



## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

**Study Guide Full  
Mark 6:1-6a  
October 20, 2019**

Having seen in Mark 5 the miracles of the healing of the bleeding woman and the raising of Jairus's daughter—two events of remarkable faith—at the beginning of Mark 6 we journey with Jesus back to his hometown of Nazareth to encounter a very different level of faith.



Church of All Saints,  
St. Thomas  
Swansea, Wales  
*Christ Teaching in  
the Synagogue  
at Nazareth*  
([stainedglass.llgc.org.uk](http://stainedglass.llgc.org.uk))

6 *He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." 5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he marveled because of their unbelief.*

## Mark 6:1-6a

Notes:

### Commentary Notes:

v. 1. Jesus had been on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, where he had healed the bleeding woman and raised Jairus' daughter. Now he travels southwest to return to his hometown of Nazareth. Note, of course, that while Bethlehem was Jesus' birthplace, Nazareth is the place that knows Jesus' family background and social status, matters so key to this week's text that portrays a painful homecoming.

That conflict is once again soon to rear its head in this gospel is not unexpected: this is not a personal visit of Jesus to see his family; rather, Mark's reference to the presence of the disciples makes clear that this is a visit of further teaching on and revealing of the kingdom of God—a kingdom by which family has already been dramatically redefined (see Mark 3).

### Discussion Questions:

*Study:* While noting the disbelief of Jesus' townsfolk, Mark does not explicitly explain the reasons for the cold reception of Jesus. Nevertheless, the gospel author has provided some background, portraying the conflict that has arisen throughout the gospel. For instance, review the last time Mark recorded Jesus at Nazareth, rereading Mark 3:30-34.

v. 2. The “amazement” that Mark describes is a particular kind: a kind of “shocked confusion.”

The verb ἐκπλήσσω (*ekplesso*) can mean a general amazement, as in being overwhelmed by a wondrous work. Yet, it can also mean a shock to the senses and system, in line with the root form of the verb (*plesso*), meaning a “blow or strike”.

This shocked confusion is further highlighted in the Greek text, as a literal translation leaves the final clause incomplete: “Such mighty words done by his hands...?!?” It’s as if the hometown crowd is so shocked, they can’t finish their thoughts.

v. 3. In this verse, Mark unpacks the source of the shocked confusion of the crowd, noting their hostility towards Jesus: they are amazed that Jesus is just an ordinary kind of fellow who makes a living with his hands. Keep in mind that craftsmen were often itinerant workers who needed to travel to find adequate streams of work and income. Most itinerants were thus treated like itinerants often are—kept separate from the community.

Note also that the “Son of Mary” comment carries a hostile tone: it was not customary among

*Study:* What does Mark likely suppose his readers to expect with reference to Jesus teaching on the Sabbath? What did we see with Mark’s last reference to the Sabbath? Review Mark 3:1-6. What was the tone of that passage?

*Reflect:* When in the past have you been “amazed” by Jesus? Consider this questions from both a positive and negative connotation: (see commentary note aside on the verb here).

- a) How you been wonderfully amazed by the work of God in your life?
  - b) How have you been left in a kind of shocked confusion by the work of God in your life?
- Share if you feel comfortable.

*Reflect:* When have you found a trip home to be difficult in terms of expectations, misunderstandings, and stereotypes all created around family and life path or profession? How were you able to rely on the Spirit to cope in such a difficult situation? Share if you feel comfortable.

*Meditate:* As a disciple of Jesus, to what difficult places and situations in life might you be lead by Jesus—places that have unfair and uninformed expectations of you?

*Confess:* When have you, in the last few months, unfairly judged another individual based on origin or status? Did such judgment cause you “to stumble” in your relationship with Christ? (“To stumble is one

Jews to describe a man as the son of his mother.

So it is that by harsh rhetorical questioning the hometown crowd makes clear what counts in Jewish Nazareth: blood background, social status, and professional achievement.

**v. 4.** Jesus rebukes their offense with what most commentators would agree was a well-known Jewish and Greco-Roman proverb at the time—and a seriously insulting one at that. The basic sense would have been akin to the English proverb “familiarity breeds contempt.” Jesus not only rebukes the crowd by this colloquial retort, but he identifies himself as a prophet (the only place in Mark’s gospel where he does so).

**v. 5.** The verb here for “could not do,” οὐκ ἐδύνατο (*ouk edunato*), can express an inability to do something, but also an emotional-charged unwillingness. The cause of the inability may be either internal or external factors. Keeping in mind what we have just read in Mark 5, the sense here is likely a visceral inability imposed by a lack of faith.

**v. 6a.** The crowd’s astonishment is turned on its head as it is now Jesus marveling at the crowd’s disbelief. “Marveling” carries a disturbed sense here.

possible translation of “to take offense” in this verse from the verb *skandalizo*, σκανδαλίζω.)

*Pray:* Pray that we would never be a community limiting the work of Christ by presuming upon the world’s evaluation of blood background, social status, and professional achievement.

*Confess:* In what ways has your heart recently looked like those of the townsfolk, lacking faith, particularly in resisting the ways in which the kingdom of God is being made manifest on earth? Confess, and receive afresh his forgiveness.

*Discern:* Consider Anthony’s question from the sermon: What does it look like for FBC to be a church of great faith in our prophet and Lord? What does it look like for your Connection Group to be a mini-“church” of great faith?

*Study:* What is the literary context of the statement that Jesus could not do miracles because of a lack of faith? What have we just read in Mark 5?

*Meditate:* How are you encouraged by the truth that Nazareth’s lack of faith cannot fully inhibit the growth of God’s kingdom? How are you in need this week of the extra, unmerited mercy of God?

*Reflect:* When your Connection Group gathers, what are your expectations? Do you expect to meet with the living God through your prayer and discernment, listening and study?