

# Familiarity Breeds Indifference

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, turning back to the portion of scripture that we read, I look in chapter 6 in the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St Mark.

And especially at the words that we have at the beginning of verse 5 in chapter 6, when he could do no mighty work there.

And in looking at these words we can first look at prejudice and its effects. And secondly, looking at power and faith and thirdly, looking at beware of indifference.

Beware of indifference. And firstly coming to prejudice and its effects. And Jesus had paid a visit to the Sometown of Nazareth before this.

He had paid a visit to Nazareth before this. And in visiting the Sometown the people were astonished at his teaching in the synagogue.

[ 1 : 31 ] But once that teaching began to challenge them, what was their desire? They wanted to throw him over the edge of a cliff.

And we have all that in Luke chapter 4, if you read it, when you go home. They wanted to throw him over a cliff.

That was their reaction. Once his teaching started challenging them, that was their response to his teaching. Now you imagine yourself.

You imagine yourself. And there is a passion. There is a passion who grew up with us.

A passion with whom we were familiar. And this passion at a certain stage in his life, declared to us.

[ 2 : 30 ] But he is establishing a new kingdom within our midst. What would be a reaction? Would we not shake your heads in disbelief and be very skeptical of his claims?

That would probably be a reaction. Now, the people of Nazareth, that might have been the case in connection with Jesus' first visit.

But they had no such excuse in relation to his second visit. Because by now this name and fame had spread abroad throughout the land.

And there would have been many present at this second visit that would have heard. And many of them would have seen evidences of his greatness and of his supremacy.

So how did they react to this second visit? Well, we have it in verse 2. They started questioning amongst themselves, where did this man get these things?

[ 4 : 08 ] What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Now one would think that there are people who were touched by such awesome amazement.

That they would fall at the feet of the person who was the source of that amazement. But that is not the case.

That is not the case as we find it here. They were offended in him. Or to translate the Greek verb, they were scandalised in him.

And the question is, why is this so? Why is this so? Well, it was because of prejudice. You see, shud salir to the Gospel.

And it hardened self-hearts to the truth of the Gospel. And this is what it did to the people of Nazareth. It was a prejudice born of nearness and familiarity.

[ 5 : 24 ] Just listen to what they are saying. Is this not the carpenter? Do we not know his mother and father? Do we not know his brothers and sisters? Are they still not in our midst?

It was a prejudice born of nearness and familiarity. And Jesus says to them, a prophet, he says, is not without honour, except in his own country.

Amongst his own relatives, in his own household. We are often blind to the worth of the near and the familiar.

You and I have great difficulty in admitting the greatness of one whom circumstances marks out as a recall, a passion who grew up with us.

We have great difficulty in admitting that person's greatness. Very often we become that person's fictitious critic.

[ 6 : 46 ] The eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth. Proverbs chapter 17, verse 24. The eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth.

It is a widespread folly amongst humanity. We see more worth in the things that are far off than we do in the things that are near.

Distance. Distance for many of us magnifies importance. Magnifies importance. And that's why the teacher in Proverbs says, the eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth.

It is amazing, isn't it? That we see far more worth in the things that are far off than we do in the things that are near.

Distance magnifies for many of us importance. And it is so in the case of Jesus Christ still, the sin of the Nazarenes is repeated by multitudes in our own day and age.

[ 8 : 15 ] Did you ever wonder? Did you ever wonder? At the fact that not many, that not many are won over by the wholesomeness of Jesus and the wholesomeness of his teaching.

That many are now touched by the appeals of such a glorious gospel. And when you put the question, why is that so?

It is because of this fact that familiarity breeds content. Although content is too strong a word to use in this case in relation to this passage, I don't think many of us in here today or within the community itself would say that they hold Jesus in contempt.

No, they don't. But the more accurate word that we can use is that familiarity breeds indifference.

That familiarity breeds indifference, which brings us to the second thing that we have here and that is power and faith.

Did you ever stand back and ask yourself the question? Why it is so that Louis's audiences and mainland audiences are not moved by the story of the cross of Christ?

[ 9 : 59 ] Why it melts the heart of a poor pig and in China to Teosh? Did you ever ask yourself the question?

Why there are so many within our islands and our nations that remain indifferent to the Bible?

While men and women in China, Vietnam, South Africa, grieve the Bible with joy and look upon it as being the very Word of God.

What is the reason behind this? Well, the reason is very plain. It's very simple, very plain. Familiarity breeds indifference.

We know Jesus. We are familiar with Jesus. We are familiar with His words. We are familiar with His wisdom. We are familiar with His mighty works.

[ 11 : 21 ] So familiar that we have ceased to wonder at them. We have ceased to wonder at these mighty works.

Well, if that was the case then we ought to be praying to God that He would preserve us from the detonating effect of our familiarity and routine.

Some of us, some amongst us, will probably read that Bible morning and evening, but it's only words.

They are so familiar with it. But to them it is only a matter of routine doing what they are doing.

So we should pray to God to be preserved from the detonating effect of familiarity and routine. The Holy Spirit alone can keep us sensitive to the grace of Jesus and the wonder of the Gospel.

[ 12 : 41 ] And when you and I lose our sense of wonder, when we lose our sense of wonder, there is always the danger that we will fall into the sin of the Nazarenes here.

When we count the blood of the whole, we count the blood of the covenant as beinian and holy thing because that is exactly what they were doing.

They were seeing no value whatsoever in Jesus. Is this not the carpenter?

Are we not familiar with him, with his parents, with his brothers, with his sister? So, as such mighty works done by the hands of this man whom we know, who grew up with us, who grew up with us, they were seeing no value whatsoever.

In this passion, the only passion, who could save them from the sin that they were giving place to within their lives.

[ 13 : 55 ] The Nazarenes were offended in him. They were offended in Jesus and it led to this. They are being offended in him, led to this, that he could do no mighty works in his own hometown. We have read the portion of scripture that we read, we have read about this woman who touched his garments and was made whole.

We have read about Jesus' daughter whom he raised from the dead. And at the beginning of chapter 5, we have read that portion, we would have read about a man who was possessed by a legion of demons and he was restored to sanity and health.

And then if we had gone to the end of chapter 4, we would have found that Jesus calmed the storm simply by adhering a word.

And yet, here he is in his hometown and he can do no mighty works. He can do no mighty works.

[ 15 : 09 ] And canot, canot is a startling word when it is applied to the one who created the words to the word of his power.

Canot is a startling word. Do we understand by this canot that the power of Jesus was for a moment that these powers for a moment had deserted him?

Well, no, no. This canot was not the result of a physical restraint being put upon the power of Jesus Christ.

Every mighty work that you and I read about in the Gospels, where all are result of the fulfilment of two conditions, there is first the divine power of the Christ, and in the second place, there is the faith of the receiver of the blessing.

And the need for that faith is brought more clearly before us in the healing of the demonic boy, the healing of the demonic son at the foot of the mount of the configuration, at the foot of the holy mount which we read about in chapter 9 in this Gospel itself, the Gospel of Mapp.

[ 16 : 49 ] And you see this demand for the presence of faith was more clearly seen when we read that account of his miracle in the healing of the demonic boy.

If you can't do anything for us, have compassion on us and help us, that was the cry of the troubled father. However, there was more needed than simply the power of Jesus.

The miracle was also dependent upon the faith of the Father. All things are possible to the one who believes Jesus said to the Father.

And what was the Father's answer? I believe, help my unbelief, help my unbelief.

He was aware that even though he believed that there was this mixture of unbelief with, along with his faith, which brings us to the third thing that we have here, beware of familiarity.

[ 18 : 05 ] So we've got to put the question, is this condition of faith necessary, needful, if our passion is going to be converted?

Well, if we go back to some of the mighty works that we have just mentioned, the woman with the usual blood, when she came forward to identify herself that she was the one who touched his garment, what was Jesus' answer to her?

Daughter, your faith has healed you. Your faith has made you whole. Then we have the leper who comes to Jesus.

And the leper says to Jesus, if it is so, if you so will, he said, you can make me clean. These were the words of faith. Blind partamayas, son of David and Mashi Amin, these were the words of faith.

Then you have the rebel on the cross. Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom, again the words of faith. But then we have the man who was possessed by a legion of demons.

[ 19 : 24 ] And it's very difficult for us to see evidences of faith in his life. And if we go to the person whom Jesus healed, who was at the pool of Bethesda in John 5, and Jesus said to him, do you want to be met old? Do you want to be healed?

All he was doing was grumbling, that he had nobody to lure him into the pool when the engine stood the water for the pool. There's very little evidence there that there was faith present.

But what we always must remember is Paul's answer to the Philippian jailer. What must I do when the Philippian jailer put the question, what must I do to be saved?

Paul's answer was, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. And when we look at that answer, very often a reaction is, there must be more than that to it.

There must be more, that's too simple. But that is the simplicity of the gospel. That is the simplicity of the gospel. There isn't more than that to it.

[ 20 : 47 ] If I am going to be saved or if you are going to be saved, it's all that is needful. Faith in God's Son Jesus Christ.

But what he is talking about here, in this passage, when he is talking about unbelief, when he is talking about the need for faith, when he talks about unbelief, he is talking about the need for faith, he is talking about a communal faith.

Faith in the community, faith within the community. He wasn't finding anything that would remotely resemble faith in a certain time.

It was a hometown that was totally under the dominion of unbelief, even amongst his own family. Even amongst his own family. Not only amongst the Nazarenes themselves, but amongst his own family. He was finding very little evidences of faith.

[ 22 : 11 ] And I am not saying that we are in a community here for black faith. But what I am trying to point out is the need, if Christ is going to work in any community, be it Carlyle or any other community, there is this need for faith.

And if Jesus did his mighty works within any community, irrespective of this faith, then these works would cease to be the works of salvation.

They could be classed as magic. And the people would be truthful in saying that he was doing these mighty works through the power of Bielzeb, the Prince of Darkness because magic belongs to the realm of darkness.

Divine blessing within any community is conditioned by the presence of faith.

The exercise of Christ's power within any community is dependent upon the degree of faith within that community.

[ 23 : 33 ] And when I say the degree of faith, I do not mean strong faith or weak faith. It does not matter whether that faith is strong or weak as long as it is present there.

But there is such a thing as an acquiescent faith, or as we call it in the Gaelic credo rhonto. The devils believe and tremble.

But what needs to be present within any community before Christ can do any mighty works within that community is a belief in himself as the savior of sinners.

The promise of Jesus is, whatsoever we ask, as long as we believe in, then we shall receive whatever we ask for in prayer, as long as that is in accordance with the will of God.

So, one belief within our community places a restraint on the exercise of Christ's power.

[ 24 : 50 ] He could there do no mighty works. He could there do no mighty works. So, I'll take it down to the level of the individual.

We leave the community. I'll take it down to the level of the individual. And I'll ask you, is this the way things are with you on this morning? Are you so familiar with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? So familiar with His words, so familiar with His works, that that Gospel has ceased to have any impact whatsoever upon your life.

And maybe you can look back here and you can remember when it was bringing you to tears. But it's no longer doing that.

Because familiarity breeds indifference. There is no seed of belief growing there at all.

[ 26 : 02 ] And you might say to me, well, if I only could see a miracle or two taking place in my own day and age, then I would believe.

But what you've got to remember is this. That there are many present when Christ was doing these miracles and many of them never came to believe in Him.

Many of them never came to believe in Him. And it's not the passion who has converted, the passion whom you see now following Jesus Christ, it's that passion not a living, walking, talking miracle of the grace of God.

Well, He or she is. He or she is. But you are failing to recognize it as being so.

And you see you are setting conditions before God. And these very conditions are preventing you.

[ 27 : 19 ] From the very condition that God himself is demanding of you. And that is to believe in His Son Jesus Christ.

When we set conditions before God, they always prevent us. From reaching to the condition, the one condition that He has demanded of us, to believe in His Son Jesus Christ.

As a church, we pray continually for revival. We cry out to God, is it not high time for you to work?

Why is it not working? Well, we can be sure of one thing. That if there is any barrier preventing God from working in our midst, it is not this.

And that is that His arm has been shortened that He cannot save any longer. His arm has not been shortened. Why is He not working within our midst?

[ 28 : 27 ] Is it not because the belief that He is looking for is lacking in us? It is lacking in us. You see, when faith and expectation come together in the life of the believer, that faith leading to us expecting God to do great things, then we will never find Christ failing us.

And when the conditions are fulfilled on my side and on your side, we will never find Christ wanting. We will never find Christ wanting.

Let not your familiarity with the Gospel of Jesus Christ lead your heart to become indifferent to that Gospel, to that Gospel.

Unbelief to this day bears the same fruit. It could dare to know mighty works.

Unbelief will never lead to a spiritual awakening in my life or your life.

[ 29 : 55 ] Unbelief will never lead to a saving transformation in my life or your life.

Without faith in Jesus Christ, there will be no improvement in my life or your life that will benefit us in the present.

No improvement that will prepare us for the eternity that is to come. And let me say this, you will find much lacking in me and in all those who confess Jesus Christ, but you will find no imperfections in Him.

So let not your familiarity with the Gospel lead you to this indifference that will lead you in the end to be offended in Him as the Nazarenes were, as those in Azeroth were.

And let it not be said of you as a passion. It could dare to know mighty work.

[ 31 : 23 ] May He bless to us these few thoughts. Let it bring. O Lord, that we would be thankful for your grace and for your mercy that keeps your people sensitive to the wonder of your workings.

And Lord, that you would bless this congregation, this community and those who are within it and that you would sustain the Gospel witness within their midst.

There too, these ends of the generation that is growing up after us will even experience greater blessings than we ever experienced.

Lord, that we would remember our need of faith, our need to believe and to the saving of our souls.

And Lord, that we would be thankful for the beauty of the simplicity of the Gospel that you are placed in our possession and help us to respond to it in a saving way.

[ 32 : 42 ] Forgive us for our sins, know that we ask that we would do so in Christ's name and for the safety of men.