

### Mark 6:1-6

*“Be on guard because familiarity with Jesus without humility breeds unbelief”*

#### Intro:

Good morning, I hope you're having a good Memorial Day Weekend so far and I'd like to wish you all a happy Memorial Day. As Rich likes to say, go ahead and take tomorrow off of work. It's fitting that our text this morning in Mark 6:1-6 falls on Memorial Day weekend because in it we find Jesus returning home after performing some huge miracles to scorn rather than the hero's welcome we might expect. On Memorial Day, it's important that we remember those heroes who have given the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom- dying in service to our country- and it's also important that we remember those who survived their heroic time fighting for our country but were received with violent scorn rather than a hero's welcome back home. In America's not too distant past, thousands of African-American war heroes returned home to the Jim Crow south only to face nightmarish persecution and even lynching. These brave soldiers were coming home to a land of supposed freedom, but they were also coming home to people who feared the benefits that wearing the uniform of an American soldier might bring to men who were viewed as inferior simply because of the color of their skin. Some returning soldiers were counseled by family to change into share-croppers' clothing rather than take their own lives into their hands by returning in uniform. Civil rights activist Bryan Stevenson looks back on this ugly time in American history and comments:

**“No one was more at risk of experiencing violence and targeted racial terror than black veterans who had proven their valor and courage as soldiers during the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. Because of their military service, black veterans were seen as a particular**

**threat to Jim Crow and racial subordination. Thousands of black veterans were assaulted, threatened, abused, or lynched following military service.”**

These were heroes who were received with violence and hatred rather than the hero's welcome they deserved. One such hero was a man named Isaac Woodard. Sergeant Woodard served in the Army during WWII, and received several medals during his military career for both conduct as a soldier and courage in battle. After the war, he returned to the states and was honorably discharged from a military camp in Georgia where he boarded a bus with other veterans to finally return home. He was eager to get home and see, for the first time, his new daughter who had been born while he was overseas. It would actually be weeks before Sergeant Woodard would make it home because though he survived the war without bodily harm, the threat at home was more than this hero could overcome. After an argument with a demeaning bus driver over a bathroom stop, Sergeant Woodard was pulled off of the bus and beaten so badly by police officers that he was left concussed, with temporary amnesia, and permanently blind in both eyes. He would never actually lay eyes on his baby girl. Certainly, a far cry from the hero's welcome that Sergeant Woodard deserved.

Sergeant Woodard and other heroes like him received such harsh treatment in spite of, or because of, their heroism because those inflicting the violence on them were filled with a toxic mixture of pride and fear. In their pride, Southern Whites sought to keep African-Americans in a familiar subordinate position in society. When these valiant African-American war heroes returned and shattered that inferior mold being forced on them, many people in the South were filled with great fear and moved towards violence. May we remember these heroes who lost their lives and livelihood at home after bravely risking their lives in service to our country...

In our passage this morning, Jesus returns home after a long stint of ministry around the Sea of Galilee and he too is met with pride and fear rather than the hero's welcome due to him. The people most familiar with Jesus, those he grew up around in his hometown, are blinded by their pride and refuse to believe in Jesus- rejecting him outright. The story in Mark 6:1-6 serves as a warning for us this morning: ***Be on guard because familiarity with Jesus without humility breeds unbelief.*** That warning is our big idea: ***Be on guard because familiarity with Jesus without humility breeds unbelief.*** Please follow along as we read God's word to us this morning.

Mark 6:1-6:

**1 He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." 5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.**

**Astonished People:**

If you've been with us at all up unto this point in Mark, you know the question that's been hanging over this first part of Mark's gospel: **"who is this Jesus?"** Along with Jesus' followers and the many people he encounters in his travels, we've been inching closer to a fuller answer to that question. As Jesus comes back to his hometown, however, we run into people who think they already know exactly who Jesus is. They are a people, like the others who we've seen, who are astonished by Jesus, but their astonishment crashes with their familiarity and mixes with their pride to quickly turn toxic. They have a preconceived mental box that Jesus should fit into because they are familiar with his family and who he's been for the last 30 or so years. In their minds, Jesus is an average boy from an average town that grew up to be a regular old carpenter just like his dad. To them, he's a good man, sure, but nothing really all that special. **If last week we saw the great results of just a little faith in the healing of the woman with 12 years of hemorrhaging and the raising from the dead of a little girl, this week we see the destruction that results from the pride and unbelief of those most familiar with Jesus.**

Jesus is returning home after a full journey where he taught great masses and performed astounding miracles. A brief snapshot of his recent ministry highlights finds Jesus captivating crowds so large he had to push out to sea in a boat to teach them all. Jesus would later calm a raging storm on that sea with a simple rebuke before going on to face the man living in a graveyard, possessed by thousands of demons. Jesus effortlessly casts out the demons restoring the life of a man otherwise deranged and left for dead. He then goes on to heal a woman who has had an unending discharge of blood for the last 12 years. Just by coming in faith and touching the hem of Jesus' garment the woman is instantly healed. The highlight real

isn't over yet though, Jesus healed this woman while on his way to heal the 12-year-old daughter of a Synagogue ruler. In his delay, the little girl has since died. Even death is no real threat against the **heroic** powers of Jesus- he simply grabs her by the hand and raises the little girl to life as if he's waking her from a nap.

Disciples in tow, Jesus now heads home to Nazareth for some home cooking and time with the people he's known and been known by for so long. On the Sabbath, Jesus stands in the synagogue he grew up attending, surrounded by family and friends and teaches. Immediately, the home town hero, is confronted by the scorn of his people.

**2 And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.**

Though the people are astonished at Jesus' teaching they are outraged that this carpenter is the one teaching. They do recognize Jesus' power and wisdom, but we should read the questions of the hometown crowd in verse 2 with the suspicion and snobbish tone that they surly had. With squinted eyes, folded arms, and jeers they say: **"Where did *this man* get these things? What is the wisdom given to *him*? How are such mighty works done by *his* hands?"**

The questioning in verse 3 is surly meant to highlight Jesus' lack of credentials and even cast gossiping doubt on the moral character of his origins. It's as if they sneer, "Who is this carpenter who's trying to march in here with his little band of mismatched followers as if he's

some sort of high and mighty religious teacher?" Jewish custom would always address a man as the son of his father- in calling Jesus the son of Mary they weren't giving a theological nod to the virgin birth, they were casting doubt on the morality of his conception. They are familiar with Jesus so even with news of his miracles and the power and wisdom of his teaching, they remain unable to see who Jesus really is. Perhaps they are too familiar. The sum of their reaction is offense: they were offended by this Jesus who is shattering the box they've predetermined he should fit in and for this reason, like the Jim Crow south with returning African-American veterans, the hero is met with scorn as he returns home.

The familiarity with Jesus should have been a benefit for the people in his home town, but it wasn't. The reaction was like when you bring your first girlfriend or boyfriend home to meet the family and the love-struck fool is met with eye rolls and embarrassing stories of you from your family. Your new romantic interest may think that you hung the moon, but your mom was there when you got caught sneaking out in high school; she has those pictures of you when you were 8 years old and you peed your pants at the family reunion. Nothing this new girlfriend or boyfriend says is going to change their opinion of you- they know you too well, they're too familiar with you. This is how the people of Nazareth, even close family and friends, approached Jesus upon his return. Though they don't have any real dirt on Jesus they also don't think he's all that spectacular. The rejection of those most familiar with Jesus serves as a warning for you and I this morning: **familiarity with Jesus can be a stumbling block rather than a benefit if we are not on guard.** Their familiarity with Jesus made it so that nothing he did or said could change their opinion of who they had already decided he was. Inaccurate as the

picture was, they were locked in the picture of Jesus they had in their minds and his powerful teaching only made their disdain grow. The people most familiar with Jesus missed who he truly was and you and I must be on guard against the same posture towards Jesus. To be sure, familiarity with Jesus is a benefit in itself, but if we are not attentive we can presume upon this familiarity or take it for granted.

1. If you think that you know Jesus best or certainly well enough to not need to learn more, you may be stumbling over your familiarity with Jesus. One way that I fight this trap is by trying to read broadly from people with some different backgrounds on their experience and understanding of Jesus. This helps to challenge areas of my own presumption and strengthen areas of Biblical conviction.
2. If you find yourself bored with Jesus and the Bible, you may be stumbling over your familiarity with Jesus. All things beautiful and magnificent were created by Jesus, certainly there is nothing boring about the God who created all things. When we truly understand Jesus we will be in awe of him not bored by him. People in awe never complain about being bored.
3. If you see that either expressly or functionally you treat Jesus as irrelevant to your daily life, you may be stumbling over your familiarity with Jesus. Jesus is relevant to everything we do, but when we take him for granted we will start to lose sight of his significance.
4. If you find your desire to know Jesus more fading or already gone, you may be stumbling over your familiarity with Jesus. To truly know Jesus is to know that you will never exhaustively know Jesus- there's always more depth to the God-man.

Familiarity with Jesus is always a good thing, but if we are not attentive we can presume upon this familiarity or take it for granted. We must be on guard.

### **Proud People:**

But what specifically must we be on guard against to avoid presumption or taking familiarity with Jesus for granted? The heart of familiarity with Jesus becoming a harm rather than a help is our own pride. We see this in the people of Nazareth. In their pride, they are outraged that Jesus has such wisdom and power because he's just supposed to be the carpenter from down the street. They think that they already know this Jesus and have ultimate say over who and what he is- he's simply a carpenter, Mary's son, the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon. (not someone to worship or follow) Think about the sharp contrast between the woman we saw last week and the people of Nazareth:

- The woman had very incomplete knowledge of who Jesus was, but in faith she drew near though it was at great risk of humiliation or worse.
- The people of Jesus' hometown think that they already know Jesus completely and so in their pride they reject Jesus outright not recognizing the certain consequences of their actions.

It is pride that has the people of Nazareth so astonished and offended. Driven by pride they reject and even mock Jesus- will not believe. It's important to see though, that the proud people of Nazareth are simply a microcosm of the greater Jewish nation, and of all of mankind.

Driven by pride, people have been rejecting God since the first man and woman walked the earth.

- A look at Genesis 3 shows us that it was the pride of life that ultimately enticed Eve to commit the first sin.

**Though commanded not to eat the fruit of a particular tree, Eve saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, so she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.**

In her pride, Eve desired to be like God and even thought that she knew better than God and so she ate. Adam proudly followed along.

- If you follow the story of God's people, pride is at the heart of their actions when we find them at perhaps their moral rock bottom in the book of Judges. Idolatry, murder, conspiracies, rape, and the list of evils goes on. Why? **Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.** In their pride, they rejected God and ran off into much evil.
- Jesus himself- God in the flesh as he's proven himself to be over the last chapter and a half of Mark- would experience this kind of prideful rejection not just by his hometown, but by the Jewish people, the people of God.

**John 1:9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.**

Jesus, the light of the world, the Creator of all things became a man and came to his people, but in their pride, they did not receive him but rejected him. Jesus did not fit the mold that they were looking for in a savior. They thought that they knew best what they needed- someone to come in and establish their nation as a world power. Along comes this carpenter turned preacher from a backwoods town telling them they what they need most is not national independence but new hearts that no longer reject God. Not only that, he teaches that faith in him was the way to receive these new hearts because he is God in the flesh. Too proud to accept this teaching- even though Jesus backed it up with astounding miracles and an other-worldly disposition of perfect love and grace- they rejected him. Like in his hometown, Jesus was met with scorn and derision by the vast majority of his proud people. As his popularity with those who did believe in him grew, the pride of the obstinate combined with fear of his growing influence and ultimately led to violence against Jesus.

- But the story of proud people rejecting God in their unbelief is not limited to the Jews of Jesus time- this is the story of all people for all time. In that way, the proud rejection that Jesus faces in Nazareth is a microcosm of humanity. The hometown prophet is not the only one without honor- left to ourselves, God is without honor among mankind. Romans 1:21-22 is a description of all of humanity: **21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools.** All of humanity, including you and I, have not honored God as we ought to and, in our pride, we've claimed wisdom. In so doing we have become fools. This is an apt

definition of sin. Romans 3 tells us that there is no distinction among men and women- all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We all have proudly claimed in word and deed that we know best and in so doing have foolishly dishonored God.

This sin, from Genesis 3 to you and I today, is actually why Jesus came. The God of the universe should not even have a hometown, but he does because he came down to proud, dishonoring people to save them from their foolish self-destruction. Jesus was rejected first by his hometown and then by all of his people because he had come to die for their sins and rise again. The very pride that hardened them into unbelief and compelled them to reject Jesus is the reason that he came to die. Your pride and my pride that harden us in our unbelief and rejection of God is the reason that Jesus came to die. He would ultimately face that rejection that would have him nailed to a cross, just as he planned, bearing the sins of his people- bearing your sins and mine. On that cross he would take our sins upon himself- our very rejection of him, he would take it on himself- so that we might not be rejected by God, but be accepted. Jesus would rise again after being in the grave for three days, securing salvation for all who would humbly come to him in faith.

Pride leads us to reject Jesus outright, but humility allows us to receive Jesus by faith. This is why this passage is a helpful warning for you and I. ***We need to be on guard because familiarity with Jesus without humility breeds unbelief.*** Whether because you are in the church now hearing about Jesus, or because you grew up hearing about Jesus, or because you live in a nation that proclaims to have Christian values- chances are we are all familiar with Jesus on

some level. If we are not careful to carry that familiarity with humility, the damning pride of unbelief is lurking beneath the surface if it hasn't already been exposed.

Here are a few ways that you can tell if your familiarity with Jesus has led to pride:

1. Pride leads you to not read the Bible because, after all, you've heard it all before and already know the answers.
2. Pride leads you to talk to Jesus far more than you hear from Jesus. Prayer is important for sure, but as in any relationship, so is listening. We all know of at least one arrogant person who always talks at you but never seems willing to listen to you. Let's not be that towards Jesus.
3. Pride leads you to talk at other Christians more than you listen to them. The proud Christian is the one who has a word of correction or advice for all those around them, but can't point to a friend that can correct them if needed. The proud Christian isn't looking for a conversation in which they might be challenged, only for conversations in which they will be affirmed. The proud Christian holds tightly to secondary issues and argues them into being reasons to break fellowship.

Proximity to Jesus without humility is a dangerous combination that breeds unbelief. This lurking unbelief is why we must be so diligent to root out pride in our own hearts.

### **Astonished Prophet:**

I want to wrap up our time in Mark 6:1-6 by looking at Jesus' reaction and thinking about how it applies especially to you if you are not a Christian:

**4 And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.” 5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he marveled because of their unbelief.**

**And he went about among the villages teaching.**

After the people mock and reject Jesus with their questioning, he responds with a proverb that works as a wholesale rebuke of his hometown. No one is safe from the indictment- Jesus has been dishonored by his hometown, by his own relatives, and even by his closest family members. This is really no shock, if you were with us in chapter three Jesus' family was there calling him a lunatic and trying to take him away from teaching and healing people. The consequences of their rejection are alarming though. It says that Jesus could do no mighty work there. The point is not that he physically could not perform miracles among them, because it says that he did heal a few sick people, but that he would not force himself on this obstinate people by signs and miracles. In their pride, this town has opted out of the grace that Jesus has for them. The few that had faith were healed, but the vast majority chose sickness and spiritual blindness rather than the humility to accept the free grace of God in Jesus. If you are rejecting Jesus now, I want you to see your face here. You are choosing sickness, brokenness, and spiritual blindness rather than the humility to accept the free grace of God in Jesus- that grace that we sang about so much this morning, you're opting out. This proud unbelief has Jesus himself astonished: **6 And he marveled because of their unbelief.** The people are astonished

and offended that Jesus would step out of line and break the mold they've precast for him in his teaching and miracles; Jesus, in turn, is astonished and grieved by their proud unbelief.

In their dishonor of Jesus, they are cut off from his gracious miracles and teaching about the kingdom of God. Jesus moves on to villages around Nazareth and continues to teach. Their example serves as a sad warning. Jesus will not force himself on you through miracles to try and coax you into belief. That's not the way it works. Maybe you say or think that if Jesus just showed himself through some mighty work or answered that one big prayer or if he just spoke to you, then you'd believe in him. That's not true, that's not the way that faith works. The people of Nazareth believed Jesus could perform miracles, but they didn't care. They heard him speak with wisdom and power unlike anything they'd ever heard- it only served to harden and offend them all the more. Jesus didn't come merely as arbitrary miracle worker, he came as one claiming to have the message of God's kingdom on his lips and the grace of God in his hands. That's what the people were rejecting. In their pride, they thought that they held the keys to the kingdom of God so they reject Jesus and missed out on the grace of God in his hands.

If you reject Jesus outright as savior, you are denying your need for God or that Jesus is the solution for your need. Either way, be warned, you are opting out of the grace of God in Christ. If you feel like you know Jesus or know all you need to know about him but are not a Christian, you are stumbling over your limited familiarity with Jesus. You may be familiar with things about Jesus, but no one can truly see the beauty of Christ and just walk away unchanged. The people of Nazareth had the utmost familiarity with Jesus and yet they decided they did not

need him. Jesus is sadly astonished by their choice to reject him. This text should be a particular warning for you if you are familiar with Jesus but are rejecting him.

Maybe you're a high school student or young adult that's grown up hearing the gospel from parents and pastors. Maybe you're very close with someone who keeps telling you about Jesus and you're just here to appease them. You have to know this morning that your unbelief is not unseen by Jesus- in fact he stands grieved and marveling that you would deny the grace of God. I want to implore you this morning, don't take for granted your nearness and familiarity with Jesus any longer. Humbly turn to Christ today and trust in him.

There is only one mediator between God and man, there is only one person that can and has born your sins. There is only one man that died but raised himself from the dead three days later- the God-man Jesus Christ. Spurn the grace of God no longer, trust in Jesus today and receive the amazing grace of forgiveness and mercy and new life in relationship with your Creator, God Almighty...

Church, let's walk away from Mark 6:1-6 motivated and inspired to fight the pride that can come with familiarity. There is always more of Jesus to know and be in awe of- may we never stop humbly pressing in. Let's stay close to the cross where the grace of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus fills us with awe, thankfulness, and humility.

James, one of the brothers of Jesus who tried to call him crazy and take him away in Mark 3 and who was surely with the scoffers of Nazareth here in Mark 6 would later turn to his brother, Jesus in faith. As a leader of the early church he writes in James 4:10 **Humble yourselves before**

**the Lord, and he will exalt you.** Let's take seriously this command and ***be on guard because familiarity with Jesus without humility breeds unbelief.***

Let's pray.