

**Mark 6: 1-6; “Christ Marveling at their Unbelief”; Sermon # 31 in the series –
“Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on August 16th, 2015, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Here in this passage we find one of the most amazing statements concerning our Lord Jesus. It says in verse 6, “And He marveled because of their unbelief”. You would think that, He being the Son of God, that He would never “marvel” over anything since He knows all things, and the fullness of wisdom and knowledge are found in Him. But it is just because He was a man that He had the feelings and thoughts of human nature in His being, just as you and I do. Yes, He was the God-man, and yet He marveled over their unbelief. We find here that Jesus was marveling over the unbelief of the people of His own home town. And so, we must ask ourselves the question this morning: What is it that Jesus was marveling over in regard to the unbelief of these people? What is it that we ourselves should be warned about in regard to the sin of unbelief so that we might not fall into it, or if we have fallen into it, that we might not stay in that awful state. I believe that Jesus was marveling over 3 three characteristics of unbelief which are manifested by the people of Nazareth. 1st – Unbelief is blind to the idea of Christ being the wisdom of God. (Verses 1 and 2) 2nd – Unbelief greatly resists the idea of Christ’s lowliness and poverty. (Verses 3 and 4) And 3rd – Unbelief seldom understands how it limits Christ’s blessings. (Verses 5 and 6) Let’s think upon these characteristics, and think about whether or not we are believing or unbelieving this morning in relation to the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1st of all - Unbelief is blind to the idea of Christ being the wisdom of God.

Why do I say this in relation to this text? It is because of the questions that these people in Jesus’ own home town asked. “Where did this Man get these things?” “And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands?” You would think that since they were Jews and Jesus was teaching them in the synagogue, that as they heard Him speak, that they would begin to reason with themselves and ask themselves good questions. How could this person be anything less than a prophet sent from God if He speaks this way? Perhaps since He speaks so powerfully and with such great wisdom, there is a good chance that He is the Christ! He could be the promised Messiah, indeed! Instead of connecting the wisdom which He spoke with, to the possibility that He was the Son of God; the questions that they ask are of a very doubting nature. “Where did this Man get these things?” He wasn’t educated by any of our rabbis. He didn’t go to any of the schools of the Pharisees or the Sadducees. So, somehow or other, He must have gotten this wisdom and this ability from some other source. Perhaps, they thought, He has just holed Himself up somewhere, and has read all of the books without having the supervision of the authorities in our synagogue or in Jerusalem. He had to get these things from somewhere; but that somewhere, they think, cannot be God. He has to have gone around the usual way to attain to this kind of knowledge and power.

You see, this is nothing other than raw unbelief. These people did not believe that God could communicate any gift or ability to a person apart from the human means of their rabbis’ educating them. They did not believe that God would ever use other methods of raising a man up to greatness and usefulness except through the schools of higher learning, and particularly the schools of their own religious leaders. These people simply could not account for the wisdom and power of Christ. Or maybe the better way to put it, is that they did not want to account for it in the true and right way. Jesus really was sent from God. Jesus really was woven by God the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb; and the divine and the human nature were placed together in the same person. Jesus really was the personification of wisdom. God really had endowed Him with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; of counsel and might, of knowledge

and the fear of the Lord. (Isaiah 11: 2) This is why we read of such statements in the New Testament such as the one in Colossians chapter 2, verse 3 – “In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” And verse 9 of that same chapter says, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form.”

You see the problem with unbelief is this. The person who is unbelieving does not want to admit the possibility that Jesus is the One whom they should believe because He proves Himself to be the Christ, the Son of God, by His wisdom and His mighty works and by His powerful words and preaching. This is true today just as much as it was on that day so long ago. The person who is unbelieving knows, almost intuitively, because of the sinful independence of their nature, that if they admit even the possibility that Jesus Christ was sent from God; then they must listen to Him and submit to Him. If they concede that He was God made manifest in the flesh; that He is the wisdom and the power of God, because God granted Him these things in the fullest measure according to His purpose and plan to save a people from their sins; people know, I am saying, that they should not only believe in Him, but they should submit to Him, and be guided in their life by the things that He and His apostles taught, which things are written down in the Bible.

And further, the unbelieving person knows that if they concede that there is the fullness of wisdom and power which is in Christ, that God alone gave it to Him; it was not taught to Him or given to Him by any man. And so, they would also have to concede then, that there is a way that God saves, equips, and teaches men by His Spirit. It is He which raises them up to become real Christians through the New Birth. And, they would even have to concede that with some men, God equips them to preach and teach others in such a way that He Himself actually saves them from their sins. It is He who builds them up, and makes them strong by faith. They would then have to believe and accept the fact that all men are sinfully lost and blind, and must believe in Jesus Christ in order to know God and have eternal life. It is only God who can bestow these gifts of grace. This is the difference between a true Christian and a person who is not really a Christian, but who is trying to live the Christian life according to their own thoughts, their own earthly wisdom, and their own human power. It is not possible to become a true Christian in that way. It is not possible to live the true Christian life in that way. This is why Jesus marveled over them. They would rather ask the questions concerning Him to other people, than come to Him directly to ask the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

This is also why there are so many seminaries and churches which are liberal in our nation today. People want to believe that becoming a minister is attained by going to an institution of higher learning and getting a degree in that pursuit of wisdom and knowledge which comes by the study of many books written by men. They try to analyze the Bible without the Spirit of God being their teacher and helper. They are trying to find wisdom apart from God’s giving it to them. They are trying to teach people how to know God better and how to minister to people in a church setting without the truth of the Bible being the ultimate textbook, and without Christ being seen as the wisdom and power of God, who will reveal Himself to the sincere seeker and by His Spirit teaching them Himself. The instructors and the books in such seminaries may teach a person many things about people, but they will never convey anything of real spiritual substance about God and Christ. They will never delve deeply into why Christ had to die, or give the wisdom which will lead to salvation. If, through the teaching of men and books, you learn Christ; then you have found true teachers. But if they teach you simply principles of worldly wisdom and deny that you must be given the power and wisdom from above to see your need of the Lord coming and doing a mighty work in your sinful heart so that you can come to know God and please God; then they are false. Let me ask you if you have learned this precious and all important truth? There is an earthly wisdom that questions the wisdom and power of Christ so that it can remain independent from submission to God and His Word. And some people will

call that true religion. But I assure you, that no person shall enter the kingdom of heaven independently of Christ's wisdom and power being believed and received to themselves. Unbelief truly is blind to the idea that Christ is the wisdom of God personified.

Secondly - Unbelief greatly resists the idea of Christ's lowliness and poverty.

(Verses 3 and 4)

Those people who were at the synagogue that day said, "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon?" "And are not His sisters here with us?" "So they were offended at Him." What were they saying there? They were saying that Jesus was just a lowly carpenter, and as such, why should they consider Him anybody special and listen to Him as a prophet? Did he not grow up around there? Hadn't they all seen Him and His brothers and sisters and mother, and known what they were like? They thought to themselves; He is not of a Levitical or priestly descent. His prophetic calling has not been established by the authorities and leaders of our religion. Why should we then recognize Him in that same way that we recognize all of our spiritual leaders if He has started His following all on His own? Besides, they would think to themselves, they are all from such a poor family. They are a lowly family in Israel. If He is so smart, then why isn't He rich? And thus, they were very prejudiced against Him. The text says that they were offended by Him. They thought that His ministry was very presumptuous.

The thing that you and I must remember about an unbelieving heart is that it very often allows itself to be overly impressed with fleshly credentials. A person, in order to be listened to, in their minds, and heeded as a prophet, must have gone to school to study and have obtained a degree. He is expected to be very gifted in the art of persuading people to his views, in order to think about going into the ministry. In the minds of some, he has to have the right background, the right lineage, the right occupation if he is going to be someone who speaks for God. Jesus was the Son of God, and yet because He was a man who was born of a carpenter, and worked at that lowly occupation, and actually became a carpenter during His growing up years, His own hometown people were offended. They were offended at the idea that such a man with such a background should teach them. This lowly background and poverty and lack of formal education; these in their minds disqualified Him to be seen as the Messiah, the deliverer of His people from Roman domination. His credentials were not impressive enough to them to even think about submitting to His teaching as a Prophet. They might be impressed with His gifts and His wisdom, but they knew in their hearts that He would never be their choice to be the Messiah or even a popular prophet. There are many people like this today in many of the churches in our own land. There are many who will only respect and listen carefully to an intellectual seminary-trained man in the ministry. If a man has great gifts and a good heart, he still may not be able to rise in the esteem of some people, as one whom they should listen to, and heed what he says, on behalf of God. He does not have doesn't have an M. Div. or a PhD. behind his name.

I will assert to you this morning that this is not the way that the Lord God Almighty thinks about things. God the Father believed that it was the best possible occupation for His only-begotten Son to be in, before He began His public ministry; to be a carpenter. And because he was a only a carpenter people were not impressed by him. But God has His ways of raising up men to the ministry which are often quite different than what we conceive. "His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts," He says to us in Isaiah 55: 8. It is the great object of the Christian life to become more and more conformed to the image of our Savior. Our goal is not to impress other people with our worldly wisdom and fleshly abilities. Ours is to become more like Him. God the Father did not want His Son to go through the Jewish seminaries of that day. He had another kind of school to attend. Turn over to Philippians 2: 5 with me. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God,

did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Lest you think that you cannot become like Christ more and more, after you become a Christian by faith in His death on your behalf, take notice of what it says here. “Let this mind be in you...” You are to have the same mindset as Christ when He came in His incarnation into this fallen world of sin. He knew and understood His high position of being nothing less than God. It was not robbery of God or His glory, on Christ's part to think so. And yet He did not come proclaiming His own greatness. Instead, the text says, He did three very important things which you and I are called to do also, as Christians. He “made Himself of no reputation”, He “humbled Himself and became obedient”, and then He became obedient “to the point of death, even the death of the cross”. That is; He wasn't concerned to be someone great in the eyes of men. He chose obscurity in their sight and familiarity in God's sight. This did not mean that He did not have friends or companions, but as you know, He chose them carefully. And He taught them this mindset of no reputation, no pride, and obedience unto death.

This mindset; if we would follow our Lord Jesus Christ, is something that you and I need to have. He came to know and to understand how fitting it was that the man who was the carpenter of Nazareth, the man who made wood products for the people of that city; the man who worked on their houses, should grow up to become obedient to the point of death on a cross of wood. His working with wood in a humble obscure way paved the way, and helped Him very much to have the discipline that He needed, to have a growing obedience to His Father in heaven. He consciously chose to seek out the fellowship and approval of God, in His work, in order that He might do a good job for other people in a holy way, rather than trying to seek out and find the approval of the men of his community, religious or otherwise so that He could enhance His reputation. He no doubt learned the value of persevering in hard work and continuing every day to be diligence in that work by being a carpenter. He was able to learn patience and see how things could fit together in a right way so that things of value and beauty could be made. He learned how to be content in that lowly state; working hard but not trying to push Himself forward as somebody great. He learned that God's time to raise a man up was perfect. He did not have to thrust Himself forward, saying, “Don't you see My greatness?” He learned carefulness and thoughtfulness in His work. He learned to think in the right and holy way about how others could be benefited by His doing good work, careful work, and thoughtful work for them; all to the glory of God, rather than by just trying to please them as men. His goal was to please God. This is one of the most important principles of living the Christian life.

I want to apply this to all of us, but I would especially speak to the young adults here this morning. It is a very great temptation to think that if you can just win the approval of other men, if you can just drink in everything that they can teach you, and then learn to impress them with something that you can do very well; then you are making progress. You may indeed make progress in the world's eyes, but you will not make much progress in God's eyes in that way. Why? Because God is not looking for you to be a man-pleaser or one who seeks after the world's idea of greatness and glory. God would have you to please Him and seek for His eternal glory. And neither is God looking to use proud, self-confident, or self-made men. He wants you to agree to let Him make you over into the image of Christ. He is looking for a humble servant, one who will look to Him by faith; one who will ask God to help him to be so, and one who sees his goal as trying to obtain the A.U.G. degree. Approved unto God. “Study to show yourself

approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth." God only gives this degree to those who will practically apply themselves to humbling themselves, and becoming obedient to the point of death. You say, "Isn't that a little radical?" Yes it is my friend, but Jesus' words are no less radical. "Unless a man deny himself and pick up his cross daily and follow Me, He cannot be My disciple." Is that what you are shooting for? To lose your life so that you might find it? For if that is the case, then you will probably not be approved of, or thought wise by men. They may reject you, they may despise you, they may laugh at you. But if you are wise, you are not really very concerned about this. You know that people did this with Jesus. "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He knew, as He once said to His disciples, "No man can serve two masters."

This, often, even Christian people do not carefully consider. Their thoughts are all wrapped up with the things that they are doing in the world to enjoy themselves, and to follow their own personal or selfish interests, rather than God's. The Apostle Paul's comment concerning the faithfulness of Timothy in Philippians is really quite amazing. He says in Chapter 2, verse 20, "For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state." "For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus." "But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served me in the gospel." This is the same kind of thing that Jesus was marveling over in relation to his relatives and his hometown acquaintances. He marveled at their unbelief in that they all sought their own, and not the things of spiritual and eternal significance. They were not concerned to receive His wise and powerful ministry to them; to be saved and to follow Him, receiving His teaching them of their need of His grace. What about you? Whether you are not a Christian yet, or whether you are, you need to be warned about the dangers of unbelief. And this leads me finally, to -

The 3rd Characteristic of Unbelief – Unbelief seldom understands how it limits Christ's blessings. (Verses 5 and 6)

Verse 5 says, "Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them." In Matthew's gospel it says, "Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Now when you hear this statement, you must not believe that Jesus did not have the power to do those miracles that He had been doing in Capernaum and in other places. It is just that, because of the many people who didn't believe in Him, people who had every reason to believe in Him and didn't, that God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit together knew that it would not be right to bestow such marvelous and wonderful blessings upon those who showed themselves so unworthy of them, because of their unbelief. They were actually guilty of limiting the blessings coming to themselves from the Holy One of Israel by their unbelief. Let me apply it to you in this way. Each of us must be careful, not to do the same with our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are privileged to sit under the means of grace in the ministry of the Word, and you do not come to believe and receive the truths presented, those truths which are intended to save and build up your souls, whose fault is that? It is not God's fault, or the preacher's fault. It will be your own fault. For if you will have faith and exercise it and act upon it, God will give you many, many blessings of grace. He will give you the power which you need to do His will, and to rejoice in doing it. You will know more and more of that wonderful fellowship and communion with the Father and the Son, which is spoken of in the Apostle John's writings, and you will not grieve the Holy Spirit. If great and good spiritual things are not taking place in your life; the distinct possibility exists that unbelief is the cause of it. Look into your heart and ask yourself if you are believing in the wisdom and the power of Jesus Christ, and believingly looking into His Word to lay hold of the promises of all that He will give to you and all He will do in you by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not a matter of whether Christ can do these things for you and in you, and through you. It is whether you will believe

Him or not. “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and forever.” “Amen”.