

Sermon Discussion Questions



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"JESUS FACES UNBELIEF"

Big Idea: Unbelief can be highly resistant to Jesus' evident wisdom and power.

Discuss

In last week's sermons, Joe and Brian encouraged us to place ourselves in the story. David R. Nienhuis in his *Concise Guide to Reading the New Testament* has explained how the stories of the Bible do far more than just give us moral principles or theological doctrines. They "immerse us temporally in a world other than our own, and in doing so, they provide us with a deeper understanding of our own identities, values, choices, and purposes."* Or as Piglet said to Pooh, "Stories make your heart grow." Let's imagine ourselves joining the disciples as they accompany Jesus on this return to his hometown.

- 1) If you have time, you may want to read the other two accounts of Jesus' return to Nazareth found in Matthew 13:53-58 and Luke 4:16-30 (scholars debate whether the Luke account is an account of the same visit reported in Matthew and Mark or perhaps an account of a different visit). What is clear from all three accounts is that Jesus never made what could be characterized as a triumphant return to his hometown.
 - Why were the townspeople both amazed and offended? What do you suppose they liked about Jesus and what did they not like?
- 2) Christians today frequently refer to certain events in their lives as "God things." Problems that are solved in unexpectedly wonderful ways are called "God things." We should, of course, be deeply grateful for every good gift that God bestows on us. The danger of understanding the circumstances of our life through the grid of "God things," however, is the very real possibility of seeing every adverse or trying circumstance as outside the control or will of God.
 - What do you think the disciples' reaction to the situation in Nazareth might have been?
 - How many "God things" (as we usually define it) did they experience as they traveled around with Jesus, the Son of God?
 - Would you still say, however, that Jesus and his ministry never strayed from the center of God's will and perfect plan?
- 3) There are two rather surprising statements in this story that can be difficult to understand. Jesus is described as "amazed" at their unbelief, and he is characterized as being unable to do miracles because of the people's lack of faith ("he could not do any miracles" see vv. 5-6).
 - Using the interpretive principle that clearly understandable Scripture should help us to figure out the more puzzling passages (see WCF 1:9), how can we understand this? Did Jesus lack power or knowledge?
 - Why did Jesus limit his ministry in Nazareth?
 - Do you think our own lack of faith or unbelief can affect the ministry of Jesus in our world today? If so, how?

DATE: January 21, 2018

SPEAKER: Joe/Frank

SERIES: Gospel of Mark

PASSAGE: Mark 6:1-6

Pray

Praise Jesus for his perseverance during his earthly ministry, despite all opposition.

Confess when you have failed to believe or allowed familiarity with the stories of Jesus or the teachings of the church to breed contempt in your heart.

Give thanks for the great gift of God's holy and inerrant Word that teaches us through story, poetry, song, and commandments.

Pray that God would help you when you struggle to believe (Mark 9:24) and would help you to rightly treasure God's Word, no matter how familiar it becomes.

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Metanoia Prison Ministries

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Bill and Melanie serving in a sensitive area

*David R. Nienhuis, *Concise Guide to Reading the New Testament: A Canonical Introduction* (Baker, 2018) quoted in Russell Moore, "You Can't Have Ethics Without Stories," *russellmoore.com*, January 17, 2018