

Sermon: Amazing Unbelief

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. During this past year, what event / sight has 'amazed' you?
What are some nuances of the word 'amazed'?
2. Do you agree with the saying 'familiarity breeds contempt'?
How do you see this in the world we live in today?

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Look at Mark 5:31-43. What miracles does Jesus perform? This passage shows three responses to Jesus:
v.34 – 'she fell at his feet... "your faith has healed you"
v. 40 – 'they laughed at him'
v.42 – 'they were completely astonished'
Mark 6:2 reads, '...many who heard him were amazed'
How are these four responses similar? Why are they different?
2. What was Jesus expecting when He came to Nazareth?
Why was He unable to perform miracles? (6:4, 5)
How did the community respond to His claims?
How was that influenced by their previous knowledge of Him?
3. Philip Yancey says, "God goes where He is wanted..."
How does this comment relate to Hebrews 11:6?
How can I identify faith and shed light on my unbelief?
How is Jesus' power enabled or inhibited by my faith?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. The Nazarenes were skeptical of Jesus' teachings because of their prior knowledge of Him. What obstacles do you have to accepting His work in your life?
2. How can you in your daily life improve your faith (eg home, work, and your neighbourhood)?
2. The main message for me is: _____
In response, this coming week I will _____

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 13:53-58

⁵³When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. ⁵⁴Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. ⁵⁵"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?" ⁵⁶Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home." ⁵⁸And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Mark 5:31-43

...³¹ "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" ³²But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." ³⁹He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep." ⁴⁰But they laughed at him. ...). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ²When 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?" ³Isn'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. ⁴Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Luke 4:16-30

¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." ²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. ²³Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'" ... ²⁸All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. ³⁰But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Sermon Study Summary

People often were amazed and in awe at Jesus' works, teaching and miracles. (Mk & Lk) Not surprising since Jesus was God in the flesh! By rubbing shoulders with Jesus people saw God face to face, so their wonder is understandable! Only twice do the Gospels say explicitly, "Jesus was amazed." (Lk 7, Mk 6:6)

Jesus took a year to launch His public ministry and announce that He was the Messiah. Reports about His authoritative preaching and miracles spread. People wondered, "Who is this?" Jesus returned to Nazareth, an obscure agricultural community where people had seen God the Son grow to be a man of 30. They knew Him--their friendly neighbourhood Carpenter! On the Sabbath Jesus went to the synagogue where He had received His spiritual training and instruction in OT Laws. People of Nazareth had heard about Jesus; now they could verify it themselves!! When He stood to speak in the synagogue all eyes were riveted on Him. What they heard was significant, profound, convicting and radical. (Mk 6:1-6) Some were amazed at His teaching. (6:2)

What did Jesus teach when they gave Him the scroll? (Lk 4:16-21). People there did not hear a typical sermon nor a dull discourse about obeying the laws of God or hope of the future kingdom. He spoke of the Kingdom of God as a present reality that He was initiating. When Jesus said "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," He was claiming to be the Anointed One, the Messiah. Jesus was proclaiming good news and declaring that He was the good news, 'come to heal the brokenhearted, bring liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, set the oppressed free and launch the year of the Lord's favour!' Jesus boldly stated that He is the long-awaited fulfillment of God's plan for the ages.

So it is astonishing to see reactions to Jesus' claims. People of Nazareth did not give Him rave reviews as their hometown star. No, instead you hear words of sarcasm and scorn, questioning His power, wisdom and illegitimate birth. It was hard for them to believe that the supreme God would come from such an ordinary family, humble town, and humble trade. The people who knew Jesus most should be the most likely to believe in His message. No, their response to this grand revelation is shocking. They did not just mutter their disapproval. They drove Jesus out of town and tried to throw him off the cliff! (Lk 4:28-29) The people were gripped with unbelief and took offense at His preaching. (Mk 6:2-3) Even Jesus was stunned at their unbelief. (6:6) His own people became His strongest opponents (Mk 6:3; Jn 1:11) proving that 'Familiarity breeds contempt.' Those who watched Jesus grow up in their midst were so focused on the familiar. They couldn't accept that someone they knew so well could be God's anointed.

Here is a clear application for our society. Today countries with a Christian heritage forget their roots, leave their foundations, ignore the familiar and seek something exotic and appealing elsewhere. An ancient worldview seems more appealing than the historic gospel of Christ! Familiarity continues to breed contempt. When you grow up in a Christian family surrounded by the teachings of the faith and allow them to become too common, you lose your sense of awe. As a churchgoer, you can become desensitized to the wonder of living for Jesus. That happened in Nazareth and continues in our day! The most difficult place to practice your Christian faith is at home among your relatives! (Mk 6:4) When Pastor Ashwin became a Christian, he was willing to go to any remote place in the world. But the Lord sent him home to practice his faith for everyone to see.

Faith is powerful--faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains! But do we know the power of unbelief? It is a spiritual force that robs us of God's blessings. Unbelief hinders the work of God and limits what God wants to do. Jesus faced intense rejection from His own people! (Mk 6:4; Jn 1:11) The hardened hearts of his own people troubled Jesus! "He could not do many miracles there, except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith." (Mk 6:5-6) "And He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith." (Mt 13:58) The power of unbelief is on full display. Earlier Jesus had showed His power. (Mk 4 & 5) Now in Nazareth this all powerful Jesus was limited by people's unbelief. His intent was to see His hometown people experience healing and deliverance. Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith!

Faith is a pre-requisite to seeing the power of God. (Heb 11:6) Faith in itself has no power but links us to the power source! Like inserting a plug into a socket, faith puts us in touch with the living God. Is Jesus' power dependent on our faith? **"Jesus could not do any miracles there because He would not. Omnipotence is not omnipotence if it's bound by anything but its own will. Jesus was morally compelled not to show His power."** Kent Hughes. If God sees skepticism, cynicism and unbelief, He refuses to show His power. Unbelief makes us prefer the safe, predictable, familiar. Many churches in NA are not Powerhouses that advance God's work, but are weak establishments on life support! To see the Spirit's power in our generation, we must be on our knees beseeching God in faith to act on His promises. What is faith? Faith is believing God will do what He said! Mighty moves of God are preceded by strong faith of people who trust the Lord to keep His promises! (Heb 11:6) Come to church believing God rewards those who diligently seek Him. Come anticipating that God will pour out His Spirit so lives will be changed. Jesus left Nazareth never to return; He proclaimed the good news where people were receptive! Why does church growth occur in the third world not in N A? "God goes where He is wanted!" Philip Yancey

Lord, grant us an expectant faith to trust You to do great things! Lord, help us overcome unbelief. Give us a strong faith that is rooted in Your character. (Ps 121:1-2)