

“The Problem of Familiarity”
(Mark 6:1-6)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we considered the account of Jairus’ daughter.
 - a. How Jairus in faith sought Jesus to heal her.
 - b. How Jesus strengthened his faith when she died.
 - c. And how the Lord sovereignly raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead.

2. There are several things here that have to do with evangelism that we don’t want to forget.
 - a. That those we minister to are dead and completely unable to do anything to save themselves.
 - (i) Generally speaking, they’re not going to seek the Lord.
 - (ii) And so we need to seek for them – we need to bring the Gospel to them, to witness to and pray for them.
 - (iii) We need to do for them what they would never do for themselves.

 - b. If we do, three things could happen:
 - (i) The Lord could immediately and sovereignly raise them to life.
 - (ii) The Lord could awaken them, so that they begin to seek Him on their own.
 - (iii) Or the Lord could leave them in their spiritual sleep – in which case we need to continue to seek for them.
 - (iv) Parents, this is what you must do for your children that seem to be uninterested – you must try to get them concerned about their own salvation before they leave your home and go out into the world where it may be much less likely to happen.

B. Preview.

1. This morning, we’re going to look at one of the obstacles that stands in the way of your reaching those who are especially close to you: the problem of familiarity.
 - a. We see Jesus now leave the region of Galilee and return to His hometown of Nazareth.
 - (i) Nazareth is where both Joseph and Mary lived before they made the trip to Bethlehem.
 - (ii) This is where Joseph and Mary settled when Jesus was quite young.
 - (a) They stayed in Bethlehem until He was about two.
 - (b) When Herod tried to kill Jesus, they fled to Egypt and stayed there until Herod died.
 - (c) Then they moved back to Nazareth.

- (iii) This is where they raised Jesus.
 - (a) This is where He grew up.
 - (b) This is where He went to synagogue.
 - (c) This is where He worked as a carpenter.
 - (d) This is where He lived until He began His ministry at about age 30.
 - b. Not much time had passed since He left Nazareth and so these people were very familiar with Him.
 - (i) When the Sabbath came, Jesus went to the synagogue as any faithful Jew would do in obedience to the commandment.
 - (ii) Since He was a teacher, the head of the synagogue allowed Him to teach.
 - (a) Apparently, the people who knew Him best had never heard Him teach, and they were shocked.
 - (b) Where did He get this wisdom?
 - (iii) As He taught, He also performed miracles to authenticate His message. But how was He now able to do these things?
 - (iv) Wasn't this Jesus, the carpenter?
 - (a) Wasn't this Mary's Son?
 - (b) Weren't His brothers James, Joses, Judas and Simon?
 - (c) Weren't His sisters with them?
 - (v) The point is they knew Him and His family very well; so how could He be someone special?
 - c. What was their problem? They were too familiar with Him.
 - (i) Familiarity breeds contempt – it's hard to believe that someone we know well can be capable of great things.
 - (ii) Apparently, this is true no matter how holy or perfect a person may be.
 - (iii) Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household."
 - (iv) As a result, He wasn't able to do much for them, either by way of miracle or teaching – they just couldn't believe.
2. There are several obstacles we need to face in seeking to reach the lost:
- a. Their spiritual condition.
 - (i) They are dead in their sin – they hate the holiness of God.
 - (ii) Their decidedly anti-Christian view – they chose to believe anything but the truth.
 - (iii) Their antagonistic stance towards the Gospel and those who would bring it to them.
 - b. Our own weaknesses.
 - (i) The fact that we don't know the Bible as well as we should.
 - (ii) That we lack the skill to communicate it.
 - (iii) Our fear of being thought less of or of being thought a fool.

- c. Here is one further obstacle: the problem of familiarity.
 - (i) Jesus faced it in His own hometown, with His own people.
 - (ii) We'll face it as well with those who know us the best.
- d. Let's consider two things:
 - (i) First, that Jesus had to face this problem.
 - (ii) Second, that we will have to face it as well.

II. Sermon.

A. First Jesus had to face this particular problem.

1. You might think He would be immune.
 - a. After all, He was perfect in every way.
 - (i) He had grown up without sin.
 - (ii) He always did and said the right thing, never giving unnecessary offense.
 - (iii) He had conducted His carpentry business perfectly – which He would have been engaged in – at one level or another – for over twenty years.
 - (iv) He never cheated, lied, stole; He had the best work ethic and always did the very best job He possibly could.
 - (v) Everyone would have been able to attest to His impeccable character.
 - b. Now that He was teaching, He spoke with wisdom and in a way that none of His contemporaries, especially His adversaries, could match.
 - c. And, not only did He have a reputation to perform miracles, they saw them for themselves.
2. And yet, they could not believe Him.
 - a. They couldn't because they knew Him too well.
 - (i) The fact that He grew up among them; that His family was with them; that He had worked in their community – in their minds all this meant there was no possibility that He could be anyone special.
 - (ii) They would have been much more likely to accept Him if He had been a complete stranger.
 - b. This wasn't a fault in Him – He was perfect.
 - (i) It's just inevitable.
 - (ii) "Familiarity breeds contempt."

B. This is something you must face as well as you evangelize, especially among those you want to reach the most.

1. Usually, these are the ones you know – and who know you – the best.
 - a. Your dad and mom, brothers and sisters, cousins.
 - b. Your children.
 - c. The friends you grew up with and have known for so many years.
 - d. Your neighbors.
 - e. The people you work with.

2. From what we see here, the fact that they know you works against you in some way.
 - a. Of course, there's kind of a catch 22 here.
 - (i) Typically, you need to get to know the people you evangelize before you can effectively share the Gospel with them.
 - (ii) But there is a point where it begins to work against you – when you become too familiar to them.
 - b. This is something parents have to face with their children.
 - (i) When they're very young, they'll listen to everything you have to say.
 - (ii) But as they get older – especially when they're in their teens – their minds begin to develop more; they begin to think they know more than they do – particularly more than you – they become less apt to listen and more difficult to convince.
 - (iii) They seem much more likely to listen and respond to a friend who tells them the same thing you've told them hundreds if not thousands of times.
3. This obstacle of familiarity is real – so what can you do about? You need to make sure you respond to it as Jesus did.
 - a. Even though most of them didn't believe and didn't want to listen, He didn't let that stop Him from doing what was right – He still ministered the Gospel to them.
 - b. There are many other obstacles as well – should you let them stand in your way?
 - c. If you do, you'll never advance the Gospel.
4. Realize that there are encouragements here as well.
 - a. First, even though Jesus wasn't able to do much, He was still able to do something.
 - (i) He was able to heal a few sick people – there were those who received His ministry.
 - (ii) Do what you can, knowing the Lord can and will work through you – keep witnessing to and praying for them.
 - b. Second, realize that sometimes familiarity can work in your favor.
 - (i) Especially if the Lord saved you from a particularly dark background.
 - (ii) Those who knew you best from before will be more apt to listen to you.
 - c. Third, remember that there are many more people who don't know you than do.
 - (i) You're a stranger to many, and though there are some who might have a difficult time listening to you, there are many more who won't have that problem because they don't know you as well.

- (ii) Unfamiliarity can also work in your favor.
 - (iii) Let's be encouraged this morning not to let anything stand in our way.
 - (iv) We should never give up trying as long as there is any possibility that those we minister to might be saved.
 - (v) May the Lord give us such a heart.
5. Just a warning for those of you who don't know Jesus.
- a. Don't let what you know of Jesus cause you to lose respect for Him.
 - b. Don't let your familiarity with those who bring the Gospel to you keep you from listening. Amen.

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