

Sermon Mark 6 1 13 6th S af Pent S B

Sermon: 6th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Mark 6:1-13 (vv. 6,7)

Theme: Frustration and hope

Goal: In spite of the Gospel's rejection, Jesus carries on His mission through the church.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: We preached some weeks ago about Jesus' family and how it was difficult for them to believe in Him as the Messiah. Even His brothers didn't believe in Him until He appeared resurrected to the disciples and to one of His brothers, to James.

I – Jesus preached in His home-town

Now we have Jesus returning to His home town, Nazareth, where He had grown up with His parents, siblings and friends. It was at the beginning of His ministry and He had already been baptized and had begun His public ministry, preaching and performing several miracles in other towns. Now it's time to go back to His home-town and to share the good news with His friends and to help them in their diseases as He was doing at other places. His disciples went with Him and He was seen as a Master, followed by several disciples. He was invited to preach in the synagogue He used to attend during all His life till He was around 30 years old. He was yet not a mere listener anymore, but He was the preacher this day.

The first reaction of the people was of amazement. They couldn't believe that the carpenter, who used to work with His father Joseph, was now a teacher. Jesus didn't go to any special school, but had the average education level that His friends and brothers had. “What's this wisdom that has been given Him?” was the question of the listeners.

But after the first reaction, critics and rejection appeared. They took offense at Him, and Jesus couldn't do many miracles there because of their lack of faith. - For them Jesus was nothing but an ordinary man,

“the man of Nazareth”, one among many; as lot of people still believe it in our society. They cannot accept Him as the Son of God and the Savior, but only as a good man, one more among Moses, Buda, Mohamed, Martin Luther King and other prominent people of the history.

I have a vivid memory of the first time when I preached in my home city, where I was born and where my father was pastor. It was not easy for me to have my parents, my siblings and my friends sitting in the pews. I was not rejected, but I didn't feel myself comfortable there. - There is even a funny story in my ministry: Just before I came to Africa, I preached in one of the rural congregations outside my home city. One of the elderly came after the service and said to me: I heard you preach when you were a student; but you have improved a lot!!!!

The Gospel is not a matter of the person or of the preacher; it's a matter of God, it's the Word of God. It has to be accepted regardless of the preacher, if he is young or old, if he is a good preacher or if he lacks good communication skills. Of course, the preacher has to be faithful to God and to the Gospel, and has to preach the truth and do the best he is able. Jesus said to His disciples: “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me” (Luke 10:16). - In the case of the audience in the synagogue of Nazareth, they had the Living Gospel among them. And they didn't recognize the opportunity they had on hand. (Luke 19:44)

The rejection Jesus suffered in His home town was a foretaste of Jesus' final rejection on the cross. His own people didn't believed in Him and put Him to death. John wrote at the beginning of his Gospel about Jesus' rejection (1:10-11): “He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.” (ABC 1181).

The story has nothing new. It was so in the Old Testament, as we heard in the reading from the prophet Ezekiel 2; and it is so

nowadays. Few accept Jesus and His word, few believe in Him. The number of unbelievers is growing and the big churches that the forefathers built in the past to worship God are empty now and are like monuments of a past history, just a museum. We saw it again while in Germany two weeks ago. Even some church-going Christians reserve themselves the right to accept only what they like and what they understand, rejecting most of the Bible truths. And several Christian churches, even some Lutherans, are preaching according to the current patterns of live, and not according to the truth of the Gospel.

The prophet Ezekiel, as we heard in the OT reading, received a hard task to warn the people of his time about their unfaithfulness and stubbornness, calling them to repentance, to faith, and to the true way. His preaching is still valid nowadays. –Let us hope that Jesus doesn't become amazed at our lack of faith, as He did in His home town. We have to examine our attitudes and our conscience every day, coming back to God's mercy in Jesus, taking refuge in Him, the only one who can give us security, forgiveness and eternal love.

II – Jesus preached in the villages around

Jesus didn't give up His ministry because of the rejection and unbelief He suffered in Nazareth. “Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to Him. He sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits”, says our text.

It is mentioned several times that Jesus gave the disciples authority over the evil spirits. It bothered me for a long time. Do we still have authority over the evil spirits?

The first image that appears in our mind is of a demon possessed man, violent and crying loud against Jesus, as sometimes the Bible describes the confrontation between the devil and Jesus. But it was and it is not always that way. If we consider that who is not with Jesus is against Jesus (as He Himself said in Mark 9: 40), this means that who is not a follower of Jesus is a follower of the devil. More: When we realize that we and our children are born in sin and are not

children of God until we are baptized, this means that a new born child belongs to the devil! What is the task of the church? To preach the Gospel of Jesus and to baptize, to take people away from Satan and to bring them to Jesus. This is the power the church still has over the evil spirits, the power of the Gospel, the Word of Jesus! When we are tempted, it doesn't come from God. And we have in the Bible and through prayer the weapons to fight against the evil spirits.

All the work of the Christian church is against the power of the darkness and is to shine the light of Jesus. This was the task Jesus gave to the disciples as He sent them two by two just after He had been rejected in Nazareth; it was the task He gave to the disciples after His resurrection; and this is the task of the church till the end of the ages. Jesus doesn't give up when He is rejected at one place; He goes to another one. If one people don't want to believe in Him, He goes to other people.

I always remember Luther, when he warned the people of his time: The Jews had the Gospel; they were unfaithful to it and they lost it. We have the Gospel now; take care and be faithful, not to lose it!

Conclusion: Jesus asks in Luke 18:8: “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” So many are rejecting Him. But He always has two handfuls of faithful people. May He preserve us all in His grace in the true faith and in a godly life according to His will until He comes again. May He give us strength to overcome the evil spirits and the temptations which try to force us away from Christ. May He give us strength to share His love and His hope with others. He does His work and wants to save all of us. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle

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