

7 S. after Pentecost      7/7/24  
Mark 6:1-13                9B

AND HE COULD DO NO MIGHTY WORK THERE, EXCEPT THAT HE LAID HIS HANDS ON A FEW SICK PEOPLE AND HEALED THEM. AND HE MARVELED BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.

Our text from Mark raises a troubling question. The Evangelist tells us, *[Jesus] could do no mighty work (v. 5)*. Or, more literally, “He was not able to do any miracle there.” Upon hearing those words, we can only ask that Lutheran question: What does this mean? Why? Why would Jesus be unable to perform miracles in His own hometown?

Jesus is, as we confess, “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.” Even though His divine nature is hidden under human flesh and bone, Jesus uses the power and authority of that divine nature to do miracles. Consider our Gospel readings these past weeks in the season of Pentecost. He calls the twelve and gives them authority to cast out demons (2:15). He calms the wind and waves (4:39). He raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead (5:29, 41-42). In fact, Jesus was so filled with healing power that flowed from Him, a woman who had suffered a discharge of blood for 12 years only had to **touch** His garment to be healed. Yet, after all of this, Mark tells us Jesus was, “...not able to do any miracle.” Our text raises the question for us this morning, **WHY WAS JESUS UNABLE TO PERFORM A MIRACLE?**

One possible answer might be because of God’s judgment. Look at where Jesus is: His hometown of Nazareth. Jesus taught on the Sabbath and many who were heard were “astonished”? They knew Him to be “the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon ... [Whose] sisters are here with us” (cf. 3). The long-promised Messiah had come, but the people of his hometown Nazareth did not

believe that He was indeed the Savior. They thought he was only a man, the son of Joseph and Mary.

God was judging these people. Because they rejected Jesus to be the Messiah, why should God heal them? It is important to consider the answer to that question because even today some people live burdened by this possibility. When they pray and do not receive healing, they naval gaze and wonder: "Is God judging me, punishing me, for my sin?"

While this seems like a reasonable answer, it does not match the mission and ministry of Jesus. Mark begins His Gospel by revealing to us that GOOD NEWS has come in Jesus (1:1). While John the Baptizer thought Jesus would come with an axe and fire to destroy all sinners, Jesus comes with water and to bring forgiveness and salvation to sinners. In fact, the mission of Jesus is to take God's judgment against sin upon Himself so all people might be saved.

The Bible teaches us this: "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son*" (Jn 3:16). And again, the Bible says, *in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself* (2 Co 5:19). "The world," Jesus died and rose for all. Remember the song we learned in Sunday School? "Red, and yellow, black, and white, Jesus loves the little children of the world." That's why Bible says, *[God] desires all people to be saved* (1 Tm 2:4). It is a true fact that not all will be saved; but that is not God's fault, that is because they do not have faith. Unbelievers are not saved because they do not believe in Jesus, and no one can come to the Father except through Jesus, who is "*the way, the truth, and the life*" (Jn 14:6).

On the last day, when He returns in judgment, Jesus will condemn those who do not believe. But until that time, He is on a mission... a mission of mercy. Jesus came to seek the and to save the lost. People will

question Him, misunderstand Him, even resist Him, but He will not stop until He has taken God's judgment upon Himself and opened God's Kingdom to all. So, upon deeper reflection of the Scriptures; no, it is not because God is judging these people that Jesus cannot perform miracles there.

So, if it is not because of God's judgment, then maybe, it is because of their lack of faith. Perhaps Jesus was unable to perform miracles because the people did not believe. In some ways, this makes sense to our fallen human reason. Mark even tells us Jesus "marveled" at their unbelief. So perhaps, just maybe, when faced with their lack of faith, Jesus was unable to perform a miracle.

Sadly – and I do emphasize "sadly" -- this answer still circulates among Christians today. Turn on the TV and you can hear faith healers say, "God wants to bless you, but you have to have faith in order to get a miracle." Listening to the lies of these preachers, someone suffering from cancer, for example, suddenly suffers from something worse than even the cancer: A crisis of faith. The lies of the father of all lies makes them think God is not healing them because they do not have faith.

So, in the face of this lie, let's go back to the Bible. We need to be clear on this: God does not need your faith in order to do a miracle. Miracles are revelations of God's power over all creation. Remember the disciples in the boat? Quite the opposite of walking (or maybe I should say "sailing") **by faith**, they cried out in terror because they thought they would perish. And after Jesus calmed the storm, they marveled, "*Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him (4:41)?*" They forgot, "very God of very God" sailed with them in that boat. Oh, and what about Jairus' daughter? She was dead. Dead people cannot have faith. God, the all-

powerful creator, does not need our faith to rule His world. In fact, on the last day, when Jesus comes in all His glory, He will raise all the dead -- those who believe and *those who do not believe*. God is able to raise all people because God does not need our faith to perform miracles.

So, if Jesus is not judging the people for their lack of faith and if Jesus does not need faith to perform a miracle, why was Jesus unable to work miracles? It was for this reason: remember His mission. Jesus came to bring salvation to all people, not judgment.

While miracles are not a reward for believing, they can lead to punishment for those who do not believe. In fact, later in Mark's Gospel, Jesus condemns those who seek signs from God, *The Pharisees came and began to argue with Him, seeking from a sign from heaven to test Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation" (8:11-12)*. And, to those who *have seen signs and yet still not believed*, there is even greater condemnation. Jesus says this, *"Woe to you... Capernaum... if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the Day of Judgment for the land of Sodom than for you (Mt 11:21-24)"*. It was not that Jesus did not have the power to perform miracles at Nazareth, but He chose not to in this climate of unbelief. Jesus has just preached in His hometown and the people have resisted the Spirit's work through that word. For Jesus to perform miracles in the face of unbelief would only increase God's condemnation on the Day of Judgment.

And Jesus is on a mission of grace: Then and now. A bruised reed, He will not break. A smoldering wick, He will not snuff out. Jesus has been

sent by His Father to bring good news. And just as He sent twelve out two by two, He still sends you out to proclaim the saving Gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit, “As you go – to work, to 4<sup>th</sup> of July family get togethers, to the lake, to the golf course -- make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19).

Our lesson this morning teaches us one marvelous thing: Regardless of how the world responds to Jesus, Jesus will respond to the world in love. Sometimes with miracles, sometimes without, but always with the self-sacrificial love that brings God’s gracious embrace and never-ending life.