Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Amazing Unbelief
Scripture: Mark 6:1-6
Code: 41-26

Well, open your Bible to Mark chapter 6...Mark chapter 6. I want to read to you the first six and a half verses. Mark 6.

“Jesus went out from there,” that meaning Capernaum where He had been ministering in the prior chapter, we saw that. “He went out from there and came in to His hometown,” that would be Nazareth. “And His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue and the many listeners were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this man get these things? And what is this wisdom given to Him? And such miracles as these performed by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?’ And they took offense at Him.

“Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in His hometown and among His own relatives and in His own household. And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He wondered at their unbelief.”

The Bible doesn’t say that Jesus wondered, or was astonished, or was amazed except for two times...here and on an occasion when He was amazed at the faith of a centurion, as recorded both by Matthew and Luke. The Bible tells us the people were constantly amazed at Him. They were astonished at Him. But only those two times was He amazed at them. Once with the centurion He was amazed at his faith. Here He is amazed at the unbelief in His own hometown.

We think about faith as powerful, don’t we? Faith moves mountains. But I want you to understand that unbelief is powerful as well. Unbelief is a great force. The power of unbelief is so great that it extends throughout all eternity. In fact, it has massive force, unbelief does.

For example, Eve exercised unbelief in the Word of God and brought the entire human race down into a curse and eternal judgment. In the days of Noah, Noah was a preacher of righteousness warning the world, the world would not believe and the world of unbelievers brought down a Flood upon their own heads that drowned all of humanity with the exception of Noah and his three sons and their wives and his own wife. Unbelief caused the destruction of the whole human race and all creatures and all life living on the earth. It was unbelief on the part of Israel in the wilderness that caused them to die there before ever entering into the Promised Land. And the story of Israel’s ongoing unbelief even after they entered the land of Canaan is clear for all to read in the Old

Testament. They were judged again and again by God for their apostasy and their unbelief.

Being a little more individual and looking at the power of unbelief, we remember Aaron's unbelief led to three thousand people being slaughtered. We remember that Moses' unbelief kept him out of the Promised Land. We remember that Achan's unbelief resulting in his disobedience brought about the execution of himself and his entire family. You might remember Sennacherib's unbelief, the Gentile king, led to his assassination by his own sons after an angel of the Lord had massacred 185 thousand of his troops.

And, of course, there is the unbelief of Judas which led to his suicide and his everlasting punishment. The Pharisees and the scribes were unbelievers to the very end with few exceptions. And like all other unbelievers, their unbelief resulted in them dying in their sins and forfeiting heaven and gaining hell.

The New Testament has a lot to say about believing. It has a lot to say about faith. But it has an awful lot to say equally about unbelief. In the familiar words of John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life, for God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged, but he who does not believe is judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

It was unbelief that brought a curse on all of humanity. It was unbelief that broke up the fountains of the deep and brought down the rain from heaven and drowned the entire human race. And it is unbelief in the Son of God that catapults people into eternal hell. Unbelief activates divine wrath. Unbelief activates divine judgment. It is a force, this unbelief.

In the eighth chapter of John's gospel, John has a lot to say about believing and not believing, that's why we find so many references there to this. He said to them in John 8:21, "I go away and you will seek Me and will die in your sin. Where I am going, namely into heaven, you cannot come."

So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He? Since He says where I'm going you cannot come?" And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above, you're of this world, I am not of this world, therefore I said to you, 'You will die in your sins for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.'" The warning that our Lord gave many, many times. "Believe in Me or perish...believe in Me or perish."

Some came close, among the Pharisees and the scribes. John 12:42, "Many of the rulers believed in Him but because of the Pharisees, they were not confessing Him for fear they would be put out of the synagogue for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Second

Thessalonians chapter 2 warns about the devastating, eternal consequence of unbelief. Romans 11:20 talks about the horrible tragedy of Israel's unbelief. Revelation 21:8 talks about the fact that no unbelieving person will ever enter into heaven.

And so, I say unbelief is a mighty force. It has brought a curse on the whole human race. It drowned all of humanity. It activates the judgment of God. And it brings about the forfeiture of eternal life, it brings about eternal judgment. That passage that we just read, I think perhaps more than any in the gospels, puts on display the power of unbelief...the power of unbelief.

Now, just some general thoughts about this text. It is a concluding text of the first section of Mark's gospel. The section began with an introduction of the purpose of the book, to talk about the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we immediately saw that His coming was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. And then as the gospel begun to unfold, we saw Jesus preaching the gospel in the first chapter, and then in the first chapter calling out His disciples. And then in the second chapter and third chapter, teaching and healing the people. And then it goes on to the completion of the Twelve who are going to be identified as the future preachers of the gospel, chapters 4 and 5 more preaching, more teaching, more miracles of healing, deliverance from demons and danger and death. In fact, just prior in chapter 5 verses 21 to 43 we saw the great healing power of Jesus as He raised the dead daughter of Jairus and on the way to Jairus' house, He healed a woman who had a bleeding problem for twelve years.

Now we need to note that at the end of verse 42 in chapter 5, the general response of the crowds around Galilee is summed up, "Immediately the y were completely astounded." That has to do with the resurrection of Jairus' daughter from the dead. But it is also a kind of general summation statement of how Jesus was received in Galilee. Primarily the response was curiosity and astonishment. That does not equal faith, that does not equal repentance, therefore it doesn't equal salvation. But there was interest and there was curiosity. There were lots of thrill seekers and people who wanted to be healed and delivered from demons and who wanted to see the exhibitions of the great power of Jesus. And they were literally astounded, as well, at His teaching.

We could say then the general attitude was one of superficial acceptance. I guess you could say that there were many in the populace of Galilee, many in the crowds of Galilee who would fit into the soils parable at the point of the rocky soil and the weedy soil. The word goes in, there's an immediate emotional response. They're there. It looks like the appearance of life, no root, however, no fruit. But not open hostility...not yet, anyway. Open hostility was already in full motion with the leaders of Israel, the Pharisees, the scribes and the Herodians as well. We learn earlier they were already plotting together to kill Jesus, very early in His Galilean ministry. But for the most part, the crowds were accepting because they wanted the benefits of His power. They were astonished at what He did. But now, when He goes back to His hometown of Nazareth, no large crowd appears there, no large

crowd. And He this time is astounded. Usually it was the crowd that was astounded, here it is the Lord that is astounded.

A little bit of background is probably pretty necessary. He had no acceptance at all in His hometown, none, not even from His intimate family. His family's attitude is conveyed to us back in Mark 3:21, they thought He had lost His mind. They thought He was a maniac. For all that they knew, He grew up there for 30 years as a quiet carpenter and now, all of a sudden, He's catapulted Himself on to the public scene. He hadn't done miracles as such in Nazareth, but the word about the miracles was running rampant all over everywhere. They were trying to process all of this with a great measure of skepticism and thought that He had lost His mind and actually they found Him in verse 31, "His mother and brothers arrived and standing outside sent word to Him and called Him," the objective was to get Him out of the public situation He was in and save both the public from His madness and Himself as well. We read in John chapter 7 that His family did not believe in Him, His brothers did not believe in Him.

Now Luke tells us about His earlier visit. You can turn to Luke chapter 4. He had an earlier visit. And by the way, that chapter 4 verses 16 to 30 of Luke is one of the great texts in all the gospel record. You can download those sermons or get the first volume of the Luke commentary or some CDs on that and you'll find it one of the most powerful of all the gospel sections. But in Luke 4 He is beginning His ministry in Galilee, verse 14, in the power of the Spirit. News about Him spread throughout all the surrounding district. He's teaching in synagogues and He's praised by everybody and this is early in the Galilean ministry. First year was in Judea and the second year and even maybe a portion of that first year, and then a long full year and even more in Galilee and He is teaching in synagogues as He begins. And right away somewhere at the beginning He comes to Nazareth where He had been brought up as...and as was His custom, He always did this, every Sabbath day He went to the synagogue. He was faithful to do that, to worship. He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read. This was traditional. This is what the visiting rabbis were invited to do when they came to town. And He had such a reputation already building up, they wanted to hear about Him. Word had come from Judea during the first year and now more word from Galilee. He opens up the book of the prophet Isaiah, we won't go into the detail. He reads from it two messianic prophecies about the Spirit of the Lord being upon the Messiah. The Messiah arriving to preach the gospel and proclaim release to the captive, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed and proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. He then closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, sat down. Everybody was looking at Him. They were fixed on Him. And He said in verse 21, "Today the Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Wow!

That's only what He began to say. The rest was, He told them He was the Messiah. He told them He was the Messiah.

Verse 22, “They were speaking well of Him,” how could they not? “And wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips but they were puzzled and said, ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’ And Jesus says, ‘No doubt, you just want more...more magic, you just want more miracles.’ So you’re going to say to yourself, ‘Whatever was done at Capernaum, do it here.’ But He said, ‘I know your attitude...verse 24, and here’s the first use of this axiom, this truism...No prophet is welcome in his own hometown. All experts come from out of town.’” We all understand that.

And then as this sermon unfolds, He basically says, “I am the Messiah, I am here to preach the gospel to the poor prisoners, blind and oppressed.” The people who are spiritually poor, spiritually in prisons, spiritually blind, spiritually oppressed. In other words, the people who know they’re trapped in sin and death. I’m here to preach the gospel.

The implication is, you’re not going to receive it because you’re just like previous generations. And He tells them the story about Elijah. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the famine came and yet God never sent Elijah to any widow in the land of Israel. There wasn’t a widow in Israel worthy of a prophet and he had to go to a widow in Zarephath, the land of Sidon which was Gentile area where they worshiped Baal. In other words, the prophet Elijah turned his back on Israel in his day because of their unbelief and then he talks about the prophet Elisha, there were many lepers in Israel but God didn’t go to any of them but rather to a border terrorist by the name of Naaman who was a Syrian and God healed him. It’s the same old story, Jesus is saying, God has never been able to move with power among you because of your unbelief, because you will not recognize you are the poor prisoners, blind and oppressed in a condition of utter sinfulness, desperately in need of saving grace.

Well the response in verse 28 was, “They were filled with rage at this indictment, leaving themselves to be righteous.” This was unacceptable. “They got up...in verse 29...drove Him out of the city, led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built in order to throw Him down the cliff.” Wow! One sermon and they wanted Him dead. And these are the people who knew Him best in a small village, His own family involved. They tried to kill Him after one sermon but passing through their midst, He went His way.

So that was the attitude of Nazareth toward Him. And this is His second and last visit before us. And you can go back now to Mark. Nothing has changed with their attitude except that at this time they don’t try to kill Him. This is about, however, final rejection, the final rejection of Nazareth. It’s kind of a...it’s kind of a microcosm of His final rejection in Jerusalem by the whole nation.

Unbelief is really powerful. It’s amazing what unbelief does in the face of full evidence. It is so startling that it even amazes Jesus. Nazareth, such hard soil. With all that they had heard from Him, all that

had been reported to them about Him, never denying His miracles, confessing to the graciousness of His teaching and the uniqueness of His teaching and the power of His teaching, and yet they're so hard-hearted that He can only wonder at such unbelief in the face of such revelation.

So to understand this account, we have to start at the end of it. So we begin at the end, verse 6, "He wondered at their unbelief," wondered, thaumazo is the Greek verb, it appears about 30 times in the New Testament usually to describe the people's reaction to Him. If you track with the gospel of Mark, go back to chapter 5 verse 20, "He went away, began to proclaim into Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him and everyone was amazed." When the demoniac went out simply to preach the gospel, or preach the good news concerning Christ and told the story of the things that Jesus had done, even as a second-hand, or first-hand witness, but a second-hand source, what the man said made Jesus amazing to the people. That's the idea of the wonder and the amazement. There was a typical response.

Over in chapter 6 verse 51, He got into the boat with them, the wind stopped and they were utterly astonished. This particular word and other synonyms describe for us the typical reaction of the people. When Jesus in chapter 12 verse 17 of Mark said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's," they were amazed at Him. And so was the standard response. Even Pilate, according to Mark 15:5 was astonished, amazed at Jesus.

That's a very understandable response to our Lord. What amazes Jesus, however, in this case is the hard-hearted unbelief of the people in the face of such powerful, powerful revelation. This speaks to the tragedy of human responsibility, doesn't it? It speaks to the fact that the sinner has the duty to respond to the gospel and is guilty and culpable for his own unbelief. John 5 and verse 39, "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and these are they that testify about Me and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life." Matthew 23:37, He looks at Jerusalem and says, "I would have gathered you but you would not." The sinner is unbelieving and unwilling to come and bears the responsibility for that unwillingness and that unbelief.

In John 6:28, "They said to Him, 'What shall we do so that we may work the works of God?' He answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent.'" Believe, the evidence is there. You've seen it. You've heard it. All who reject will perish. But it is especially amazing that those who were there during our Lord's divine power display were so stubbornly unbelieving, the people of Nazareth, of all people.

Well let's go back to the start of the story then. Jesus went out from there, meaning Capernaum where He had based His Galilean ministry up to this point. This marks a crisis, by the way, in the history of Capernaum. At this point when He leaves, He never comes back to reestablish Himself there. It's no more His home. No longer is the center of His Galilean ministry, only occasionally does

He visit there and only in passing. Capernaum has heard enough and seen enough, plenty to be responsible for believing.

Furthermore, they don't need more information. They don't need more revelation. And additionally the growing power and hostility of the Pharisees and the scribes makes it dangerous for Him to go there. And then there's the nearness of Herod's residence in Tiberias not far away which made it nearly impossible for Him to be in Capernaum. And furthermore, Capernaum was doomed. Listen to Matthew 11. "He began to denounce the cities...verse 20...in which most of His miracles were done because they didn't repent. Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you Bethsaida, for if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sack cloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you," that is to say, it will be more tolerable in hell for idolatrous Gentiles than it will be for religious Jews who rejected Christ. "And you, Capernaum...verse 23...will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades for if the miracles that occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you. In hell it would have been better for you to be a homosexual pervert living in Sodom than to be a synagogue-attending, self-righteous Jew living in Capernaum." That town is cursed.

Well, He left there and came to His hometown. We know His hometown is Nazareth, chapter 1 verse 9, chapter 1 verse 24 tells us He's from Nazareth. Chapter 10 verse 47, chapter 14 verse 67, chapter 16 verse 6 all say that Jesus the Nazarene, referring to the town of Nazareth. Where is it? Twenty-five miles away from Capernaum, twenty-five miles, you go directly west from the north tip of the Sea of Galilee, directly west and directly south.

Now when we think about Nazareth, we have all kinds of imagination as to what that place was like. And maybe I can help you with it a little bit. It is in its ancient configuration about sixty acres on a rocky hillside on the road to nowhere. The best guess is the town had about 500 residents, not exactly a booming metropolis, about 500 residents. It is so obscure that it is never mentioned in the Old Testament, never mentioned in the Jewish Mishnah, never mentioned in the Jewish Talmud, never mentioned by Josephus. And no church ever appeared there until the fourth century A.D. Our Lord returns to this little small town for one final visit to the people who were most familiar with Him. If you grow up for 30 years in a town of 500, you know everybody and everybody knows you. About a year earlier, He had made that other visit when they tried to kill Him.

Well this time His disciples followed Him. Why? Because they were going to learn a lesson about rejections. Part of their preparation, by the way, because in verses 7 to 13 He sends them out on their first trial run and they're going to experience rejection. So here is an opportunity for them to see it firsthand. This is not a private family visit. He came for public ministry. And the disciples come along

as spectators to the rejection as kind of a preparation for what they're going to experience. No large crowds show up in Nazareth. There is no interest in Him there. His family, I guess, is convinced the town that He is a mad man. They try to bring Him home and spare the public from His maniacal machinations unsuccessfully.

Nonetheless there's so much curiosity about Him and He is recognized as a rabbi, that when the Sabbath came in verse 2, He is given the customary right as the visiting rabbi to speak. Who knows what they thought. But here we'll see in a small way, a microcosm, John 1:11, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." That was true of the nation, that was true of the world and that's certainly true of His own town and even His own family.

But at least they're curious enough that they want Him as the visiting rabbi to speak. They know how gifted He is. Remember Luke 4? The first time He came, they marveled at His gracious words, they were astounded at His teaching, they couldn't resist giving Him this opportunity.

Alfred Edersheim says that many times in a situation like this when a visiting rabbi came, he had to sometimes had to speak through a local speaker. In other words, he would speak into the ear of the speaker and the speaker would speak in his behalf. And Edersheim points out that this was because they were so much in to oratory that they wanted to make sure that there was the appropriate kind of persona there. Edersheim says, "This is what was to be expected of a speaker in a synagogue. He was to have a good figure, a pleasant expression, a melodious voice, his words coming like those of a bride to a bridegroom, fluency, speech sweet as honey, pleasant as milk and honey, finely sifted like fine flour, diction richly adorned like a bride on her wedding day and sufficient confidence never to be disoriented. And above all, he had to be conciliatory and avoid being too personal."

So to help them assure that that might happen, they picked a guy who had those kind of qualities and let the visiting speakers speak through him. In this case it doesn't seem to have happened because they knew that even though Jesus was bound to be personal and not too conciliatory, He could speak for Himself. And He did. And we don't on what subject He spoke, but we do know the result, "And the many listeners were astonished." That's a really strong verb, astonished, not thaumazo, ekplesso. Plesso means to strike, to smite, or to blast, and in a passive form, to be hit, blasted. And then you add a preposition on the front, that's plesso, make it ekplesso and it's an intensified word. We would say today, and this would be a perfect parallel, He blew their minds...He blew their minds. They were just blown away.

Scripture describes His teaching in many ways. In Matthew 7:28 and 29 it is declared that His teaching was authoritative. In John 7:15 and 16 , it was knowledgeable. In Luke 4:32 it was powerful. And according to John 7:46 it was unmatched, no man ever spoke like this man spoke.

And all that without having a master rabbi who mentored Him, without having all the formal degrees, a formal education, He was nothing but an amharits, a man of the earth, a commoner. But as again they listened to Him, they are astounded at what He says. They meet it strangely enough without right unbelief. And it is that that I want to address in the moments we have left.

I want to show you four things about unbelief. And I know you've experienced them because this is how you're treated by unbelievers. This is how I'm treated by unbelievers.

First, unbelief obscures the obvious. Unbelief obscures the obvious. You've confronted somebody with the gospel of Christ, shown them in the New Testament, gave them the account, the historical account, let's say of the resurrection of Jesus Christ with 500 eyewitnesses, etc., etc., etc. And inevitably unbelievers, hard-hearted unbelievers find a way to obscure all of that. Look at it in verse 2. Here is their response. "Where did this man get these things? And what is this wisdom given to Him and such miracles as these performed by His hands? You know, where did this come from? What is this source of this wisdom?"

They were more concerned about where it came from than about what it was because they were in to all these layers and layers and layers of rabbinical teaching. There is only one sensible answer to where it came from, and that is it came from God, that He is who He says He is. He is Messiah. He is the Son of God. He is the One who has come to fulfill messianic prophecy as He told them the first time He came. That's obvious. There's no need for such silly questions. What's the origin of this. What...what else...what else could it be, this kind of healing power, connected with this kind of teaching? Well you can say that the healing power came from Satan, as the Pharisees did, but certainly you wouldn't say that the teaching came from Satan. So the package is very obviously from God.

In John 5:36 we read, "The testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John for the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish the very works that I do testify about Me that the Father has sent Me." There's no other explanation for what He did than the power of God. In John 8:46 He says,...verse 45, "Because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me?" And He goes on to say, "Because you are not of God."

The obvious...the only obvious answer to where His teaching and His power came from was God. John 10:37, "If I do not do the works of My Father, don't believe Me. But if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me and I in the Father."

The only explanation again is that God is present in Him. John 14:10, "Do you not believe that I am in

the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His work. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. Believe because of the works themselves." He keeps going back and forth in the gospel of John, "Believe Me for My words, believe Me for My works," combine the two, it is obvious where this comes from, both this wisdom and this power.

Nobody ever denied that. John 11:47, even the Pharisees said, "This man is doing signs. This man is doing miracles." And at the end of the gospel of John, the last two verses tells us that if there was a record of everything He did, the books of the world couldn't even contain it. It was obvious that He had divine power. It was obvious that He taught divine truth. But unbelief obscures the obvious. And in Luke 16:31 Jesus said, "If they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they're not going to believe the one rose from the dead." He did, and they didn't believe.

And they ask these silly questions that evidence their skepticism. Where did this man get these things? Not in this town. Not from any local yokel. And what is this wisdom given to Him that transcends all that they've ever heard? By the way, what is this wisdom given to Him...it's not "Him" in the Greek, it's "this fellow" which was an expression of disdain. And what about the miracles performed by His hands, though not done in Nazareth to any great extent well, well known by everyone?

There's only one possible answer to these silly questions. It all came from God because this is the Son of God but unbelief by nature obscures the obvious. It blocks out the obvious. According to John chapter 7, "Even His own brothers in His own family, even after the influence of His mother who must have communicated to them who He really was, did not believe." The Jews in John 7:15 were astonished and said, "How is this man become learned having never been educated?" Jesus said, "My teaching is not Mine, it's....it's His who sent Me."

This is the nature of unbelief. It will go everywhere but to the truth. It will go everywhere but to the reality, the obvious.

Secondly, unbelief not only obscures the obvious, it elevates the irrelevant...it elevates the irrelevant. Verse 3, look at these ridiculous questions, "Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?"

What does that have to do with anything? But that's the way they thought. They couldn't...they couldn't possibly have focused on the power, they couldn't possibly have focused on the profundity of His teaching. They have already rejected Him wholesale and now they want to attack Him by attacking His family. He comes from a local well-known family, a very common people. To imagine that He's the Messiah, nah, His family's probably right, He is a maniac. He comes from an obscure

town and an obscure family, He can't possibly be who He says He is. And they speak with disdain of Him. "Is not this the carpenter..the carpenter?" Not a rabbi, not a clergyman, not a Pharisee, not a scribe, not a local synagogue leaders, He's a carpenter.

Now, trades were honorable. Matthew 13:55 says, "They said He's the carpenter's son." So you compare the two accounts, as always in these parallel accounts in Scripture, the carpenter's son who Himself is a carpenter, that fits perfectly because fathers taught their sons their trade. This is meant to be a demeaning expression. Carpenters is the word tekton...tekton. We get the word tech from that, we get architect from that, somebody who builds an arc...arch. It refers to a builder. The word tekton could refer to a mason, a stone mason, a smith, somebody who worked with metal, a ship builder, a sculptor, even physicians were referred to by that term. It's a very, very broad term and what would be best to say would be that He was a builder...a builder of what? We don't know but He was a builder. The early church held that Joseph and Jesus were carpenters who made yokes and plows. That we find in A.D. 155, about a hundred years, of course, after the main part of the New Testament era, and this from Justin's dialogue with Tripho(???) where he refers to Jesus and Joseph as those who made yokes and plows.

Well, that's a tradition we really don't know, but He was a builder and from their perspective He wasn't a part of the elite, He wasn't a part of the clergy. And so they focused on what is irrelevant. Then they dig even deeper, "The Son of Mary....the Son of Mary." When we say that we say that with love and respect, don't we? That's not how they said it. In Luke 4:22 He is referred to this way, "Is not this Joseph's Son?" That's how you referred to people in a respectable way. You referred to someone as the Son of the father, we still have that today, right? When you get married you take the man's name, you are the son of. In many, many languages people's last name is simply the son of...whoever. I have a name Mac...well Mac means "son of," son of Arthur. And that's how people generally are referred to. But here He is called Son of Mary. Some have speculated maybe Joseph was dead, but even if Joseph was dead, you would still refer to Him genealogically as the son of Joseph. It's very possible that they're calling Him the Son of Mary because they're slandering Jesus for what they've come to believe is an illegitimate birth...an illegitimate birth.

Listen to John 8, Jesus is talking to the Jewish leaders and verse 41 He says, "You're doing the deeds of your father." Here's their response, "They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication.'" Whew...that's a slander, that Mary, because Joseph was not the father of her baby, Jesus was an illegitimate son. His father was unknown. These are very slanderous things, but they're all irrelevant. They're focusing on earthly family instead of seeing a divine person. It's amazing how unbelief can elevate the irrelevant. And they say, you know, there are brothers there, James and Joses and Judas and Simon. James we know about, he became the leader of the Jerusalem church and eventually wrote the epistle of James. And Jude we know about because he wrote the epistle of Jude. They were the half-brothers of Jesus. As far as Joses and Simon, we don't know anything about them. And

then it mentions, “Are not His sisters here with us?” So there were sisters, plural. We don’t know exactly how many. Matthew says, “All His sisters,” which would take it beyond two and make it three or more. So, you know, Mary may have had ten children, who knows? She was not a perpetual virgin, by the way. But they’re stuck on the idea that this is a nobody from a nowhere family with a perhaps an illegitimate birth who is a common Amharits, man of the dirt, man of the earth. This is typical of unbelief to focus on the irrelevant.

Then there’s a third characteristic of unbelief, it assaults the messenger...it assaults the messenger. End of verse 3, “They took offense at Him.” Skandalizomai...they were scandalized by Him. It was an absolute...absolute blasphemy in their minds that He would claim to be God, the Son of God. This is scandalous, this is the same word you’ll find in 1 Corinthians 1 where the gospel is a stumbling block, a skandalon to the Jews. Repeatedly the Scripture talks about how they stumbled over the reality of Jesus and over the gospel. This is adamant antagonism. This is the attitude of an unbeliever when pressed with the truth, when the truth is obvious and the truth is relevant. He tries to obscure the obvious, elevate the irrelevant and then turn on the messenger.

Now we’ve all experienced that. We have all experienced that. I..I can promise you that there are few days in my life when having taught the truth about something in the Word of God, I am not attacked personally. And that’s one of the ploys that unbelief uses, it assaults the messenger. It will use an ad hominem attack, it will try to diminish the person who is proclaiming the truth by attacking him.

Jesus prepares His disciples in the next section of Mark. The extended version of that preparation is found in Matthew 10. Listen to what he says when he sends them out. “I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues.” And just exactly what would the crime be? What is the crime? Did they rob? Did they kill? Did they plunder? Did they break the law? No...no. “You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, don’t worry about what you will say, it will be given you in that hour what you’re going to say and it’s not you who speaks, it’s the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Brother, even your own brother will betray brother to death, a father his child. Children will rise up against parents, cause them to be put to death. You’ll be hated by all because of My name. But it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. And when they persecute you in one city, flee to the next.” I mean, that’s to be expected. They will attack the messenger. That’s what unbelievers do. They ridicule, they show disdain, hostility, fierceness, persecution and even martyrdom as their response to the truth.

John 15:18 on the upper room discourse, Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know it hated Me before it hated you. If you are of the world, the world would love its own but because you’re not of the world, I chose you out of the world. Because of this the world hates you.”

It’s hard, isn’t it, sometimes? When you out of love in your heart want to give the gospel to somebody in your family or some friend, or in some environment, in some class, or to some professor, or somebody at work, and they turn on you and it’s especially true if they know you well and you’re not from out of town. And that’s why Jesus responds with that axiom, that self-evident truth which He also referred to on His first visit back in Luke 4, “A prophet is not without honor except in His hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.” And you have a sort of decreasing circles. In His hometown and narrower among His relatives, and finally in His own house. If Joseph was dead, He had only one person in that house who believed in Him. Not His brothers, not His sisters...they came to believe after the resurrection, according to the book of Acts. But at this time, they don’t. He was believed to be a prophet outside of town. You can look through the New Testament, look up the word “prophet” and see how many times it’s used to refer to Christ. He is deemed a prophet, again and again, and again, and again, and again.

And I’m not going to take the time to drag you through all of that, even down in chapter 6 of Mark verse 15. There were some who were saying, “He’s a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.” And when the disciples are asked by Jesus, “Who do men say that I am?” What do they say? “Some say You’re Jeremiah, or Isaiah, or one of the prophets...one of the prophets.”

After Jesus had raised the dead son of the widow of Nain, Luke writes, “Fear gripped them all,” Luke 7:16, “and they began glorifying God saying, ‘A great prophet has risen among us and God has visited His people.’” A great prophet.

There was clear evidence that He was a prophet. Listen to Luke 24:19 where the disciples on the road to Emmaus say, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people.” People thought He was a prophet, one who spoke for God, but in His own hometown, He had no honor whatsoever as a prophet. They thought He was a man who had lost His mind. Animosity in His own family and they attack Him. And His response, “A prophet is not without honor except in His own hometown among His own relatives and even in His own household.”

Unbelief obscures the obvious. It elevates the irrelevant. And it resents the messenger. And that resentment comes from hatred of the message. It attacks the messenger. And, of course, Christ lived that out , didn’t He? They killed Him because He was the messenger of the most wonderful message ever preached.

One final characteristic of unbelief. Unbelief spurns the supernatural..unbelief spurns the supernatural. Verse 5, “He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.” He shut down the whole supernatural operation. Same thing is stated in

Matthew 13:58. What is this about? Was it a power problem? It's not a power problem, it's a purpose problem. What is the purpose of miracles? To attest to the truth. If you've rejected the truth, there's no need for the miracles.

As I said, if you had a person in your midst who could heal all your diseases, conquer death, deliver from demons, who could provide by a word a sumptuous meal for untold thousands of people, who showed compassion, who could show you the way of life and every aspect, is this the person you want to kill? But that's what it was. Give us Barabbas, give us Barabbas, give us Barabbas, kill Jesus. That is so bizarre. And this is the ultimate disaster of unbelief, it literally shuts a person off from God. He can do nothing if you don't believe.

So you're left to yourself. You are the master of your fate, in one sense. You are the captain of your soul, with the exception that you're also a servant of Satan and the kingdom of darkness and on your way to eternal hell.

How foolish is unbelief? Unbelief chooses hell. Unbelief chooses Satan. Unbelief chooses sin. Unbelief chooses to go it alone my way in the kingdom of darkness with no divine intervention. Is that really what you want? So you don't want to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, right? You don't want love, joy, peace, gentleness, faith, meekness, self-control. You don't want prayers answered. You don't want divine intervention in your life, supernatural wisdom, supernatural direction, hope, the promise of heaven, peace that passes understanding. You don't want those things, right? Well unbelief..unbelief spurns the supernatural. It shuts out God. Nazareth can be added to Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum. It's over. With a few exceptions, there must have been a few believers. And maybe He did a few miracles just to let His disciples know that He still had the power, it wasn't a power issue. It was a purpose issue.

That was enough for our Lord in Matthew 7:6. He warned, "Don't give what is holy to dogs. Don't cast your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces." The hardened unbeliever hates the truth, cuts himself off from all sacred supernatural blessing. Jesus just turns His back and leaves, never to come back again.

It reminds me of Acts 19:9 where Paul faced the same unbelief and turned and left the crowds and went and taught in the school of Tyrannus. So the power of unbelief, tremendous power. It never has enough evidence. It always does biased research. It will reject the facts because it is totally self-centered and self-protective and will shut itself off from all divine power.

I don't know about you, but I would rather live in this world and the world to come under the full influence of God, wouldn't you?...His power and His goodness. John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life, he who doesn't will not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." I'd rather

have the full blessing of God in eternal life than to have the eternal wrath. Unbelief spurns the sacred supernatural, the blessings of God. And no wonder Jesus was so amazed.

Thank You for a wonderful time this morning in worship, Lord. Thank You for reminding us of the magnificence of the heaven to come and the gathering of all the saints who will be there in Your presence, enjoy forever and ever. We thank You, Lord, for the call of the gospel, for its clarity, its truthfulness that we do not follow cunningly devised fables but are eyewitnesses of His majesty. For we have read the eyewitness accounts, we thank You for the power of Scripture to convey to us the truth concerning Christ. I pray, Lord, that anyone here who is still in unbelief will think deeply about the power that that exerts over their life in time and eternity. May they turn to Christ so that the windows of heaven can be opened and the flood of blessing poured out on that life now and forever, amen.

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