

Home Study

Mark's Epiphany



THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021

INTRODUCTION

This past week we have seen Jesus and the disciples on a boat, and Jesus showing his power over nature, by calming the storm. We saw Jesus interacting with a demon-possessed man, and showing his power over demons. We also saw the Lord demonstrate his power over disease, and death itself, as two people display complete dependence and confidence in Jesus. Today we see Jesus return home, where his power is much harder to see.

TODAY'S READING

Read in your Bible Mark 6:1-6. As you read, try to imagine yourself in Jesus' home town. Make note of anything that especially catches your attention in the story, or surprises you.

Remember that much of Jesus' childhood is not recorded in the Bible. Many scholars assume that Jesus followed in the family business of being a carpenter, as today's reading suggests. If so, neighbors of Jesus would certainly know him as a mere carpenter. What kind of personality do you imagine Jesus, as a young adult, demonstrated?

As he returns home we see he is not alone. Jesus now has a group of people following him. He then teaches in the local synagogue, and his former neighbors had questions about where he gained this knowledge. If you grew up in Jesus' hometown and saw him return years later with followers, performing miracles, and showing himself to be a great teacher, how would you react? What questions might come to your mind?

When you look into the words Mark originally used to tell this story, the word we read as "amazed" or "astonished" in verse 2 is the Greek word *ekplesso*, meaning "to strike out, or expel by a blow." In other words, Jesus' teaching was received by his hearers as a blow to the face. Why do you think they reacted so strongly?

We see this play out more in verse 3 when it says they took offense to him. Think about those that grew up with him. They now see Jesus, who came from the same area, with people following and worshipping him. It was like a strike to the face, for some of these folks.

Were they feeling jealousy? Were they thinking, "This Jesus imagines he is better than me"?

Home Study

Mark's Epiphany



This scene is reminiscent of a Hallmark movie. A small town boy leaves home, meets a bunch of friends in the big city, does amazing things, and goes on amazing adventures. He then returns home to his small hometown, only to be seen by his old friends as someone completely different from who he was before. That is what is happening for Jesus.

Read verse 2 again. Notice that these people are not denying his words, or rejecting the efficacy of his works. Their initial questions actually seem to validate Jesus.

But now read verse 3 again. Do you sense a shift in tone, or purpose, in this second set of questions? The questions in verse 3 seem intended to lower his status, or to question Christ's legitimacy.

First, they point out that Jesus is only a carpenter, without a formal education. Why might this cause them to question Jesus' status?

Next, he is the son of Mary. Perhaps they'd heard that Mary had become pregnant prior to marriage, and maybe they even thought that Jesus had been born illegitimately. What do you think of this critique?

Finally, they mention his siblings. Perhaps they were pointing out that even his own family members were not like him, or that they didn't even believe in him. Was this a legitimate criticism, or were they grasping at straws?

If you were Jesus, returning to your home town, and being questioned like this, how might you feel? How might you react?

In our lives, don't we often judge other people without really knowing them? Can you think of a few examples?

Jesus had to experience the pain of seeing the hearts of those around him harden to his words. Read verse 4 again. Jesus understands that, like the prophets of old, he's not welcome among his own. Do you imagine he said these words with irony? With sadness? With humor? With anger?

Read verses 5-6 again. Does it surprise you that he was not able to do many miracles in his home town? Why do you suppose this was the case? It seems that strong unbelief, on the part of his former neighbors, was causing them to reject Jesus and all that he came to bring them.

Think about some of the ways we reject Jesus today. It may be that some of his teachings are uncomfortable for us. It may be that we do not want to follow how the Holy Spirit guides us. It may be that we do not take time to share Christ's words to others. It may be that we find it difficult to follow his example, and to act in love and kindness toward others as we should.

How do you reject Jesus?

Home Study

Mark's Epiphany



How was Jesus' power demonstrated and seen in today's reading, despite his rejection by his former neighbors?

Read Luke 23:34. This is the power of Jesus, at its most supreme. His love and mercy are strong, even for those who are vilifying and harming him.

While on the cross, Jesus knew that he would be rejected. He knew that people in his day, and people in our day, would reject him and his teachings. He knows that we live in sin. He knows that our sinful nature turns us away from God every day. But, on Good Friday, Jesus, knowing all of this, went ahead and died on the cross, paying for the sins of humanity.

PRAYER

Lord, I/we so often reject your Word and turn away from you. Help me/us remember your holy presence. Help me/us not judge our neighbors, but spread your Word to the ends of the earth. Thank you for the perfect example you showed us. Give me/us strength to turn away from sin. By your forgiveness, renew me/us in the days ahead. Amen.