider Jesus. He was God, come to bring the Good News of salvation and love to the people who knew Him best—yet the people of Nazareth rejected Him because they couldn't see beyond His earthly family. Jesus never sinned; He was absolutely holy, perfect, righteous in everything He said and did. His miracles were already known throughout the region; every place He went, the multitudes followed and witnessed many signs and wonders. But that did not faze the people of Nazareth. They would not honor Him, and so the miracles performed there were few.

Sometimes, we've felt like Gideon, from the least esteemed family and the least member within the family. Sometimes we've felt like David, who was held in such low regard that his father left him in the field while the prophet examined his other sons to see who would be king. But the expectations of others or the past we've lived should not keep us from following the Lord's path for us or listening to His wisdom, whatever it may tell us. Nothing others said about Him or the humbleness of His past stopped Jesus from doing what the Father said He must do. How we live our lives should hinge on the Word of God—not the opinions of men.

10. *Have you allowed the opinions of others to impact your faith and faithfulness? Explain your answer.*

11. *Why is fulfilling the will of God the most important duty of life?*

12. *Why is it often hard to see beyond our past and past expectations to do the Lord's will?*

What God Says

Many voices try to tell us who we should be and what we should do. Anyone who tries to keep us locked in the past or chides us for not being everything we “should” be is not a voice to listen to.

► *Which voices are you listening to that you shouldn't—voices that keep you from doing God's will and being His servant? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you tune out those voices and listen to Him instead.*

KEY VERSES

And 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

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

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 20 through July 26

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Proverbs 3:13-18—Wisdom, the Source of Abundant Life.
- Tues.** John 5:19-24—Jesus Does What the Father Does.
- Wed.** John 13:30-35—Love as I Loved You.
- Thurs.** John 14:15-17—The Spirit of Truth Dwells in You.
- Fri.** John 14:18-24—Love Binds Believers to God.
- Sat.** John 14:25-31—Spirit of Wisdom Promised to All.
- Sun.** John 14:1-14—Jesus, the Way to the Father.