

The people reject Christ

In our Gospel Lesson for today, we see that Mark does not dwell on the message Jesus proclaimed but on the hostile reaction of Jesus' hearers. Mark's account is almost identical to that of Matthew. Luke tells us in some detail what Jesus preached in the synagogue that Sabbath when He pointed to Himself as the promised Saviour.

Accompanied by His disciples, Jesus came to His hometown Nazareth as a rabbi, a teacher. It was not a family visit. This synagogue Jesus had attended as a boy, a teenager, and a young man. The worshippers that day were all people who knew Him well. He had now come to share the gospel with them, but they were not ready to receive Him as the One who embodied the gospel. In a certain sense this incident was important training for the disciples, who shortly would be proclaiming the gospel themselves and also facing rebuffs. They could say, "They did the same to our Master."

The synagogue audience was amazed at Jesus' teaching and at His miracles of which they had heard. In their eyes He was no more than a carpenter, a son of Mary, one who had four brothers, and whose sisters were married and living in Nazareth. He was one of them, just an ordinary fellow who once had made His living with His hands. How could He claim to be a prophet and the fulfillment of Scripture? It was more than they could stomach. They rejected His claim and then in their wrath attempted to cast Him off the cliff at the edge of town (see Luke 4:28–30). Since the day ended with an attempt on Jesus' life, the healings mentioned in verse 5 undoubtedly were performed before the Sabbath synagogue service, perhaps on Friday. But even then there were only a few who brought their sick to Him. Apathy and unbelief filled the whole town. Since these were people who had studied the Old Testament in the synagogue, even as Jesus had when living among them, it is not surprising that our Lord "was amazed at their unbelief." Knowing the Scriptures, they were without excuse in refusing to acknowledge Him as God's prophet and their Saviour.

Before leaving this dark day in the life of our Lord, we must call attention to a few other facts that Mark has brought to our attention. Four of Jesus' brothers were mentioned as well as His sisters. Who were they? There is no reason to believe they were anything but children of Mary and Joseph born after the virgin birth of Jesus. In contrast to the sisters, the brothers seemed to be no longer living in Nazareth. In Mark we have met them once before in Capernaum (3:31–35), where Jesus had moved His family after the wedding in Cana of Galilee. It was not until after the resurrection of Jesus that His brothers became believers.

What happened to Christ in Nazareth can also happen to us. Just because we are followers of the Lord does not guarantee that all our relatives, neighbours, acquaintances, or even our children will welcome the gospel message. At times some of us stand alone, ridiculed and mocked by those who know us best. But it is easier to bear when we realise that Jesus also had to bear the same burden.