

GAME CHANGER
Weekly Devotional
A ministry of Chapel Hill
chapelhillpc.org

WEEK 1

This sermon pairs with Mark 6:1-6 and the sermon preached at Chapel Hill on May 25 and 26.



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LifeGroup Guide
Game Changer Series
Week 1

This sermon pairs with Mark 6:1-6 and the sermon preached at Chapel Hill on May 25 and 26.

LifeGroup Questions

Head

Jesus refers to the rejection of prophets in their hometown and households. Can you recall some of the prophets in the Old Testament that experienced this? (Cf. 2 Chon 36:16, Jer 11:21)

What sorts of things produce “astonishment” in today’s society?

How did Jesus respond to the ridicule he experienced in this story?

Heart

Can you relate to Jesus being scorned for his background and simple origins? Jesus deserved every ounce of respect and yet was treated with ridicule and contempt.

When have you been astonished by the work and teachings of Christ?

Have you ever experienced people (especially family!) taking offense at your faith?

Hands

What is your response when you are ridiculed? What can you learn from Jesus’ response in this passage?

“Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you” is the command given in Matthew 5:44. If this passage has reminded you of some difficult memories of experiencing rejection, spend time intentionally praying for those who have hurt you.

Day 1 – Monday

Daily Devotional

Read

Mark 6:1-6; Mark 1:21-22; Mark 9:24

Ask

What sorts of things produce “astonishment” in today’s society? When have you been astonished by the work and teachings of Christ?

Reflect

The word “astonished” in the original Greek language means to “be struck” with astonishment, admiration, to be amazed. It carries with it the idea of being “knocked-out” of one’s senses, or as we might say today: Mind. Blown. It may leave us speechless, or shaking our heads in wonder.

In Mark 1:21-22, Jesus had gone out to Capernaum to teach, and the people were astonished because Jesus taught as one who had authority. Immediately following this statement, Mark tells us that the people were coming from all over, bringing others to be healed. Their astonishment led them to believe, and their belief caused them to respond in faith. Not so in Mark 6.

Jesus was now teaching in his own hometown. Yes, the people were astonished. They wondered how he came up with his teachings and wisdom, how he could heal so miraculously. This Jesus who had grown up before their eyes into the man who made their furniture and did their carpentry work had not been raised or trained as a Rabbi. Yet he came to them as an itinerant Rabbi would, disciples in tow, teaching with authority, and Mark tells us “they took offense at him.” They found him off-putting, they did not respond in faith, but in unbelief.

Sometimes we are like the people in Jesus’ hometown. In our own humanity, we grapple with hard Bible passages. Increasingly, we see the things embraced by our culture as contrary to Jesus’ teachings, and we may find ourselves like the people in this story, questioning Jesus’ authority.

Think of one or two cultural values that you struggle reconciling to the word of God. Pray for wisdom, clarity, and understanding. Ask for help in transforming any unbelief to faith and acceptance, using the words of the father in Mark 9.

Day 2 – Tuesday

Daily Devotional

Read

Mark 6:4; Deuteronomy 18:15-22; 1 Samuel 8:7; Luke 17:24-25

Ask

Jesus refers to the rejection of prophets in their hometown and households. Can you recall some of the prophets in the Old Testament that experienced this? (Cf. 2 Chron 36:15-16, Jer 11:21)

Reflect

If you've read any Old Testament book that is written by or about a prophet, you know that the prophet almost always experienced some form of rejection. The task of a prophet being to speak forth God's word – either generally to tell of a coming event, or often to a person or group of people who were breaking God's laws, highlighting a consequence for the misbehavior. It isn't a stretch to think that God's people might reject such a person.

Jesus was not only rejected, he says he was "without honor." Those words actually mean "dishonored" or made lowly. God gave Moses specific instructions concerning prophets. The people were to obey the words that were spoken, unless the prophet behaved dishonorably, speaking words that leading God's people astray. If in fact the people saw Jesus in this dishonorable light, what would have been their responsibility under the law, according to the Deuteronomy passage?

The response of the people, however, was faithlessness. They were indifferent to Jesus, casting him aside as though he were nobody at all. (cf. John 1:45-46) Because of this faithlessness, they did not experience the miracles in the way that Jesus had been performing them in the outlying areas. Have you ever encountered a teacher that didn't hold your attention the way you would have expected or wanted? What was your response to that teacher? What was the impact of that person's teaching on your life?

We can hold the same attitudes toward teachers (prophets, pastors, lay leaders, etc.) today. Think of the people who might fill those roles in your life. How do you treat them? How do you respond to the things they say and do? What changes, if any, may you need to make to honor them as God commands?

Day 3 – Wednesday
Daily Devotional

Read

Mark 6:2-3; Mark 3:21; John 7:1-5

Ask

Have you ever experienced people (especially family!) taking offense at your faith?

Reflect

I did not grow up in a Christian home, but came to faith at the age of 30, when my daughters were still young. When I began attending church and verbalizing my faith as an adult, one particular family member objected to me teaching my faith to my children, telling me that it was like child abuse. Our relationship was strained for many years until this person understood that I was not trying to influence their own beliefs.

Jesus had already experienced rejection by his family, as we saw in Mark 3. In today's John passage, his brothers were daring him to prove himself, because they did not believe him. They thought he was at best, a fraud—at worst, certifiably crazy. We don't have insight into his relationships with them as children, but as adults it is safe to say, their relationships were strained! How have your family members responded to your faith?

I've come to realize that my family member's objection arose from the brokenness of their own experience. They had felt coerced and manipulated in a youth organization that masks the meaning of certain rituals and practices until a person reaches a certain level of participation. This person equated my faith-based parenting with that coercive experience. Today we have a healthier relationship, though they still avoid conversations about my faith.

Think of a family member who has been offended by your faith. Can you recognize the brokenness from which they respond? Pray for them, asking God to heal their hurt, with no other agenda than to see them healed. Pray for their openness to things of faith.

Day 4 – Thursday

Daily Devotional

Read

Mark 6:2-6; Mark 1:35; Isaiah 15:3

Ask

How did Jesus respond to the ridicule he experienced in this story?

Reflect

This was not the first or last time, Jesus would be rejected, made fun of, or despised. As we've seen before, his family thought he was crazy. No one believed anything good could come from Nazareth. And from the story of the cross, we know that taunting became hatred, which became abuse and physical torture eventually leading to the death of Jesus. Our passage this week falls at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, so the taunting he experiences is rather mild.

From the text it seems that Jesus' response is also mild. He responds with an innocuous phrase, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown, and among his relatives and in his own household." This is not a quote from the Old Testament, nor from some philosopher of old, it was simply a fact to say "I know you don't recognize my authority – little Jesus all grown up." Nonetheless, they had *heard* him teach with authority, they knew it and so did he. But they did not believe him.

Then, ironically, Mark says that Jesus "marveled" at their unbelief. The word "marveled" here is synonymous with "astonished!" This version of the word gives us a picture of a gaping jaw, a shake of the head. We can almost hear Jesus respond this way: "Unbelievable!"

How does Jesus' response compare with your own when facing ridicule by family members? Describe a time when a family relationship was strained because of your faith. Read Matthew 19:29 and Mark 3:31-35. How do these verses help you keep perspective in the face of ridicule? How do they reflect the response of Jesus in Mark 6?

Spend time journaling or praying through what God has been stirring in you this week.

Day 5 – Friday

Daily Devotional

Read

Isaiah 15:3; John 15:20; 2 Tim 3:12; Romans 8:35-39

Ask

Can you relate to Jesus being scorned for his background and simple origins? Jesus deserved every ounce of respect and yet was treated with ridicule and contempt.

Reflect

Today's readings all point to the fact that Jesus was appointed to suffer, and his disciples with him. He knew at some level that he was headed to certain death, and that truth became more evident the closer he got to the cross. In his humanity, he really was a lowly carpenter, a laborer without much status in his culture or his community. But in his deity, he was the very Son of God, who deserved the deference of a King! In the story of King Saul, even though he turned out to be a wicked and horrible king, the person who caused him to fall on his sword himself fell on his sword, because no one was to touch or harm the Lord's anointed (chosen) ruler.

Yet the nation of Israel, the Lord's own people, did not recognize him as such. For those of us who do recognize him, we are also to identify with him in his sufferings. Can you relate to the sufferings of Jesus? In what way(s)?

We're told in the Bible that we should expect to be treated poorly when we stand up for Jesus. How does this make you feel? Have you ever experienced this outside your family, in your community?

Today's readings also point to the fact that we have hope in Jesus. Nothing can separate us from him, especially the persecutions we face when we exercise our faith. He is no stranger to the situations we face, and he helps us overcome each one.

Consider underlining the words in Romans 8:35-39 that you identify with. Pray through each situation and thank Jesus that he has already won your battles. Ask him to help you overcome each one with his help.

Day 6 – Saturday

Daily Devotional

Read

Mark 6:1-6; James 1:2-4; Matthew 5:9-12

Ask

What is your response when you are ridiculed? What can you learn from Jesus' response in this passage?

Reflect

Our former church, in a small town, experienced a painful separation of relationships, due to a difference of opinions. The people caught in the middle struggled to maintain any relationship for fear of taking sides. Yet, one day I spoke up for a former church member who was being ridiculed.

I didn't expect that I would be the next person targeted for appearing disloyal to those who remained at the church. Someone took offense at my gesture, thinking I was trying to divide the remaining church members when my desire was to cultivate an atmosphere of grace, to leave open the possibility of reconciliation, and to walk out my own faith in love for all the people.

It wasn't easy to be the object of people's disdain, in this small town where the situation was well known, as was who took which side on the issues. It sure didn't feel like joy experiencing this trial, though I believed what James said in his letter, that standing firm would produce perseverance.

My response to all of this was to do the next thing God put in front of me – my husband and I eventually left that church, which put us on the path to where we are today. It was a hard road, but we found grace and healing along the way. And, I feel incredibly blessed to be in a place now where grace is highly valued, and modeled by our church leadership.

What situations cause you to stand for truth and righteousness? Have you ever been ridiculed for taking a stand? How do today's readings give you hope for standing firm in the future?

Spend time praising Jesus for the blessings he pours out on us in the face of trials and persecution.

Day 7 – Sunday
Daily Devotional

Read

Matthew 5:43-48

Ask

“Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you” is the command given in Matthew 5:44. If this passage has reminded you of some difficult memories of experiencing rejection, spend time intentionally praying for those who have hurt you.

Reflect

It is not easy to recover from rejection, at least not for us humans. Jesus has some wise words though, from his Sermon on the Mount. He says that we should pray for our enemies. Earlier in the week, I said that most often the rejection from others comes out of their own brokenness. This has helped me be more compassionate toward those who reject me. When I pray for them, I can ask for healing and reconciliation (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Whether that happens is up to God, and the person for whom I pray.

Read this Matthew passage in the King James Version of the Bible (Use the online tool [Bible Gateway](#) if you don't have a copy laying around at home!) This version expands on the way we are to respond to our enemies. What stands out to you from this version? How can you demonstrate your love for your enemies today? How can you bless them?

Spend the rest of your time going over what you discovered this week. Did you discover any struggles you related to rejection? How will you approach healing from these things?

Pray for your enemies, for those who may need your grace and possibly reconciliation. Be gracious to yourself and allow God to work in these situations.
