

“The Problem of an Unholy Familiarity”
Mark 6:1-4
(Preached at Trinity, October 6, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 5** could be called the faith chapter. We first witnessed the demoniac, wild and self-destructive, yet after his encounter with Christ he became a man of faith who testified of the greatness of his Savior. We saw the woman with the infirmity who by faith touched the hem of Christ’s garment and found healing. And we witness Jairus who took to heart Jesus admonition, “Fear not, only believe.”
2. But if Chapter 5 could be called the faith chapter, Chapter 6 must be called the chapter of unbelief. **Verse 6** sums it up, “And He wondered at their unbelief.”
3. **Verse 1** - At some point Jesus left Capernaum which was the place of His headquarters and returned to Nazareth which Mark refers to as His “hometown.” Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem He was raised in Nazareth which is why He had the title “The Nazarene” or “Jesus of Nazareth.”
4. On the Sabbath it was customary for the Jews to go to their nearest synagogue. After the building of the Second Temple during the time of Ezra houses of study began to rise up outside Jerusalem for those who couldn’t regularly go to Jerusalem. This was the beginnings of the synagogue. In Jerusalem the Temple was called the House of Prayer but outside Jerusalem synagogues were called houses of prayer.
5. **Verse 2** – On this particular Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and began to teach. Every time Jesus taught people were amazed by His word. Great multitudes would come to hear Him speak. We’ve already seen this in Mark’s Gospel.
Mark 1:21-22 – “And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. ²² And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.”
Mark 2:1-2 – “And when He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.”
6. Once again the people were amazed at Christ:
"Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?"
 - A. At first the people received the words of Christ well. After all, no one could deny their power. No one could deny the authority by which He spoke.
Luke records:
Luke 4:22 – “And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

- B. But their knowledge of Him became their stumbling block.
This was our Lord's hometown. They knew Him. They knew of His former profession as a carpenter. Many had purchased His handiwork. They knew His parents; His brothers and sisters. Perhaps some played with Him as a child.
Mark 6:3 – "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?"
- C. They knew Him. The text tells us because of this they took offense of Him. How could this hometown boy speak to them with such authority? How could they bow before this one they knew so well? Their common knowledge of Him caused them to disregard His teaching and His authority. In their familiarity with Christ they hardened their hearts and continued in unbelief.
- D. The expression "familiarity breeds contempt" is the warning here.
7. Tonight I want to set before you the great danger of familiarity. We'll approach it from two different angles.
- A. First, Jesus applies it as a general concept – prophets are honored everywhere except among those who know them well.
Mark 6:4 - "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household."
I'll apply this to leaders in general.
- B. More specifically, Jesus is applying this to Himself. One of the greatest dangers for the church is to develop an unholy familiarity with God. We come to worship twice every Sunday. We enter into this structure and follow the same format of worship. There is a danger of it passing from a place of the sublime to a place of the mundane.
8. Tonight we'll look at the subject specifically as it deals with our reverence of God. Next time we'll look at it in the sense of leaders in general.
- I. Jesus continually faced this issue of unholy familiarity while upon the earth
- A. Jesus is God. In spite of His great displays of power most dismissed His Deity. They dismissed His authority.
1. Those in His hometown dismissed His authority
Mark 6:4 - "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household."
 2. Some of those closest to Him thought He had lost His mind
Mark 3:21 – "When His own people heard of *this*, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."
 3. John records that His own brothers failed to recognize His glory.
John 7:5 – "For not even His brothers were believing in Him."
 4. Judas Iscariot had such a familiarity with Christ he thought it nothing to approach Him with the kiss of betrayal
 5. Even Peter was guilty of an unholy familiarity with Jesus – he felt at liberty to rebuke Jesus!
NASB **Matthew 16:22-23** – "And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."
- B. After the resurrection His disciples ended all sinful, unholy familiarity

1. Thomas - **John 20:28** – “Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”
2. John –
Revelation 1:13 – “and in the middle of the lampstands / saw one like a son of man”
Revelation 1:17 – “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.”

II. Men have often been guilty of an unholy familiarity with God

- A. This is truly the problem of all of humanity
 1. They breathe God’s air every day. They consume His food and enjoy His goodness. It is all just so common.
 2. They fail to recognize that it all comes from the hand of the Divine
Romans 1:21 – “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”
 3. When they hear the Gospel they are unable to see the glory in it. It just seems like foolishness
- B. This problem of an unholy familiarity has also been a danger for those closest to God – for those acquainted with the holy things pertaining to God
 1. Nadab and Abihu became so familiar with the holy service of God they thought they had liberty to be creative. Apparently they had become dissatisfied with God’s ordained way of worshipping Him.
NASB **Leviticus 10:1-2** – “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.”
 2. Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas abused their position – considered it a small thing to treat holy things common – and God killed them
 3. Uzza also failed to recognize the awesome presence of God.
1 Chronicles 13:9-10 – “When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, because the oxen nearly upset *it*. ¹⁰ The anger of the LORD burned against Uzza, so He struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark; and he died there before God.”
 4. All of these were blind to God's great and terrible majesty.
 - a. They had all grown up around the things of God
 - b. It had all become too familiar to them – they brought upon themselves the wrath of God
- C. This stands as a great warning to us
 1. There is a great danger for us to become too familiar with the holy things of God
 - a. For many their relationship with God does not inspire awe – they are indifferent to His majesty
 - b. Have you ever come into worship without a sense of awe – is it because you have become accustomed to the sacred
 - c. For many coming into the presence of God does not inspire awe – they are indifferent to His majesty – they have become familiar with the sacred

2. We must come before God in holy reverence and Godly fear

III. A proper understanding of God's holiness and majesty should affect how we approach Him

- A. All of our life should be lived before God in reverence
 1. The seraphim in Isaiah's vision were always in the presence of God. But there was no hint of an unholy familiarity
Isaiah 6:2-3 – "Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."
 2. All of our labors should be as if they are done for Christ
Ephesians 6:5-7 – "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷ With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,"
 3. Paul reminds us that everything should be done to the glory of God
1 Corinthians 10:31 – "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
- B. Although God is omnipresent there are particular manifestations of His presence.
 1. We can see this demonstrated in Scripture
 - a. The burning bush was a particular manifestation of God's presence
 - b. Sinai was a particular manifestation of God's presence
 - c. The Tabernacle was a particular manifestation of God's presence.
 2. We should see this building as having a special significance
 - a. It was purchased with the tithes of God's people
 - b. We should see it as belonging to God
 - c. You should teach your children that this place is worthy of respect.
 - d. Why do I straighten the chairs in the dining room on Sunday evening before leaving?
Who will see them?
- C. But how much more should we see our sanctuary as having significance
 1. Let me make myself clear. There is nothing special about this place that makes our worship more acceptable.
 LBC – Chapter 22 – "Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day"
 Paragraph 6 – "Neither prayer or any other part of religious worship is now under the gospel tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is preformed, or towards which it is directed; but God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth. . ."
 2. But we must give particular attention to the matter of coming into His presence in solemn worship with the people of God.
 R.C. Sproul – "When you enter into this place you cross the threshold from the secular to the sacred."

3. When we gather in God's presence it should be done with holy reverence, great seriousness. How are we to worship Him?
 - a. We must contemplate His infinite holiness
 - b. We must confess our sin
 - c. We must examine our relationship with our brothers and sisters
Matthew 5:23-24 – “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”
4. We must teach our children to enter into the presence of God with a holy reverence
Psalm 34:11 – “Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”
 - a. You should teach your children that this place is special – it is where we worship God.
 - b. This is one of the advantages of how we handle our children in worship
 - c. We teach them early of the serious nature of worship.
 But we wait until they are four. You should make it an event. They have now joined with us in the worship of God. (The danger of toys and crayons)

Conclusion:

1. On one hand we have intimacy with God. We have access before Him as a child has access before his own father.
 A king's own child may talk familiarly to his own parent with words familiarity. As the children of God we have the blessing of close communing between God and his own adopted child.
2. But on the other hand, He is God – high, exalted, and holy. He is infinitely greater than any of His creation. Every thought of Him should fill our minds with awe. We must guard against developing any familiarity with God that diminishes awe and holy reverence.
 Spurgeon - There is a holy familiarity with God which cannot be too much enjoyed; but there is a flippant familiarity with God which cannot be too much abhorred.
3. May God guard us against an unholy familiarity.