

Mark 6:1-6 ReMarkable Replies: How to Handle Rejection

I have a ton of good memories from my childhood. But one painful one that sticks out, maybe I've shared this with you, is... I was with a small group of classmates. I hadn't noticed at first, but one by one they began drifting away. Soon just two of us were there. And I realized: they were trying to lose me before whatever they had planned next.

Facing rejection is a painful thing.

A small group of us were sitting here at church about a week ago. One of you shared how a member of your family, in the wake of their own issues, has pushed the rest of the family away. That's something in Susan and my family too – one of the children in another sibling's family flat out said: "you're not my family." [deflated exhale]

We might think, "How could the pain cut deeper than that?" It does if we experience a loved one of ours not just wanting to cut us loose, but rejecting God.

Today we're going to look at Jesus' remarkable reply to rejection. In this case, we're zeroing in on rejection that is faced in reply to God's truth. Jesus teaches us so much for the different times that we face such rejection.

At first, in Nazareth, it sounds like things are off to a good start: "*many who heard Jesus were amazed.*"

See if you can give me an expression on your face that shows: surprise or amazement. Go ahead. **(If someone has a good expression, ask if they'll turn & show everyone.)**

People were often amazed at Jesus.

Turn it around. How often was *Jesus* amazed at other people? Only twice that we have noted in the Bible. The other time, besides here in Mark ch.6, I imagine Jesus' face would have held a similar expression to what I just saw on your faces. He was joyfully surprised –amazed - at the faith of a foreigner, a Roman centurion (Luke 7:9). The centurion expressed complete trust in Jesus' power.

Now, here, Jesus comes to his hometown. And before the end of his visit, we hear he is amazed at what he finds there. Did Jesus react to how much the neighbor kids had grown since he last saw them? Or, did he hear some town news - maybe there was a couple recently engaged and planning their wedding feast – and react to that? We're not told. Though he might have been pleasantly surprised by some of that, our attention is focused on something else. The point of his visit isn't a family reunion, or to get reacquainted with the neighbors and old friends.

Jesus came home, and what's the first thing we hear him doing? He teaches. He's come back home to do his work. Things need fixing in Nazareth. Not tables and chairs. Hearts and lives are broken, and he's got the remedy – He is the remedy!

Gospel lesson - 1 *Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2* *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, that he even does miracles! 3* *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. 4* *Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet*

without honor." 5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

Jesus taught. People were amazed. They were literally "*struck out of their senses!*" Their heads were spinning! "If Jesus is who he says he is, it means..."

But instead of pairing up Jesus' words with the Old Testament prophecies of the Savior, and matching up how Jesus' actions fulfilled God's promises in His Word, questioning came from the people of Nazareth. And it wasn't a "we'd like more information" type of questions. It was a "we know better than that, Jesus, and your words aren't going to change our minds." See what I mean...

Imagine one of your friends is standing right in front of you, and talking about you to the others gathered around. But instead of saying, "Tom, here...", he says: "*This one*, here, says..." Whoa! That's a dig! Right? It's: "I'm not even going to bother with saying your name." And the surrounding words from the people of Nazareth are no more friendly...

"Isn't *this one* just a common worker, an average-joe? This guy is no different – no better – than the rest of us, right?" You see, these are leading questions. They're calling for everyone to give a "sure as tootin'" reply.

And so even though they ask the question, "Where did this man get this wisdom and this ability to do miracles?", they aren't going to even give an honest look at the facts. Everything here was showing them the source: God. But they closed themselves off to hearing and seeing God's answer.

Think of how deep their rejection goes: the very thing we need our Savior to be, they were using as their reason for discarding Jesus. You see? We need the Savior to be like us in every way. That news goes all the way back to the most ancient promise given to sinners. God promised Adam and Eve: One from their own descent would rescue us – humans – from separation from our God and from the curse of hell that our sin deserves. The people of Nazareth were rejecting the longest held truth about God's plan to save us: look for one from among you, born of woman.

"*They took offense at Him.*" There's actually a picture conveyed by the Greek word: "*they were in the process of being entrapped.*" And what was propelling them toward this outcome? They were following their reason and pride. They were ensnaring themselves more and more tightly, as they rejected God's clear truth. [They reasoned:] "Jesus is like us; he isn't what we're looking for."

But God's Word is clear: We need our Savior to be like us in every way, except one. Notice: there is something that the people of Nazareth don't bring up about Jesus. It is as telling as what they do talk about. They don't raise a single question about Jesus' behavior from all his years growing up, or his young adult years in their midst. Not a single sin gets mentioned. Now *everything* is fitting together!

God had promised that He himself would come - that He would become man (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 7:14). God the Son did this, He – Jesus – lived without sin, and He alone is our source of righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6, Isaiah 45:24). To say that another way: He is our only way to be right with God.

That is another truth that sinful human thinking, in pride, rejects.

This is more widespread of a problem than among those in Nazareth. John ch.1 tells us: "*He [God the Son] came to that which was his own, but his own did not recognize him.*" We all lived in rejection of God

at one time – we started out life that way. Yet moved by his grace, the Lord has used his Mighty Word to change our hearts, which were set like stone against him, into hearts that trust in Jesus.

While unbelief takes an utterly blind refusal to consider the facts, belief takes a miracle. We thank God for the miracle he has brought about in us – faith in Jesus!

Though faith in Jesus takes a miracle, unbelief takes a blatant, wicked refusal to look at the facts [Deutschlander].

Earlier we gave surprised or amazed expressions. Try one more. Try to give me an expression of amazed, when it is in reply to something that's not good. Say someone you know says something or does something that is "messed up," which you wouldn't expect from them. Ready? Give me your expression.

(Note if someone has a "shaking the head" in disbelief/surprise type of expression.)

Jesus was amazed. Only it wasn't over how great someone's faith in Him was. He was amazed because of the lack of faith. So many in Nazareth rejected Him. Remember, Jesus grew up in this town. He knew the people. He could have pointed out to you the ones who sat in the synagogue week-after-week as the Word of God was read and taught. Now the One at the center of all those words stood before them: teaching and performing the miracles foretold in the Word. Can you see why Jesus was amazed at the lack of faith here?

Jesus' words in vs.4 are directed at those who rejected him. He's still sharing the truth with them, reaching out to them.

But see how Jesus' comment here also serves as powerful encouragement to us who trust in him - though many times we are weak. Look at the encouragements, correction and direction for us here:

1. Don't be surprised, or misled, by how many people reject God's clear truth.

No one likes to be rejected, especially by those who know us, like family or friends. But that's exactly what Jesus faced from friends and family. We shouldn't be surprised when we face the same.

2. Guard, especially, against being pulled into – entangled in – the rejection of those close to you.

Some have grown children or grandchildren who have followed their human reasoning. Maybe it's their reasoning that it's ok to live in a sin. You see them in the process of ensnaring themselves more & more, rejecting God's clear truth.

Younger adults: think of those you were confirmed with, or went through your high school years in church together. Do any of those friends speak now in rejection of God's truth? They know what the Bible says, but they take offense over it. Maybe it's over the truth of God's 6-day creation of the world. Maybe it's over God's will about sex: to save it for marriage. Maybe it's over God's definition of marriage as 1 man & 1 woman – no alternative definitions. I had a close friend from high school & college who now rejects that truth of God, at least last I heard.

Think of the temptations we feel when confronted with the situation of someone from our family – or someone close to us – walking away from God's truth. Realistically, who enjoys dealing with topics that will almost certainly be greeted by objection, or flat out rejection? We wince at the kind of tension there might be hanging in the air afterwards. We may be tempted to try to "soften the blow" of God's truth.

Understand, until the Holy Spirit gets one's thinking corrected, both God's law and gospel messages rub them the wrong way. They don't want to hear what's wrong with them; they don't want to hear their only

hope is to abandon hope in themselves. Softening God's truth never helps; it hurts the effort to reach others; it also puts us in danger.

Here's a real example, to help show that: a family member who has decided to live together with someone instead of getting married chooses to announce their big news at a gathering with family and friends. There is a chorus of congratulations from many of those present. If you join in, think of what message you'd give to all the people there. Instead, you avoid giving any indication of approval (which may in itself bring looks of question or disapproval). You figure out: Ok, what's the best way to say something? Your goal – God's goal – is that you say something in love to your family member and friend that shares God's truth with them – that what they're planning is sin. You want to point them to God.

Examples could go on. The principle and importance are what we want to take home for the many examples we'll face. We know there are times we've in weakness failed. We thank the Lord for his forgiveness when selfish concerns or timidity have kept us from speaking up for God's truth. What peace! We walk forward in Jesus' forgiveness. We walk forward fully aware of the challenging nature and importance of: guarding against being pulled into the rejection of God's truth, even when – especially when – it comes from those close to us. "Lord, increase our faith" (Jesus' disciples once prayed this).

3. Don't become discouraged. Trust the power of God to work through His Word of truth. Most rejected in Jesus' hometown. But we hear about some who believed. Their faith is shown by the fact that, in spite of the overwhelming opposition, these few still came to Jesus, trusting he could help & heal them.

And each of us can look back to the personal example of the Lord's Word working in our own individual cases. If the Lord has gotten through to a hard-headed nut like me – both bringing me to faith, and time and again correcting me when I've sinned –, he can still get through to others, and bring them to know Jesus and the joy of his immeasurable patience and love.

Prayer: *as close of sermon*