

**The Reverend Jon Hauerwas – July 4, 2021 – Unexpected Revelation
Psalm 48:1-8 and Mark 6:1-13**

In scripture, we don't learn much about Jesus as a child, with the exception of his birth narrative, and that story of his family traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover. You may recall when Jesus was 12 years old, and his parents accidentally left him behind at the temple. They began the journey home before realizing that he was lost and retracing their steps back to and through the city in an effort to retrieve him.

When Joseph and Mary finally found their young son, they chastised him for his lack of obedience. Why had he not remained with the family? And in his response, they heard a precursor of things to come. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" In that moment, Jesus was flipping the script, expanding the traditional concept of family, and claiming his kinship as a child of God above every earthly relationship.

In our second lesson this morning, we learn a bit more about Jesus' childhood. And this information, as I discovered during our Bible study on Monday afternoon, is something that often flies under the radar. You see, only here do we read that Jesus

has both brothers and sisters. ¹ So in addition to his special relationship with God, which is often at the heart and soul of the gospels, he is also part of a very human family who lived at a particular time and place. Jesus had parents. He had brothers. He had sisters. And presumably, he had aunts, and uncles, and cousins living near him in Nazareth, as well.

Nazareth, the place where Jesus was raised, was a village of less than a thousand residents. ² I invite you to consider that for moment as you try to envision what life may have been like there. In a village of less than a thousand people, everyone knew their neighbors. Many of them were related, and a lot of these families lived in that place for generations.

As you might expect, the people who resided in Nazareth looked out for one another. They knew when their neighbors came and went. They knew their neighbor's routines and what they did for a living. And they often knew the most embarrassing things that everyone in that village had ever done because, in tight knit communities, word travels fast.

¹ Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, (Orbis Books, 1991), 212.

² Matthew L. Skinner, *Connections: A Lectionary Commentary for Preaching and Worship, Year B, Volume 3*, ed. Joel B. Green (Westminster John Knox Press, 2021), 141.

So when our second lesson this morning refers to Jesus' own people, it isn't singling out the Jews as a whole, but rather friends and relatives residing in his hometown.³ And here, we find this interesting juxtaposition. "On the one hand, the hometown crowd recognizes Jesus' 'wisdom' and 'deeds of power.'" ⁴ There is clearly some understanding of the significance of his ministry among them. And yet, his neighbors are also scandalized by this man that they have known since childhood.⁵ They "are suspicious of his renown, and they question his 'mighty works'. To them Jesus is 'the carpenter, the son of Mary,' and from his hands more mundane things are expected."⁶

As this passage unfolds, "the dominant emotion on his part and theirs is astonishment."⁷ The residents there believe that they already know Jesus so well that they find it difficult to accept his divine claims. Naturally, they are astonished at his pronouncements. Meanwhile, Jesus is astonished by their lack of faith. Instantly, he recognizes the problem inherent in his hometown mission. And as his neighbors struggle to perceive him rightly, he senses that their vision is too limited.

³ Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Mark, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, ed. James Luther Mays (Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 113.

⁴ Richard W. Voelz, *Connections: A Lectionary Commentary for Preaching and Worship, Year B, Volume 3*, ed. Joel B. Green (Westminster John Knox Press, 2021), 143.

⁵ Voelz, 143.

⁶ Myers, 212.

⁷ Williamson, Jr., 113.

⁸ That their view of God is too restrained. That his embodiment of the divine initiative does not and will not fit into the categories that they have carefully devised. And so, he is rejected.

In life, most of us experience rejection at one time or another. Sadly, some people are haunted by a lifetime of rejection. Yet, whether the sting of rejection is intermittent or more frequent, we soon discover that those with whom we are the closest are uniquely qualified to send us tumbling down. Yes. It is their rejections which evoke the sharp emotions of “anger, outrage, and self-pity.”⁹

In such moments, we are wise to remember that we are never alone. For the God that we profess sent a Son named Jesus who was regularly rejected by his own people.¹⁰ In response, he does not curse them. Instead, he loves them. From this point onward, “Jesus understands that his vocation will be rejected in his native region, by his relatives, and finally in his own household.”¹¹ And “he is forced to concede that he is “a ‘prophet without honor,’ stripped of status and robbed of clan identity. Disowned,” Jesus does not send God’s wrath or condemnation upon the

⁸ Voelz, 143.

⁹ Williamson, Jr., 113.

¹⁰ Williamson, Jr., 113.

¹¹ Myers, 212.

people.¹² Instead, he “withdraws and takes up again his itinerant mission to the village court.”¹³

For us, there are many connections with our own discipleship. Richard Voelz writes, “There are seasons in which we find ourselves riding high in ministry, when it seems that our ministries are strong and effective, when our witness to the community and the world seemingly has the capacity to change the world. Then there are Jesus-in-Nazareth seasons: times when every faithful act seems to be thwarted by circumstance or people.”¹⁴

Voelz continues by noting that, at times, “we face obstacles, even when we are faithful. Sometimes our ministries encounter resistance, even when we do the right things.”¹⁵ “The message for us is, in the face of failure, do not be swayed. When obstacles come, carry out Jesus’ ministry regardless.”¹⁶ For this is what it means to be sent by the one who was rejected.

¹² Myers, 212.

¹³ Myers, 212.

¹⁴ Voelz, 142.

¹⁵ Voelz, 143.

¹⁶ Voelz, 143.

Today, I am honored to be gathered for worship alongside all of you - faithful people who are “seeking to live into the will of God.”¹⁷ In our success and fruitfulness, God is there. And in our rejection and despair, God walks with us. Whatever the season, did you not know that we must be in our Father’s house? May it be so, and all thanks be to God. Amen.

¹⁷ Voelz, 143.