

A Sermon for DaySpring Baptist Church

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“The Composite One”

Mark 6: 1-6

July 9, 2006

At the CBF I heard someone remind a group of Baptist that whenever the gospel is preached, it always demands a response. We should be quick to say that it's not just **“every sermon that is preached demands a response”**... ‘lest you want to count sleeping as a response... or been-there-done-that boredom... or manipulated “amens.” As the saying goes... again... it's **“when the gospel is preached...”** folks are going to respond.

And that is certainly true in the four biblical gospels. Jesus goes preaching and everywhere he goes and every time he opens his mouth, folks respond... And he gets all sorts of responses, right? Everything from **“let's crown this guy king”** to **“let's crucify him and do it today.”**

There's always a response...

Some of them say, **“Wow, a new teaching... and he says it with such authority.”**

Some like what he's saying so much, they can't get enough of it and listen to him every chance they get. They're always a part of that multitude.

His family hears him and thinks he's nuts...

not playing with a full deck.

Some religious leaders think he's possessed.

And a few... give up everything just to follow him.

Jesus is a living, breathing... walking, talking sermon... and everyone's responding. No one's dozing off on him and no one's bored... there's always a response.

In today's gospel reading we have another response. Jesus and company have been out and about, preaching and teaching and healing... and like a good son, he goes home to see Mama... he goes home to Nazareth.

Wonder how long he's actually been gone? We don't know, really. Wonder how long it's been since he's seen his friends and neighbors? Is he feeling what you might feel if you were heading to your high school reunion? I wonder...

Does he have that “I'm home” feeling in his heart when he walks into town? **“Finally back with what's familiar...”**

You know how that is, when you've been away. Just seeing the things you know... places... seems to matter.

We moved to Abilene back in '93 and seemed like another planet from Houston where we'd spent our young adult years and where the kids were born. I remember when we went back after 6 months, watching Brandt and Abby respond to everything they saw...

“Look, it's Randall's”

“And there's the park and playground.”

And joy of all joys, our Taco Bell.”

Any of that going on for Jesus? Finally, he's got some home field advantage. And he can't wait, of course, for the Sabbath to arrive. The officials there had, I'm sure, gotten word to him that they'd want him to say a few words... give a little lesson.

So, when the day came, he made his way to the Synagogue... and perhaps it was his first time to be invited to the seat of honor, up front where the teacher would teach.

And he sat and he taught... and Mark says, **“Many were amazed.”** They responded.

And do notice the things they say, **“Where did this man get these things... what’s this wisdom that has been given him?”**

I think their initial response is very telling. They’re amazed... **“This is different... it’s not the same ole’ Sabbath song and dance... where’d he get this stuff.”**

These lines, the initial amazed responses... are, I think, a clue to a couple of things about Jesus’ life. First of all, he was very normal. In other words, while he seems to have been unusually curious, spiritually speaking, growing up in Nazareth,

he wasn’t walking around quoting proverbs
and helping old ladies cross the street all day
and occasionally healing a buddy who stumped his toe
and always wearing a halo.

He’s a normal kid... Folks aren’t saying, **“You know, he just might be The One. Have you noticed how everyone is always going to him for advice? And how the clouds just seem to part when he’s around. Why do birds suddenly appear, every time he walks near? And he’s such a nice boy, never gets grumpy and they say when he was a baby, no crying he made.”**

No... When Jesus was a baby, he cried...

When Jesus is ten he’s shooting spit wads like every other ten year old. And when he’s 14, he’s flirting with girls... and probably trying to get out of extra chores in dad’s shop. When he’s 17, he’s wrestling with what he’s going to do when he grows up.

He’s normal... that’s why folks listening are so stunned that they’re hearing something so profound from him.

I think that’s the first thing their amazement tells us. The second thing is that Jesus was a wisdom teacher. He was a “moshlim,” a master of wisdom, this was the first title he was given by his followers (Bourgeault, 8). He taught using “mashal,” parables and wisdom sayings.

Which means, he was taught... Jesus didn’t get this by Divine download. This isn’t the Matrix, it’s the biblical story of the incarnation and Jesus gets no leg up on us. God doesn’t hook him up with a parable program so that now he’s just spouting out stories and amazing everyone.

Jesus was a Moshim... a teacher of wisdom... and there is a certain way that wisdom must be taught.

It takes time and a teacher...

And a community, fellow pilgrims...

And practice, practice, practice...

“Where did this guy get this wisdom?” He got it the “old fashioned way.” He learned it.

Yes, he certainly had a spiritual capacity. And yes, God was with him in an historically unique way, but spiritual wisdom is “process specific.” It must be lived into and involves intentional work and submission and direction and struggle and pain... and lots of you in this room know this to be true.

When Jesus emerges as a teacher... he has struggle and grown, how does Luke say it, **“in wisdom and stature in favor with God and man...”** He’s been taught and he has a great deal to say and he says it in a wisdom way.

“A certain man had two sons...”

“The Kingdom is like someone sowing seed.”

“It’s like yeast in the dough... treasure in a field.”

“Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Do not judge or you shall be judged...”

“Unless you become like a child...”

“Unless you die... you can’t live.”

“You have heard it said... but I say to you.”

This is different.

And not just the words... Jesus, as a mature spiritual being, was like spiritual kindling. So open to the Spirit, so centered, such a channel... that when he spoke he spoke from his depth to depth... to the deepest part of a person. It was a different experience... one heart to another and the connection, at least for some who were ready, was immediate.

They responded. Many are leaning forward. Before they've had a chance to think about it, they're just astounded and really into it but then... their egos caught up. That small judging, critiquing, comparing part of themselves... got engaged, it always does. We never leave home without it.

They took their egos to church, which is never a good idea. You should always leave that part of yourself in the car... because you can't judge worship and worship at the same time (just a little reminder to us all).

At first they were leaning forward but then they caught themselves. Someone saw Jesus' brother James sitting next to him and thought, **"Man, I just went fishing with that guy last week."** Someone else is curbing her enthusiasm with the thought... **"His little sister was my babysitter."** **"Who does he think he is?"**

And, like it always does, negative thinking spreads like wild fire... And in just a few minutes the wonderful energy in the room starts changing and no one's leaning forward anymore... they aren't receiving anymore... they're closing off... shutting down.

"I used to play stick ball with that guy."

"Man, we vacationed in Jerusalem with his family every year at Passover."

"My mom goes to the well every morning with his mom."

"One of his brothers owes me ten bucks."

"The table in our kitchen says, "Ma yow tin fy, Joseph, ket tow Nazareth." (That's Aramaic for "Handcrafted by Joseph of Nazareth")

And just like that, the spiritual encounter that was happening in the synagogue that morning was over. **"They took offense at him... who does he think he is?"**

And part of their offense is just ole' fashioned jealousy, it seems. It's just our human narcissistic tendency... **"If someone's going to be better than me, I at least don't want them to be from Nazareth... Maybe someone from Jerusalem or from Jericho... but not from my hometown. If anything good ever comes out of Nazareth, I want it to be me."** There was just some pettiness in the room and in their hearts, don't you think? That's part of it.

But... I think not the main part, not the main cause of their offense. Their reaction is telling us about something much more important and significant. And their reaction is not too very far from ours... especially when we don't get the incarnation.

Their reaction is telling us something very important about what they think of themselves and about what it means to be human. And it's also telling us also about where and how they think God works... and **"surely it can't be in the likes of us."**

"Not here... not in something so familiar... so earthy."

"I used to make spit balls with that guy."

"I had a crush on that guy."

"He and I made a pilgrimage once."

"God can't be that present in someone like me."

It was too much for them to take, all that holiness in someone so human. **"I changed his swaddling, for goodness sakes. What's he doing talking that way?"**

They couldn't handle his humanity... and most Christians I know, can't either. Can you? You sure? Imagine Jesus... can you picture him? Every bodily function you have... can you go there? Jesus blowing his nose???? Jesus.....

It's not so easy is it... letting the holy be in the human.

We say it... profess and confess it... **"he's human and divine"** but most of us have our fingers crossed... at least unconsciously.

We picture him haloed... with a haloed life, a Renaissance painted life... So, our problem is the same as theirs... we just can't get heaven and earth together quite like that... an average stickball player and the Source of all Being... in the same skin... we just can't do it.

But that's the gospel. God and man, heaven and earth, infinite and finite, united in Jesus. It was scandalous. The very idea... but... that's the gospel. That's the faith we've been given.

The early church Fathers went on and on talking about the **"mingling of the divine and human in Jesus."** (Gregory of Nyssa) This was a new way of being... in what they called "a theandric" mode. God-man, a divine-human mystery... revealing to us all who God is and who we can become.

The earliest teachers in the church said that Jesus was the prototype... he was the template, the archetype. It wasn't just that the divine and the human had united in Jesus but that they could be united in us... in each of us. Heaven and earth intersect in you... too.

Is that shocking?

Does that sound scandalous?

It did to first century ears.

God in a guy, whose sister they knew, whose dad made their whatnot shelf. The scandal of the particular.

And given what you know of you... you're life... is it shocking at all? You... an average Josephine... and the Source of all Being... commingled. Designed to be what Jesus was... is.

Maybe if it isn't shocking and a bit scandalous we haven't gotten it? And if we haven't gotten it yet, we can't know who we really are as human beings. What we know of Christ reveals to us who we really are in our essence.

You are a composite being... just like Jesus is. We are of flesh and of the Spirit... Genesis Two, remember? Molded clay and the very breath of God... heaven and earth.

It's the truth... and the heart of the Christian faith. God is in you. Augustine said that God is nearer to you than you are to yourself... at the core of who you really are... know it or not, live like it or not. That's why he prayed, **"Lord, may I know myself in order that I might know you."** (The Confessions)

The incarnation is a hallowing of the normal. Everything's holy now... Here we are in what the church has come to call "Ordinary Time." Only after six months of re-living the incarnation, it's like the church is winking at us and saying... **"Yes it is ordinary but no, not really... nothing is really ordinary... not anymore."** "Henceforward," as Karl Rahner said around Vatican II, "The incarnation says God is exactly where we are and only there is he to be found."

God is at the heart of who you are, your innermost reality. And God is in the very middle of your life. Your ordinary, stick-ball playing, table-making, classroom-teaching, garden-planting, dish-washing, test-taking, diaper-changing, deal-making... holy life.

And... is that not amazing? That's the gospel... how will you respond?