The Peril of Rejecting Jesus

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[0:00] Back with me to the passage we read in Mark chapter 6. I'd like to consider the first six verses. We might say the central verses, or the central passage even.

The middle end of verse 3, where we're told, And they took offence at him, they took offence at Jesus. In our evening services, those of you who've been here in our evening services, we've been looking at different aspects of the ministry of Jeremiah the prophet.
And as we've been looking at aspects of his early ministry, we've seen just the whole aspect of Jeremiah's being rejected for his proclaiming the word of truth.
Remember us, we, of course, who are here, remember, last Lord's Day evening, we saw that even Jeremiah's own townspeople, the people who lived in that little town of Anatho, just near Jerusalem, that his townspeople even were plotting to kill him, plotting to silence his voice because Jeremiah was speaking the word of God.
He was speaking the truth of God. That truth that was so unpalatable to those even of his own family, even of his own townspeople. And Jeremiah coming to realise that he was the victim, as it were, of these plots.
[1:29] And as we were saying last Sunday evening, as we saw Jeremiah being rejected by his own people, the people that he grew up with, we noticed that isn't this so often the lot of the Lord's people, those who follow the Lord Jesus, that if we follow Jesus, then as he was despised and rejected by men, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, then if you're following Jesus, you will share in his suffering, you will share the cup that Jesus drank.

Obviously not, you're not sharing that cup in the sense of bearing the sins of many, but you will share in the Lord's suffering. You will be even those who are rejected by your own family, your own loved ones, your own people.
And that's why I think we should even explore this more fully, as we see here in Mark 6. We referred briefly to Mark 6 last Sunday evening, but it's a passage I think we should look at more fully.
Because in this passage we see remarkable things about unbelief, and we see wonderful things about Jesus. We see even in this passage encouragement for you who are a Christian, for you who seek to follow the Lord Jesus.
There's encouragement here for you, as you see, as you look upon the one who endured such opposition from men, and yet carried on in that road to Calvary.
[2:59] Anyway, so let's look more closely then, particularly as I say at the first six verses. And as we see first of all in verses 1 to 3, we see the offense of the Savior.

He went away from there, came to his hometown, his disciples followed him, and the Sabbath, as we read here, he began to teach in the synagogue. Many who heard him were astonished, saying, where did this man get these things?
What's the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us?
And they took offense at him. What are we seeing here? Well, let's get the context. Obviously, Jesus has begun his mission. He's begun his three-year public ministry.
But for 30 years before that, for 30 years, he's worked in Nazareth as the local carpenter. He's worked on the wood that he created at creation.
[4:04] He's worked with the very hands that would be nailed to another piece of wood, to the cross of Calvary. For 30 years, he's been known by all in his hometown of Nazareth.

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It's the town he grew up in as a young boy, and then as a young man. It's a town that he's made a living for his family. And as we can work out from, or it appears from Scripture, Joseph's presumably now dead, because there's no mention of Joseph anywhere in Scripture beyond the time when Jesus was 12.
And as carpenters, you know, Jesus has mingled with the townspeople. He's done business with them. But of course, as the Son of God, as the divine, sinless Son of God, he's surely revealed by his perfect life that he was and is different in heart and mind.
Jesus, even these 30 years, lived that sanctified life, that life that was completely sinless. And even as the carpenter, he would stand out, and did stand out as holy in word and speech and in action. Whether he's, you know, conversing with those who he's doing trades with, whether it was in his home with his family, whether it was in the local synagogue, everywhere he went was a testimony to his life that glorified God and a life that lived in sinless obedience and grace and love.
[5:39] And yet, what we read here in this short passage tells us that he wasn't acclaimed in his hometown for who he truly was, for who he truly is. What we see here, we see sneering.

Even, you know, this designation, Son of Mary. And that's more than just a reference to his mother. There's more than just a hint of how people perceive Jesus in this supposed illegitimacy.
Because to be called by Son of Mary rather than Son of Joseph, even if Joseph had died, was to suggest that he was known in relation to his mother and not in relation to Joseph.
The local people, you know, they haven't received Jesus for who Jesus is. Their prejudice, their closed hearts revealed this deep-seated ingrained resentment to Jesus.
They hadn't considered the evidence before them of Jesus as the Holy One in their midst. And so that's the background that we've got here. And obviously Jesus, when he begins his public ministry, he leaves Nazareth, he's embarking on his mission, he's got a public ministry to fulfil.
[6:55] He's going to do it by preaching and teaching and healing. He'll do it by his miracles. He's going to show who he truly is. He's the promised Christ, the promised Messiah.

But then notice here, he returns back to his hometown for a short time. And he does this for a purpose. He's going to teach in the local synagogue. And because that's going to happen on the Jewish Sabbath.
And in his teaching, that teaching carries authority. He's speaking with an authority that none of the other synagogue rulers had.
And he's speaking in a way that's so different. And you see the reaction of the people. There's such an array of emotions. They've heard them. What's their response?
There's astonishment. There's amazement. This carpenter, this carpenter from an ordinary family with ordinary brothers and sisters, and as the people think, with a supposed or a suspect legitimacy.
[7:57] And you know, you can just hear their thoughts churning away in their minds. They're listening to, as they say, Jesus, son of Mary. And they're coming to a conclusion. It's a conclusion, we would say, of unbelief.

Disbelief. Unbelief. How can anyone, I thought you can just hear them thinking, how can anyone, from their town, from their people, how can anyone with such a humble background, how can he speak with such authority?
Yes, they're astonished, but more, they're offended. And you say, you know, why, why this offense? I mean, you know, wasn't Jesus' life exemplary?
Didn't his preaching show that he had absolute authority to proclaim the word of God? Didn't he reveal by his life and by his words that he has to be listened to and has to be followed?
No, they took offense at him. Why? Well, truly pride. Why? Why were they offended at Jesus? Pride, surely, as we see here in verses 2 and 3.
[9:05] I mean, you can just summarize what they're saying. You know, others might well be taken in, if they're thinking, taken in by Jesus. We know better. We know his family. We know better. We know his background.

Who does he think he is? He's one of us. I mean, yes, okay, he's performed mighty works. He's performed these miracles in another place. But we're not going to follow this man of questionable birth.
We're not going to follow this man from a pure background. He's got basic education. He's not trained as a teacher of the law. He's just been a carpenter for all these years.

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He's got all these brothers and sisters. Who does he think he is? And so, you know, you can just see us, these people are thinking these things as they reject Jesus.
It's that principle that's still with us today. I mean, the people of Nazareth had privileges. They were privileged in the fact that Jesus had grown up with them for so much of his life.
[10:07] And yet, they still rejected him. They still took offence at him. Let's project that onto Scotland. This is a land that, you know, championed the cause of the Reformation under John Knox.

And many others. This is a land that revealed the foundations of scriptural truth in 1843 when principled men left a church that was so drifting in liberal theology.
A church that had no full, utter respect for the word of God. This church that wanted to have state interference in the way that ministers were appointed.
This is a land that's been so blessed with so many preachers who've given of themselves and preached it. Word of God unashamedly. Many of these men now in glory.
What do we see? We see offence taken. Just mention the name John Knox in Edinburgh today and you'll have so many negative reactions. The statue of John Knox just hidden away so that it's not in public view.
[11:18] When I was growing up in Edinburgh we used to go down from the mound to Prince's Street down John Knox steps. The name's all gone now. Playfair steps. Even where he's buried almost again hidden out of sight in Parliament Square.

We see a denomination, our own denomination rejected by so many for standing for biblical truth in so many areas of doctrine and morality. we see the preaching of God's word practically ignored by the vast majority of our population.
You might even say that, one example, what was the old motto of Glasgow? Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the word. Of course that's now been changed to let Glasgow flourish.
Forget about the preaching of the word. We've had privilege upon privilege in this land. But people are taking offence because of human pride that says we know better.
We're superior in our intellect and our reasoning and our standards. Is that the root of the problem? Well, no. No. Surely, even what we've been seeing, even in our own examples, are consequences, are results of the most fundamental reason why Jesus is rejected today.
[12:40] Why people take offence at him. And it's what we see there in, yes, in pride, man-centered wisdom, but that pride in man-centered wisdom is because of the offence of the cross.

The offence of the cross on which Jesus gave his life. The cross that speaks of Jesus' finished work that fully satisfies the requirements of a holy God in regard to the problem of sin.
the cross that tells us that Jesus paid the price for our sins by a sacrifice for us. You go to Galatians chapter 5, verse 11, and you read there of Paul speaking of the offence of the cross.
And that offence does speak of pride. I mean, the people of Nazareth, they took pride in their own reasoning, their own estimation of Jesus. and human pride is offended by the cross.
Because the cross tells us that Jesus has done all for our salvation. The cross tells us that man can't earn salvation by his good works.
[13:49] The cross tells us that man can't please God by his own efforts. The cross tells us that it's grace alone and not by works.

The cross tells us it's Christ alone and not any other saviour who saves us. The cross tells us that it's faith alone in Christ and not again by any effort of man to find to know salvation.
And when these truths are given, pride is offended. And then there's man's wisdom. I mean, the people of Nazareth thought that they were wise, that they knew better than others about Jesus. They reckoned, you know, they were the wise ones. They thought, you know, we're the superior ones. We know this. We know from where Jesus has come from. But isn't it the case that man's wisdom is so offended by the gospel of Jesus?
Man's wisdom, you see, man's wisdom thinks it can find many routes to salvation. Man's wisdom says, surely there has to be many ways to God.
[15:00] Man's wisdom says we're not going to have anything to do with sin. Man's wisdom will send everyone to heaven and no one to hell. Man's wisdom condemns the word of God, the word of the Bible.

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Man's wisdom is offended by the Bible that speaks of that absolute authority of the Lord Jesus that tells of the exclusive claims of salvation and Christ alone.
And man's wisdom can't allow for that exclusive claim. Jesus is the saviour, the way, the truth, the life. And it's the offense of pride, it's the offense of man-centered wisdom because of the cross of Christ.
But what about you? Are you offended by the cross of Christ? What about the words of Jesus, the claims of Jesus? Are they offensive to you? Do you use reason, philosophical reason to object to the one who said I am the way, the truth, and the life?
Has the world searched into its mould so you prefer the relative claims that this religion, that religion, every religion leads you to God? Well, is that okay?
[16:15] Ditch your pride, ditch your so-called wisdom but turn in faith to the Lord Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life and come in repentance of sins.

Yes, ask him, forgive me my sins, cleanse me from all my unrighteousness, make me whiter than the snow. But what about Jesus said earlier in this passage?
We've looked at the negative, if you like, the reaction, the rejection of Jesus. But isn't there encouragement at the same time that we see here? Well, when we come to verse 4, there is actually encouragement.
Maybe at first it might not seem obvious, but if we look at verse 4, let's look at verse 4, Jesus said to them, a prophet is not without honour except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.
Jesus has come to bring good news. He's brought that good news to the people he grew up with. There he is in his hometown amongst his relatives. There he is amongst his half-brothers and sisters.
[17:23] They're offended at him. And Jesus as a reaction, as a response, gives this saying. And he's telling not just in the immediate sense about the rejection that he's received from his own people, his own hometown, but yeah, the people in Israel, and yes, even the world itself.

See, Jesus was dishonoured among his people. He wasn't honoured as the Lord's Christ. He wasn't honoured as the Lord of lords and kings. But remember he'd shown by his perfect, sinless life, he'd shown by his teaching, his preaching, his miracle, that he hadn't come from heaven to earth.
He'd come to save his people from their sins. The verdict was given, rejection. Just as John said in the opening chapter of his gospel, he came to his own, but his own did not receive him.
And you say, well, how is this an encouragement? You who believe, you who seek to follow Jesus, how is this an encouragement to you? Well, surely this, if Jesus is the last and great prophet, if Jesus could be so dishonoured, even by those who in many ways were closest to him, well, you who know rejection for your faith, maybe amongst your family, maybe amongst your friends, you are sharing in the suffering of Christ.
When you're despised for following Jesus, remember Jesus, the sinless son of God, was despised and rejected by men. Even when you're closest, they'll have nothing to do with you for your faith in Jesus.
[19:16] You know that the Saviour, the Saviour whom you love, loves you. The Saviour who was rejected, but he loves you and continues to love you. You know, Jesus knew that rejection over his three-year ministry.

You know, if you go back for example to chapter 3 here in this Gospel, again you find Jesus in his hometown and even his family saying of Jesus, he's out of his mind. Or you go to John's Gospel chapter 7 and we're told that his brothers didn't believe in him.
And you go through the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life, Jesus' ministry, and again you see the repeated unbelief of the Jewish people. You see all that unbelief coming to the fore and then culminating in that cry, crucify him.
You know, Jesus bore a rejection that you and I will never know. But you know, even in these times when you are ignored and ostracized and left out and you're ridiculed and you're mocked, well, yes, we've said it already, you are certainly to an extent drinking from the cup of Christ's suffering.
And in that surely we rejoice. Listen to the words of Peter. Peter, Peter who suffered much for his faith in Christ. Look at what Peter said in his first letter, chapter 4, but rejoice in so far as you share Christ's suffering, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

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[20:50] If you're insulted for the name of Christ, you're blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. When we lived in Skye for all these years, we worshipped in the church that met in the local primary school in Portree.

And every Sunday we would put a banner outside the building and of course the banner said that the services were to be held in the building. And I remember one Sunday after the service we noticed that the banner had been torn down, the banner had been ripped to shreds.
And we were all very saddened at that kind of act of vandalism. But I remember our minister, the late Kenny MacDonald, he wasn't distressed. Kenny said, you know, this is surely an indication that we're doing the Lord's work.
And in his words, as he said, surely we're doing something right. Yes, it is distressing when we see these kind of attitudes from people that we grow up with and live amongst.
But you can still be encouraged when you're rejected for being a Christian. It's no shame to be rejected for being a Christian. In fact, you could even say this, that it's an affirmation of whose you are and whom you serve.
[22:08] Yes, it's an opportunity for you to take that stand, to stand firm in the face of that opposition. You still pray for those who hate you. You still show love.

You still proclaim the good news that Jesus proclaimed when even despite that opposition. And we still wait and hope for the conversion of those, even those whom are with.
Jesus' brother, for example. Jesus' brother, James. James at one time despised Jesus. James would later be converted. He would be part of the family of the early church there in Jerusalem.
He'd be the author of the epistle that bears his name. And yes, there was dishonouring of Jesus amongst his hometown. But even as we see towards the end of this little section, there is hope.
There's hope for the repentant sinner. But there's a tragic verdict as well. And we might even see astounding verse 5 and 6.
[23:14] And Jesus 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.

And we might say here's the opportunity forfeited. The people of Nazareth had been so offended at the carpenter who had been making great claims about himself.
But they were guilty. they had cut themselves off from Jesus' saving power. It was their guilt that forfeited the privilege of knowing Jesus as Savior.
You know the time when Jonah was in the belly of the great fish? And Jonah said these words, those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.
Or maybe another way of another translation, those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. And you know, surely the people of Nazareth were forfeiting the grace that they were actually rejecting.
[24:20] As we're told here, Jesus wouldn't perform great miracles in their midst, apart from a few people being healed. Because you see, Jesus wouldn't force faith.

He wouldn't force faith in the people by some sort of great miracle. The people would have to come to him by faith. And that faith wasn't in their hearts. You know, later Jesus would reveal that truth in the story of the rich man and Lazarus.
Remember, when poor Lazarus died, Lazarus went to heaven. The rich man had gone to hell. And the rich man is pleading that Lazarus be sent to his family to warn them of the hell, because of rejecting God.
Abraham, in that story that Jesus tells, says, they have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them. And the rich man says, no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they'll repent.
He said, if they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, they'll not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead. Jesus wasn't going to perform mighty works of power before a people who would not believe.
[25:34] it's interesting, in Mark's gospel, there's no further reference to Jesus going to Nazareth. And you might say, isn't that in itself? We don't know if Jesus did ever go back, but even the fact that Mark doesn't tell us of any other occasion when Jesus goes back to Nazareth, I'm sure that's an indictment.

Indictment against a people, people who had such a privilege upon privilege, and yet wouldn't act on that privilege in believing in Jesus. And for that refusal of the people to believe in Jesus, Jesus

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responds in a way that you might say is, well, in some ways, astonishing.
He marveled because of their unbelief. Jesus was amazed that these people of Nazareth, they didn't believe in him. The evidence of who he was right before their eyes.
They'd heard him, they'd seen him, they'd certainly known of his miracles elsewhere, and yet they still wouldn't receive him as Lord, and that astonished Jesus. And you know, if you're a Christian, doesn't it astonish you why so many people don't believe in God or don't believe in the Lord Jesus? Why so many people don't put their faith in Jesus? Even think of the evidence of creation, or tell him the same to the children, the evidence of creation itself points to our creator God.
[27:04] So many dismiss that truth. The Bible tells us the heavens declare the glory of God, and yet people are blinded to that truth. Or think of the call of Jesus, come to me all you who labor and heavy laden, and I'll give you rest.

And that call's heard, but it's dismissed. I mean, the evidence is there before us in the word, in the Bible, the promise is there of salvation for all who believe, for all who give their lives to the Savior. Yet that promise is dismissed. And we marvel at that unbelief. But that doesn't stop you from telling others the good news of salvation in Jesus.
Just as it didn't stop Jesus from continuing in his ministry. Because that's why that little verse, or half verse, half verse at the end of verse 6 tells us, and he went about among the villages teaching. Because Nazareth might not receive him in their midst, but others did. And surely that has to be an encouragement. Encouragement to you who witness to the Lord.
[28:19] Be encouraged. If you rejected one place, yes, continue in another. Continue to witness by your words and by your actions. Even when at times you're rejected and people are offended at the word.

Persevere. Persevere in your faith. Persevere in your practice. Persevere in the mission, the work that God has given you to give for him.
Yes, go in faith. Go trusting. Go trusting that God will lead you and God will direct you to tell that person or that person, this group, that group to tell them of the good news of the Lord Jesus.
And we pray in that work that there will be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who hears the good news and will not reject that good news but receive it by faith and repent and save.
And so may God bless to us his word. Amen. Let us pray. Lord, you give us much to consider and you give us much to ponder, much to reflect, and much to apply.
[29:35] And we pray, Lord, that we will not be slow in proclaiming the good news of salvation in Christ alone. May it be by our words, by our witness, that we can truly say that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

And so, Lord, may there not be anyone here this morning who is offended at the cross. There's no one offended by the gospel, but rather may it be that your word will be that standard, that rule by which we all follow you and are directed in our lives.
hear us, Lord, as we continue in worship before you now. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's close in Psalm 148 in St.
Psalms on page 194. We're going to sing the whole of this psalm. The tune of St. John. We'll praise, we'll praise the Lord.
Praise him from heaven's height. All angels give him praise. Praise him you hosts of light. Praise him sun, moon and stars on high. You highest heaven and cloudy sky.
[30:55] 148 to God's praise.

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