

6 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?” ³ Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

⁴ Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

There’s something different about home. Whether it’s after a long vacation, or slug through a semester in the college dorms, or a stint in the hospital; home is different. The smells are recognizable. The water tastes oh so ordinary. In the middle of the night, you can roll out of bed walk down the stairs, grab a glass of water and wander back all without having to flip a light switch because you know it so well. Everything is: familiar.

In our text for today’s worship, we have a homecoming described in just six verses. Jesus is going to his own hometown. The place where he and his siblings were raised. The place where he knows the streets and the alleys in the dark. Where he knows the faces on the paths.

And in another sense, a part of home is coming to Nazareth. The carpenter’s son who has left is returning. The man who bears the town’s name as part of his title is coming back. The same boy who learned to fix their walls and build their tables, has come home. Jesus is familiar.

But there’s something different this time. Jesus is invited to speak in the synagogue as he had probably done before. And preach he does. Not only that but he performs great miracles and signs in front of their very eyes. And Nazareth’s hometown boy is not greeted with Hallelujah’s and open arms, but with questions and rejection. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? And they took offense at him”

I don’t know who this guy is, but this is not the Jesus that I remember. The Jesus I remember was not performing miracles and spitting and spewing wisdom like this. The Jesus I remember was just like his brothers and his sisters, and his mother. A carpenter from our town, not this prophet who does and speaks in this way. I don’t like this. No, I don’t like this at all. This Jesus is all wrong. This Jesus is not familiar.

How could the people who were so comfortable, so at home, so to speak, with Jesus; be so quick to disregard and despise what he has to say? It might seem counterintuitive, but there can

come a point where familiarity can become something that is no longer a benefit, but a detriment. There can come a time when familiarity can be dangerous.

Allow me to explain. That house which we spoke of, and which you all know; how often do you forget the things which you love about it? We all appreciate the familiarity of the place when you are gone from it for a time. But how often do forget the things we love, which make it your familiar home? The furniture, the color of the paint, the way the sun lights up the rooms specifically. Or is it all just lost in the blur of the familiar?

Flip it the other way around, when something is changed, even for the better, does it not sit right with us? When the couch is moved because it keeps the glare off the TV, do we despise it? Not because it is bad, or worse, but simply because it's not the way it always is? Being dangerously familiar is completely forgetting the purpose because it is known, or hating anything different because it is not.

That's what happened to the people of Nazareth. They had become dangerously familiar with Jesus. Some people had rejected him because he was just the same and others because he was not. Some didn't take what he had to say seriously because he was the same Jesus who's brothers and sisters were there and always had been. And others didn't like it because he was different that what they remembered.

They were so wrapped up in their experiences, and what they knew, that they completely missed the point of what Jesus said and did. Which astonishes Christ himself, that people so close to him, could be so far away.

Does this ever happen to us? Do we who are so close, somehow become far away? Have we ever become dangerously familiar with Jesus?

Do we lose the marvel of God's promises or the sheer magnitude of the effects of sin because we have heard it so many times? We sit and stand at the same times, I say the same words as we did last week. We hear the same words from the same mouths from the same spots. I have the same styro-foamy wafer that I get every two weeks. This is all just how it is and how it has always been. What would be special is something new, something different.

Or do we reject the content simply because it is not? It was fine, but we always preach from this side of the church in this pulpit, no I don't like that at all. I know it will be the same, but church has always started at 11am on the dot, nope can't do it. I have never really heard that passage being spoken to reprimand me before, it must be incorrect I do not want to hear it.

We all can very quickly get into the same danger as those people of Nazareth. We all can become comfortable and complacent. We can easily get caught up in the routine. Us, even us in the service today. I, even I, as your pastor, can become dangerously familiar with Jesus.

However, there is something that is so amazing about this text. Even though the people of Nazareth were dangerously familiar. Even though the people denied and rejected Jesus. He doesn't reject them. Jesus, continues to work. Jesus continues to preach. Amazed and dumbfounded by the people's lack of faith, he continues to come to them. He lays his hands on the sick and heals them. The outward things that the people of Nazareth were so uncomfortable with, could not overpower the saving message and the saving work that Jesus came to accomplish. Jesus still loved, Jesus still died for those familiar faces in Nazareth.

That's what is one of the most wonderful and astounding things about our Savior and his Word. Even though it may be overlooked or rejected, even by us, the Word still works. Our Savior still continues to find us and heal us. Our God still seeks us out. Jesus approaches us and gives us the forgiveness and healing that we need, that only he can give, through the things that are so familiar to us. The things that are the same or the things that are different cannot overpower the Word and forgiveness that Christ offers to us.

Even though we might not think about that thin and plastic wafer and little sip of wine as much as we should. Jesus true body and blood are there with the forgiveness of your sins either way. Even though we sometimes are not as mindful of the words that we speak during the service the Holy Spirit still works through them to strengthen your faith every single time. Even though you hear the same pronouncement of "your sins are forgiven"; they truly are, whether for the 1,000th time or the 1st. God still works through the familiar.

Jesus' relentless seeking and saving of us sinful creatures leads us to look upon his words and his work with a new kind of familiarity. A familiarity which appreciates God's grace every single day. God's grace is the kind of familiar that your home offers you, knowing that it is always there. It is always comforting. It is what you know to be true.

That is my goal for all of us here today. Not to be satisfied to hear what we always have, but to sit at the foot of the gracious Jesus and say: "Teach me more". Not to become lackadaisical in our hearing of the Gospel, but to take it and appreciate it more, every time that we have the opportunity to hear it.

As we go home to our houses, and smell those familiar smells, taste that perfect water, and lay in our oh so comfortable beds. Let's all take a moment to praise our Jesus. The one who we have the opportunity every week, every day, every moment, to thank for the love and forgiveness that he surrounds us with, that he won for us, that he will never stop giving to you. Amen.