**Astonishment and Unbelief Mk 6:1-6**

-Be astonished at who Jesus says he is, but don’t walk away in unbelief.-

I remember this vividly. It was a warm August day in San Diego, California. I was closing in on my first month of boot camp when we hit the Confidence Course. As the name indicates, the purpose of this course is to instill confidence in recruits as they overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

After instructions on how to safely navigate these obstacles, it was my turn. I was running the course when I came up to my arch nemesis, the Stairway to Heaven. The Stairway to Heaven is a 30-foot obstacle that resembles a ladder made out of telephone poles. To a young man afraid of heights, it seemed like it actually went up to heaven, or at least the moon.

I was afraid, but I attacked it quickly, to get it over with. At first, it went fairly quickly. The rungs are closer to each other at the bottom but then they gradually got further apart. When I made it up to the transition point, the second from the top rung, the one you climb over before descending down the other side, a couple things happened. First, I looked down. That was a *mistake*. Secondly, when I threw my left leg over the top rung, I couldn’t quite get over it with my right foot touching the rung I was currently standing on. To get over the top, there would be a period of time where neither foot was touching a rung. I froze, stuck tight. I wasn’t moving, and I didn’t think anything could make me move.

Now, in boot camp, each platoon has at least three drill instructors. One senior DI and two Junior DI’s. They like to play “good cop, bad cop.” The senior DI is the good cop. The junior DI’s are the bad cops. Well my senior DI was on duty watching over this particular obstacle. So, in his good cop role, he started to *encourage* me. I looked at my left leg- thrown over the top rung. I looked down at my right leg, safely on the lower rung and held tighter. I was having none of it.

After a few more statements of encouragement, this good cop- my encourager ... well, his manner and demeanor started to change. I was flabbergasted, completely blown away. The good cop had crossed over and become one of the bad cops and now a slur of threats was leaving his mouth. I knew he meant them. As he got more heated, I started to get light headed, and everything slowed down.

Then my moment of disbelief came. He started to climb that obstacle! At first I was excited. The good cop was coming to help. But as he got closer and I understood what he was saying, I snapped out of it. In that moment, I suddenly became more afraid of him choking me out and throwing me off of that obstacle than I was of climbing over that top rung.

There is a saying that goes, “We change when the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of changing.” Well, that day, I discovered the truth of that statement.

So I somehow made it over that ladder and scooted across the top, to the other side, almost knocking into another Marine, just to get further away from my senior DI.

I was amazed that the good cop had started acting out of character, and I could not believe that he was actually climbing after me, threatening me with bodily harm.

Have you ever been amazed into unbelief? Today we are going to look at Mark 6:1-6 and learn about a time when the people from Jesus’ hometown were in a state astonishment and unbelief, similar to the state I was in on the Stairway to Heaven. Turn in your Bibles to Mark 6:1-6.

Mark 6:1-6. Follow along as I read out loud.

**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.**

Our main takeaway today will be, Be astonished at who Jesus says he is, but don’t walk away in unbelief.

After Christ finished in Capernaum, he went to his hometown. Can you imagine? Jesus is heading home! I wonder what Jesus was thinking on his way there. I’m sure he was excited to go home.

Have you ever been gone from home for a long period of time and then returned? Maybe you went through an extraordinary circumstance while you were away- good or not so good- and then returned home?

I remember the homecoming I received when I returned home from Desert Storm. Beth was there to meet me with our daughter Rachel, who was only a few months old, at that time. I was so happy to see my family. It is one of the happiest moments in my life to be back home with them. Then I also got to see some of my close Marine friends who did not go to Desert Storm. They were there to meet us too.

Even people we did not know were happy we were back home. The city of Irvine, California even had a parade for us. I remember the streets lined with people who were happy, and excited we had made it home safely. I didn’t want to be in the parade. I didn’t necessarily think I deserved it. But everyone was so excited and kind that my fellow Marines and I did go ahead and march in it.

Let me take a moment here to address those of us who may not have had a homecoming similar to mine. Sin is horrible and it affects the way people act. Some of us have been in situations where we should have been welcomed home. Maybe we come from dysfunctional homes and our families did not welcome us after we returned home from college. Maybe we moved away for a job and when we returned home to visit, it seemed like they could’ve cared less. Some of us are vets or we have family members who are vets and they never received the welcome they deserved. I think specifically of our Viet Nam vets who did not receive the homecoming they deserved. In fact, many even received a hateful homecoming. I am sorry if that describes you and your situation. My heart breaks for you.

So here in this passage, we see Jesus coming home. He is going back to the people he knows and grew up with. I can imagine Jesus being excited about seeing his old neighbors and playmates. I’m sure he longed was looking forward to showing them who he was, God’s Son, the promised Messiah. I imagine he longed to reveal the truth to the people in his hometown and watch his friends and family respond in faith.

As Jesus and his disciples were heading to Nazareth, I’m sure the disciples were also getting excited. The teacher, and miracle worker (along with his great students) were going home. They were probably strutting down the road, pretty confident in the reception that lay ahead. But as they enter Nazareth, there was nothing but the chirping of crickets. No family or no friends ran to great them. There were no flags, no bands, no decorated camels, no matzo with icing, no celebration of any kind.

Now just to be clear, the Gospel records do not record everything that took place. There would be no way they could, or even if they did, we would not be able to read it all. The apostle John writes in 21:24-25 **“This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”**

But I believe if Jesus had been greeted as the hometown hero, it would have been worth mentioning. Jesus had recently freed a man of a demon, and the man’s neighbors repaid him by begging him to leave. I’m sure that after that disappointment, Jesus and the disciples would have been looking forward to a good old-fashioned homecoming back in Nazareth.

But scripture is silent on the account of Jesus’ reception, which leads me to believe it was not a noteworthy event. Jesus returned home as if he was just a normal person, not really worthy of any special honor. Can you imagine the pain he must have felt? The disappointment and confusion the disciples had to have been feeling? Friends, if people couldn’t be bothered to notice Jesus Christ, the son of God, as followers of him, can we expect to be treated any better?

I did a little research to see if this was Jesus’ first trip home after He began his ministry. It was not. One preacher wrote, “A year earlier than this particular event in Nazareth that we are reading about in chapter 6, the Lord Jesus suffered intense rejection in Nazareth, his hometown.” Right after his temptation in the desert with Satan, Jesus heads first to Galilee and then to Nazareth. You can read about this visit in Luke 4:16-30. Luke writes, in verse 16 & 17, **And he,** (Notice he was by himself this time) **And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. 17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.”**

Here we see that Jesus taught a messianic prophecy from Isaiah 61:1-2. We’re not quite sure if he picked this passage or if it had been assigned to him, but what a passage to teach on!! He was teaching about himself, God’s answer to that very same prophecy. In verse 21 we read, **“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”**

But as we read a little further, we see in in verses 28-29 of Luke 4 that, **When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and drove him out of the town…** They were astonished at who Jesus said he was, but they ran him out of town because of their unbelief.

Luke records they loved his teachings at first, but then they got angry. I’m astonished! They heard the Son of God reading his word to them, and they got angry at the truth and drove him out of town. I can’t believe they drove him out of town - physically forced him to leave. Can you imagine that?

Maybe this is why there was no homecoming parade? Since his first visit to Nazareth ended up with him being thrown out of town, it’s not hard to believe they didn’t bother to show up for his second homecoming tour. Isn’t this so gracious of Jesus to return again?

Edgewood, Jesus is gracious and patient with us, and gives us second chances. Just like he gave his own family, friends and neighbors.

If you ever returned home but didn’t receive the homecoming, you were expecting, you are not alone. Our Lord Jesus didn’t get one either. Edgewood, let’s pause just a moment to recognize those among us who never received the homecoming they deserved. Let’s give a round of applause for those of us who have returned home, from wherever they were, and whatever they were doing. Let’s make sure they know we’re glad to have them back.

Notice what Jesus was doing in our passage? Verse 2 reads, **And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue.** Jesus did what he always did; He went about the Father’s business. He didn’t get mad, tell them off, or vaporize them. He didn’t take his stuff and go home either. He was in the Synagogue, the “church” he grew up in. He was teaching and explaining God’s Word to them. Jesus was full of *grace* and *truth.* Grace led him to give them another chance. He preached the truth, not what they wanted to hear, but what they *needed* to hear.

The bible doesn’t contain a record of his sermon that day. The exact subject matter isn’t recorded for us, but what is recorded is how the listeners responded. Verse 2 tells us, **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?”** So whatever Jesus taught, it *astonished* the listeners.

This word *astonished* comes from the Greek word ekplesso which means they were amazed, or flabbergasted, at Jesus’ teaching. One pastor wrote, “We would say today, he blew their minds. They were just blown away.” When I looked this word up in the concordance, I found that 13 times people were amazed at Christ’s teachings. Matt 7:28 reads, **And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,** In Matthews account of this story, chapter 13 verse 54 we read, **and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished**, Matt 19:24 we read, **When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”** Those are the first three times we find our word. The other 10 are found in the gospels and one in the book of Acts.

Edgewood, be astonished at Jesus he is who he says he is. But, please do not walk away in unbelief.

I’m sure you’ve been amazed or flabbergasted before. I have. How many of you remember Nik Wallenda? Nik Walllenda walked a tightrope between two sky scrappers in Chicago in November 2 of 2014. Now just to be clear, the tightrope wasn’t lying on the ground. It was stretched from the top of one skyscraper to the top of another. That blew me away! I’m not sure I could’ve walked across it even with it lying on the ground.

But Nik Wallenda didn’t just walk across that tightrope between two sky scrappers, he walked across it without a safety net. And it wasn’t just without a safety net. The first part of the walk was an uphill incline *two blocks long*. For the second part of the walk, Nik *was blindfolded*. Wow, wow, wow!! That’s unbelievable. But He did it !

I do not like heights, not at all. I can’t even imagine dreaming of doing what Nik Wallenda did. But he did it, and he did it in Chicago where a strong wind could have literally blown him off of the tightrope. Wow!

That’s how Jesus’ neighbors felt when he was teaching in the synagogue. They were astonished. They were nudging their neighbors saying “Wow!” They were saying (in verse 2), **“Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands?”**

Jesus’ neighbors are astonished about two things. Frist, they were astonished by his teachings, and secondly, they were astonished by his miracles.

This first point may elude us, since we are not first century Jews. Why were they astonished at his teachings? Jesus entered Nazareth as a Rabbi with his followers in tow. Rabbis were highly educated men. They would go off and be formally trained by a qualified Rabbi. Then as they grew and matured and succeeded, they would have men – disciples - whom they would teach. So Jesus ebtered Nazareth as a Rabbi, but his neighbors, and fellows citizens knew he had never left to be trained by a qualified Rabbi. That’s why they said, **“Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him?”** And verse three goes on to say, **“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?”**

They were wondering, “Where did Jesus get this ability?” “How could he be so wise?” After all he was just a carpenter. Joseph, his father, was a carpenter. They knew him. He grew up with them Joseph his father, was a carpenter. He wasn’t some highly trained rabbi. He was a common man, one who worked with his hands. They knew his whole family and they knew he never left Nazareth to study under a Rabbi.

I want to spend a little time now focusing in on his teaching. Let’s look at some of his teachings people were flabbergasted by. In Matthew 22:23-33 Jesus was questioned by the Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. They wanted to trip Jesus up, so they asked a ridiculous question about the resurrection. They ask about a woman who is remarried seven times over, all by brothers. The oldest brother married this woman and died without having an heir. So the next eldest married her to honor his brother, and have a son who could pass on the family name. And so on down the line until all seven of the brothers had married her. They ask in verse 28, “**In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”** Now I do not want to go to far off of our course and talk about the resurrection; I only want to point out the crowd’s reaction. In verse 33 we read, **And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.**

I believe there were two reasons they were astonished. First, it was the content. He discussed the resurrection and taught about God’s character. The Sadducees were religious leaders and he knew more than they did. Secondly, I believe they were astonished at how he reacted. Jesus didn’t run and he wasn’t speechless. He stopped them dead in their tracks. The very people who were trying to trip Jesus up were the ones left speechless. Amazing!

A closer look at Jesus’ teachings would reveal to us that this common carpenter was wise beyond all explanation and he astonished people everywhere he went time and time again.

Jesus is who he says he is. Be amazed, but do not walk away in unbelief.

We also need to keep in mind the literature situation during that time. There were no electronic devices where a person could do a word search and in an instant have the results. There were no printed Bibles either. We take it for granted that we have Bibles. I personally have 2 ESV bibles, An NIV study bible, a NKJV study bible, a NKJV bible, a KJV study bible, a Thai bible, a life application living bible, and a humungous KJV family bible. I have 9 bibles. Praise God for the Gutenberg bible and the age of the printed book.

Jesus had *zero* bibles. If he wanted to read God’s Word, he had to go to the synagogue and read one of the scrolls they had. The scrolls were hand copied through a very long and intense process. They didn’t let anyone have access to them. And yet, his knowledge of God’s word was so vast it astonished the educated leaders of the synagogue.

But it wasn’t just his teaching that flabbergasted them. It was his miracle-working power too. In verse 2 they ask, **“How are such mighty works done by his hands?”**

Let’s review a couple of these mighty acts that might have caused their astonishment. Last week we learned about Christ performing two miracles in the Decapalous. Christ has just landed in the boat and a crowd was gathering when a ruler of a synagogue came to him and said his daughter was dying, and begged Jesus to save her. As they were walking to his house, a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years grabbed his robe and was instantly healed. Miracle number one! Wow! Just by grabbing His robe she was healed.

Then someone from the ruler’s house arrived and said, “Your daughter is dead.” Christ answered, “Do not fear, only believe.” Then Jesus went to his house and raised her from the dead. Miracle number two in the same day! Wow!!

Two weeks ago we learned about another one of these mighty acts. Jesus landed in the country of the Gerasenes and was met by a wild man. He was so wild he could break chains with his bare hands (like me!) and he lived in the tombs outside the village. (If I ran into a guy like that, I’d throw some bacon at him and then run away as fast as I can.)

Jesus cast the demons out of this man and set him free. And even the demons acknowledged Jesus was the Son of God. But how did the people respond? They begged him to leave. That’s astonishing and hard to believe.

Be astonished at who Jesus says he is, but don’t walk away in unbelief.

So getting back to our passage, the people of Nazareth are in a state of astonishment. They understand that Jesus is performing many miraculous acts, but the next part is really sad.

They couldn’t see Jesus’ knowledge and miraculous acts as coming from God. They get stuck on his humanity, his common humanity. Verse three reads, **“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.“** They grew up with Jesus and they knew him. They may have remembered him falling down, scraping his knee, and crying. They may have remembered him playing around and being silly hiding James’ sandals or putting spiders on his sisters bed, or His voice changing, and his beard growing. They knew Jesus, the man. **“Is this not the carpenter?... And are not his sisters here with us?”** Instead of seeing Jesus as God’s Son because of these astonishing acts, they still saw him as a common, or ordinary, man and they got offended. Remember in his first visit to Nazareth in Luke four, Jesus told them He was God’s Son. He said he was the fulfillment of the Messiah messianic prophecies. He was the one they’d been waiting for. Jesus was 100% man and 100% God. But they couldn’t believe. They were trapped in unbelief.

Be astonished at who Jesus he says he is, but do not walk away in unbelief.

Now don’t get too hard on them. Isn’t that often the struggle people still face today? Many people do not believe Jesus is God. They may believe he was a great man, or a good teacher, but not God! John the Baptist struggled with this. He baptized Jesus, saw the heavens open up and admitted he was not even worthy enough to tie Jesus’ sandals. Yet later on he had doubts and sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he really was the Messiah. Christians struggle with doubts and unbelief too.

Nate Weaver’s testimony was highlighted two weeks ago, and it was a glorious celebration of Christ bringing freedom to his life. We hear stories like Nate’s and think, “Wow! That’s great for him, but that can never happen to me. Jesus can’t change my judgmental attitude, or my self-righteous heart, or give me the strength to stop taking pain meds. Jesus’ love isn’t enough to stop me from jumping from one bad relationship to another. I’m too far gone; my pain is too great; he doesn’t care about problems like mine.

We can get stuck in our unbelief, just like the people of Nazareth did.

The people of Nazareth had Jesus, God incarnate, right in middle of their presence, but because they knew him before his ministry, when he was just one of Joseph and Mary’s kids, they would not believe. They taught us a vital lesson. They let their familiarity with him overshadow his greatness, and they took him for granted. We all know that familiarity breeds complacency. That’s really what Jesus meant when he said, **“A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.”**

I know I can fall into the same pitfall. Take my wife, Beth. No other person loves me more than she does. She takes care of me, sacrifices for me, cooks for me, watches war movies with me, and is kind and encouraging. Yet I can find myself taking her for granted. I can be unappreciative, lazy, or say rude and unkind things. Why? I know her so well that I take her for granted. I know it makes no sense, but it is human nature. I can be just like the people of Nazareth at times and I’m sure you can too.

The saddest part about Jesus’ second trip to Nazareth is that their unbelief made it so Jesus could only a do a *few* miracles. They were stuck in unbelief. It wasn’t that he was physically unable to perform more. It was that their unbelief limited Jesus’ ability to do more miracles for them.

Unbelief skews our perspective. We can look right at miracles and not see them for what they are. It can harden our hearts so we mock the miraculous, Ultimately we get so calloused the miracles stop happening - even the most miraculous of acts, salvation by faith.

Listen to these verses from John chapter 3, **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**

Please do not get stuck in unbelief like the people of Nazareth.

Be astonished at who Jesus says he is, but don’t walk away in unbelief.

Application:

1. Be astonished- Gather with us here at Edgewood on a weekly basis and I promise, you will here God’s word and have ample opportunity to be blown away by Jesus’ teachings and mighty works. We want you to understand that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man. Wrestle with it. Ask questions. We don’t want you to take our word for it, we want you to get in the Bible and read it for yourself.

2. Don’t walk away in unbelief- I urge you from the bottom of my heart, to understand today is the day of salvation. If you have not accepted Christ as your sin bearer why not today? God is gracious. He will not force himself on you. If you beg him to leave he will, like he did the first time he left Nazareth in Luke 4. If you get offended by him and choose unbelief, he will walk away and ley you turn down his grace. Please understand this: Jesus was gracious and went back to Nazareth a second time, but we never read of him going back a third time. Friends, we never know when his grace will end, but it will end. The good news is, if you’re listening today, it’s not too late. Admit you’re a sinner. Believe Christ died as your sin substitute and cry out to him to save you. He will!

3. Renew your Love - If you know Christ as your Savior, be aware that familiarity breeds complacency. If you’ve lost your love for Christ, or if it’s diminishing, renew your love for him. Renew your love by getting back in God’s Word. Join a small group and strengthen your love for Christ by loving his children. Remember his miraculous works, believe, and embrace his loving hope for you. Christ can break the chains of your sin and dysfunction that are holding you back. Trust God to restore your love for your spouse. Trust Christ to love you sufficiently as you wait for your future spouse or embrace singleness. Let Christ rid you of your anger, which is exasperating your children. Let Christ help you find your purpose of serving him in a job you don’t like. Renew your love for him and find freedom from Life’s Hurts, Habits and Hang-ups.

Chad would you and the band please come forward and play Lord I’m amazed by you.

Jesus is astonishing! He is 100 percent God and 100 percent man and that fact should blow our minds. But, please, let that draw you closer to him. Do not leave here today in unbelief or taking him for granted.

Let’s listen to Chad sing and let the Holy Spirit work in our hearts. If you’d like to come forward and pray with a pastor, feel free to come forward. If you’re in the middle of a pew and it’s hard for you to get out, I’ll wait in the front after the service, in case you’d like to pray or talk about salvation.