

Jesus Comes Home

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this morning, with the Lord's help, turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The Gospel according to Mark, in chapter 6.

The Gospel according to Mark, in chapter 6, and if we take as our text, verse 4. Mark 6, at verse 4, But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, among his own kindred, and in his own house.

A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, among his own kindred, and in his own house.

And looking around this morning, I couldn't help but think that we're not a very cosmopolitan congregation.

And that's probably because of our location. We're a small congregation on the far west coast of Scotland, so it's unlikely that we could boast of being a multinational congregation.

[1 : 14] But with that said, we do have an Englishman, and we do have an Irishman in our congregation. Our church officer, as you know, is from the southern border, and our presenter is from across the Irish Sea.

But for the majority of us here this morning, we would regard ourselves as Scottish. We are born and bred Scots. Now, I'm not trying to be nationalistic, or patriotic, or xenophobic when I say this, but last year, if you recall, 2014 was the year of Homecoming Scotland.

And it was the second time that our nation's history held such an event, because it was first held back in 2009. And it seems that every event of Homecoming, it's going to happen every five years. And the purpose of Homecoming Scotland is that there was a series of events organized throughout the year, which were designed to attract people from all over the world with Scottish ancestry.

It was to attract them to come home to their native land of Scotland. And I'm sure that even thinking about it, there are probably many of us here who have either Canadian, or Australian, or South African relatives that are part of our ancestry.

[2 : 38] They have a Scottish heritage. But last year was the year of Homecoming. And we had the Commonwealth Games, and all these monuments erected, like the Kelpies in Falkirk, and we had all these different occasions for celebrating the milestones in our nation's history, like the Battle of Bannockburn.

And they were all designed to welcome people from all over the world to come home to Scotland. But when we come to this chapter in Mark's Gospel, we see that it's a homecoming with a difference.

Because Mark tells us in verse 1 that Jesus went out from there and came to his own country, and his disciples followed him. And so the first five chapters of Mark's Gospel, Mark has been showing us the miracles that Jesus performed, and the parables which Jesus told all around the region of Galilee.

But now he tells us that Jesus left Galilee, and he moved eastwards towards his hometown of Nazareth. And Mark points out to us that Jesus came out from there.

He came out from Galilee and returned to his native town of Nazareth. And he says that Jesus came to his own country. And when Mark says his own country, he literally means his fatherland.

[4 : 04] His fatherland, which was the home of his father, the home of his parents, Mary and Joseph, where Nazareth was the hometown of his family. It was where Jesus grew up as a young boy, surrounded by his own people and his own relatives, all his aunties, all his uncles, all his cousins.

They all lived there, and they were all part of this community in Nazareth. And Mark presents to us this significant moment in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Because when Jesus returns home to the place of his ancestry and his heritage, the response he received at his homecoming from the people of his own fatherland is not at all what you would expect.

Because instead of reunion and celebration, Jesus was met by rejection. Instead of reunion, it was rejection. And that's what John said in his gospel.

He came to his own people. And his own people did not receive him. And what Mark is presenting to us in this passage is that the homecoming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was met by rejection.

[5 : 19] Jesus came home, but he wasn't welcome. And as we look at this passage, I'd like to draw our attention to three things that Jesus did at his homecoming.

Three things Jesus did when he came home. Because in the passage which we read together, we see Jesus preaching, we see Jesus marvelling, and Jesus sending.

Jesus preaching, Jesus marvelling, and Jesus sending. So we look first of all at Jesus preaching. Jesus preaching.

Look at verse 1. He went out from there and came into his own country, and his disciples followed him. And when the Sabbath day had come, he began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing him were astonished, saying, From where has this man learned these things?

And what wisdom is this which is given unto him? And even such mighty works are done by his hands. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph, and of Judas and Simon?

[6 : 27] And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. So when Jesus returned home to the place of his youth, the place where he grew up, he would have inevitably noticed some changes.

For us, with every community and with our own community, it's constantly changing. But one feature of the community life in Nazareth that would have never changed is what took place on the Sabbath.

Because Mark tells us in verse 2 that when the Sabbath came, Jesus began to teach in the synagogue. And that's one thing that never changed in the community of Nazareth, or in any Jewish community.

That on the Sabbath, everyone in the community would gather together in the synagogue to worship. And I'm sure that there was a day in this community where everyone would gather in church to worship.

But that's obviously not the case anymore. And it's one sad change which has taken place in our community over the years. But on a typical Sabbath morning in Nazareth, everyone would gather into the synagogue, which was this synagogue which was at the heart of the community.

[7 : 44] And that's what the word synagogue means. It means to gather together. Because it was the place where everyone gathered together. And it was the place where the whole community would come together on one day of the week.

And so Mark is telling us that in the morning service in Nazareth, everyone had come to the synagogue. Everyone was there. Everyone from all over the town was there. All the neighbours were gathered in the local synagogue to listen to the message of the rabbi.

But the preacher or teacher that Sabbath morning was a new teacher. One whom they'd never heard before. And yet the preacher was someone the locals were all familiar with.

He looked like them. He was a Nazarene. He was one of them. They knew his family. They knew his people. He even had the same accent as them. He sounded like them.

He spoke like them. And he knew them. And they also recognised him. And that was because the preacher was the local boy from Nazareth. Mark tells us that Jesus taught in his local synagogue.

[8 : 54] And he preached to the congregation that he grew up in. And all those who were in the audience that morning were his family and his neighbours and the members of his community as he was growing up.

And they were all there. And they were all listening to Jesus' teaching. And you can somehow imagine what it must have been like to have a local lad come and take the Sabbath morning service.

And preach to the community a message from the scriptures. Because I suppose if we were to apply this to ourselves and our own situation here, the preacher would have been someone born in this community.

Someone born, say, in Bru. Someone born in Bru. And the preacher would have grown up in this community. He would have been baptised in this congregation. He would have grown up in the congregation.

He would have attended the creche. He would have gone to the Sunday school. He would have gone to the youth fellowship when he was older. He would have become a member in the congregation. He would have attended the prayer meeting.

[9 : 58] And he would have been part of the life of the community. And he would have been someone everyone would have seen and everyone would have known from a young age.

But now at the age of 30, he was preaching a message that was going to challenge the lifestyle and the spirituality of the people of Barbas. And it was going to be direct.

Right to them. And that's what was happening in the synagogue in Nazareth that morning where Jesus preached to his own people. His own people.

Those whom he grew up around. And he preached a direct message. And I believe the message that Jesus preached was the message he always preached. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. And I don't believe that Jesus would have changed his message because of his audience. Neither should we.

[10 : 59] I don't believe that Jesus would have softened or diluted the message because of his audience. Neither should we. Because I believe that when Jesus was given the opportunity to preach to his own community, those whom he grew up with, those who were in school with him, you could say, those whom he knew in his home and in his family, I believe that Jesus would have taken the opportunity to present to his community the greatest message in all the world.

And he would call them to turn from their sin and turn to God. To repent and believe in the good news. The good news that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever in the community believes, whosoever anywhere believes, shall not die, but have everlasting life.

And yet Mark tells us, many hearing him, they were astonished. They were astonished. And it wasn't a good astonishment.

They were offended. They were insulted. Maybe even betrayed. Having listened to Jesus preach, many of the people from the community of Nazareth, they began to question Jesus.

And there is this commotion from the congregation. They all feel uneasy at what they've just heard from the preacher. And they're so offended that one of their own people could speak to them in such a manner.

[12 : 43] And to show how offended and maybe even irate and frustrated they were with what they had heard from Jesus, Mark notes five questions which they began asking one another.

Where did this man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to him? How are such mighty works performed by his hands?

Is not this the carpenters, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, are not his sisters also here with us?

And what the congregation in the synagogue in Nazareth were discussing with one another is, who does he think he is? Who does he think he is telling us to repent and believe in the gospel?

Who does he think he is? And where did he get all these ideas that he's speaking about? Who told him to say all that to us? And what wisdom has he been taught?

[13 : 45] How can he perform all these miracles? Who does he think he is? Who does he think he is? We know him. We know his parents. We know his family.

We know his people. We know his relations. We know Jesus. We know Jesus. It's not just the carpenter. It's just not our local joiner.

How has he all of a sudden become this preacher in the synagogue? Who told him that he could preach? Who gave him the authority over us to say such things?

Who gave him the right to tell us what to do? We know Jesus. We know him. He's the son of Mary. His father is Joseph. His auntie is Elizabeth.

And his cousin, he's John the Baptist. And his siblings, they're all here with us in the congregation. Because there's James. There's Joseph. There's Judas. There's Simon.

[14:40] All his brothers are here. And even all his sisters are here. They're all here. The whole family is here. They're all listening to this sermon. But why is he speaking to us like this?

Why is he saying all these things to us? Who does he think he is? And Mark tells us that the response of the community of Nazareth towards the message of Jesus was that they were offended.

Offended. They were offended at Jesus. And the word which Mark uses to describe the offense of the community in Nazareth is that they saw the message of Jesus as a stumbling block.

They saw the gospel as a hindrance rather than a help. They saw it as a curse instead of a blessing. It was this stumbling block that would ruin their community.

Because as far as they were concerned they were fine the way they were. Fine as things are we don't need to change anything. Why do we need to alter our lifestyle and the things we do?

[15:52] Why do we need to listen to Jesus? And yet Mark tells us that they were offended at him. And so they opposed Jesus and they refused to listen to him.

They rejected his message. They rejected his message. And you know thinking about it you would think you would think that the people of Nazareth would have listened to Jesus.

You would have thought that they would listen to Jesus not only because he was one of them but also because they knew him. And they could trust him. They could rely upon him.

They knew who he was. They knew everything about him. But as the old saying goes familiarity breeds contempt. Familiarity breeds contempt.

It was because of their familiarity with Jesus that the community of Nazareth rejected the message of the gospel. And you know I sometimes wonder if that is why so many people in this community in this congregation throughout our island I wonder if that's why they reject the message of the gospel.

[17:15] Familiarity breeds contempt. And my unconverted friend is the reason why you reject Jesus as Lord over your life. Is that the reason why?

Is the reason why you reject the gospel offer of salvation is it because you have become so familiar with it? Where you've become so familiar with the gospel so familiar about hearing about Jesus. Where you were baptized in the congregation you've grown up in the congregation you've been part of this community most if not all of your life and throughout the years of sitting in church week by week by week by week year by year you've become so familiar with the preaching of God's word and you've become so accustomed to hearing about God's love and God's willingness to save a lost and needy world and you've frequently heard the call to come to Christ for your salvation you've heard it again and again and again but what's frightening is that you've become so familiar with it and that you're now so comfortable and at ease in your soul sitting under God's word that when you are even reminded that you are on the precipice of hell itself it does nothing to you it does nothing to you don't allow yourself to become familiar with this gospel that it causes you to forget how wonderful it is don't allow yourself to become so familiar with Jesus Christ that it and hearing about him that it breeds contempt towards him to the point that you'll say

I don't need him I don't want him he means nothing to me instead listen to what Jesus is saying repent and believe in the gospel repent and believe in the gospel Jesus preaching Jesus preaching that's the first thing we see here but secondly we see Jesus marveling Jesus marveling if we look at verse 4 Jesus said to them a prophet is not without honor but in his own country and among his own relatives or kindred and in his own house and he could do there no mighty works except that he had laid hands on a few sick folk and healed them and he marveled because of their unbelief and he went round about the villages teaching so having preached to the people of his own community and experienced complete rejection

Jesus now responds to the opposition towards him and he does so by explaining that familiarity does breed contempt which is why they rejected him because he says a prophet is not without honor but in his own country and in these words Jesus issues a proverb and it was a well-known proverb among the Jews that those who are closest to you in life and those in your family they are least likely to take you seriously and respect what you're saying a prophet is not without honor except in his own country and what Jesus is saying is that a prophet he's held in high esteem wherever he goes except at home except at home but when Jesus delivers this proverb I don't think he's talking to the congregation in Nazareth I don't think he's addressing the community as it were

[21:20] I believe that Jesus is addressing his disciples in order to prepare them for what's going to happen shortly when he sends them out in pairs to the cities and towns and communities of Israel but what's interesting here is that when Jesus uses the proverb a prophet is not without honor

but in his own country he's referring to himself and he's drawing attention to the fact that he's carrying out his office as a prophet because the primary role of a prophet was not just to tell what would happen in the future what was going to come the primary office of a prophet was to present to the present generation that they found themselves in they were to proclaim to them God's truth and herald God's covenant and challenge any who worshipped false gods or bowed down to idols they were to call people to see the error of their ways and to repent and turn to the

Lord and that's what Jesus was doing in the synagogue in Nazareth that Sabbath morning he was executing his office as a prophet by pleading with the people of his own community he was pleading with them to realize the error of their ways and repent and turn to the Lord that's what our catechism teaches us he executes his office as a prophet in revealing to us by his word and spirit the will of God for our salvation and so the role of Jesus Christ as our prophet is to show us the way of salvation to show us the way of eternal life to show us how we can be saved and that's what Mark's gospel is all about this prophet who proclaims to us in his word that he is the only way to be saved and that through faith in him we can have eternal life he executes his office as a prophet in revealing to us by his word and spirit the will of

God for our salvation the will of God for our salvation but what is the will of God for our salvation my friend the Bible says the Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance the Lord doesn't want you to perish that's his will he doesn't want you to go to hell I don't want you to perish I don't want you to go to hell but the only way for you to be saved is to take the message of Jesus seriously the only way to be saved is to repent and believe in the gospel and yet what Jesus tells us here is what is true of every community and every family and every home where there is a Christian witness because just like the prophets in the Old Testament were ridiculed for their serious message of

God's coming judgment so too was the prophet Jesus a prophet is not without honor but in his own country and among his own kindred and in his own house and as Jesus presents the proverb he narrows the scope and influence that an effect that someone has in their community he speaks about the Christian influence among the community and then among his among their relatives and lastly among their immediate family and you know my Christian friend what Jesus is reminding us here and what Jesus experienced for himself is that the hardest place to be a Christian witness is in your own home and among your own family because John tells us in his gospel that even the brothers of Jesus didn't believe in him during his ministry we only hear that

James and Joseph or Jude they came to faith after the death and resurrection of Jesus and so as Jesus grew up in his own home in Nazareth among his brothers and sisters he was a stranger in his own home because they didn't know him as the Lord and that's what it's like for many Christians in their own family where sometimes they're the only Christian in their family they're the only Christian influence in the home and that's not easy it's not easy to be a Christian in your own home it's not easy to make that solitary stand for Christ in amongst your family especially if it's in a marriage where the spouse is still unconverted and there's no real interest in the gospel there may be a nominal consent but no genuine interest and what may make it more difficult is when children are involved but the greatest comfort here is that

[26 : 49] Jesus empathizes with us because he knew that the hardest place to be a Christian is in your own community and in your own home and even though Jesus was perfect and without sin it still didn't mean that everyone in his family believed that he was the saviour of sinners and for us who are sinners it's hard to be faithful and a consistent witness because those in our community and those in our family they know our past they know our personality they know our weaknesses they know our faults they know our pitfalls they know our temptations they remember all our blunders and they don't forget them and those in our community and those in our family they become the hardest people to speak to about the gospel because they know us so well and maybe it's because they know us so well that they find it hard to take us seriously where it would be easier for someone else to speak to them and to talk to them about the Lord and to tell them of their need of salvation but what makes it so hard and so difficult as a

Christian in your own home is that the people you want to be saved the most are those in your own family and yet at the same time they are the hardest people to speak to and if you're here this morning and you're still unconverted but you're from a Christian home or you have Christians in your family you have friends close to you that follow the Lord I want to tell you something those Christians in your family if they are your parents your wife or your husband or even your own

children let me tell you that what they want more than anything for you more than anything is that you will be saved that's what they want more than anything that you will follow the Lord that you'll become a

Christian that you'll know what they have that you'll enjoy what they have that you'll come to know Jesus for yourself but what they find so hard is that you still don't believe and that's what we see here with Jesus in his own community and his own family he marveled because of their unbelief he marveled because of their unbelief they had heard the gospel they had seen Jesus in the flesh they knew his miracles they'd heard him preach they had had every opportunity and yet it wasn't enough to convince them it wasn't enough for them to change their ways it wasn't enough and Jesus marvels at their unbelief and with so many of you in here today who have heard the gospel and have had Jesus presented to you for so many years where you've sat here and listened to so many sermons and yet you still don't believe and you know

I wonder what Jesus would think of this community I wonder what Jesus would say about this community and this congregation would Jesus marvel at your unbelief would he marvel that you're still unconverted still out of Christ because we are a privileged people and let's never forget that because there are places in our nation and throughout the world that they don't have the freedom that we do to worship or even the opportunity to do so and our community it's a place that has seen so much blessing it's experienced revival the Lord has blessed it it has seen the word of God preached faithfully every week for decades and yet there is still unbelief still unbelief still unbelief what would Jesus think of this community today what would

Jesus think of you today what would Jesus think would he marvel at your unbelief that you're still lost would he marvel that you've heard so much you've experienced so much you've seen so much and yet and yet there is still unbelief in your heart you know what Paul says beware of an evil heart of unbelief beware of an evil heart of unbelief only you can change that only you can change the heart of unbelief by seeking the Lord while he is still to be found three things

[32 : 30] Jesus did at his homecoming we've considered Jesus preaching Jesus marveling but lastly and briefly we see Jesus sending Jesus sending in verse seven he called unto him the twelve and began to send them forth two by two and gave them power over unclean spirits and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey save a staff only no bag no bread no money in their purse they should be shod with sandals and not put on two coats and he said to them in whatsoever place you enter into a house stay there until you depart from that place and whosoever shall not receive you nor hear you when you depart from there shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them assuredly I say to you it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city and so what we see in these verses is that the response which

Jesus had to the opposition he experienced from his own hometown of Nazareth was the response of not giving up or changing his strategy and that despite the unbelief of his home congregation and the people of Nazareth and their unwillingness to listen to the message of the gospel Jesus doesn't back off he doesn't call it a day he doesn't give up he doesn't think that the cause of Christ well it's not going to get anywhere and it's better to quit while the going is good no Jesus doesn't do that because instead he multiplies the mission he multiplies the mission in fact the fact that the community of Nazareth rejected the message of the gospel it didn't stop the mission of the gospel just because they didn't want to know and didn't care didn't mean others wouldn't didn't mean others wouldn't listen and so what does Jesus do he multiplies the mission he calls the twelve disciples to himself and he sends them out he sends them out two by two he sends out six pairs of preachers and they were the first apostles that's what the word apostle means it means the sent ones they were the sent ones and here

Jesus is sending out six missionary groups to proclaim the gospel but I don't want us to get bogged down with the detail of what Mark says here when he tells us that Jesus gave them authority over the unclean spirits and that they were commanded to take nothing for their journey except a staff and no bag no bread no money but have their sandals on and not could on two tunics Jesus tells these missionaries he tells them go out from where they are without with a staff in their hand and just sandals on their feet they were told to leave everything behind and go go they were to go and so as Jesus commissions his missionaries he tells them all they need to do is go with the gospel go with the gospel don't back down don't give up don't become despondent because of rejection don't become distracted by all the other things don't change your strategy don't try and introduce

innovative ideas to try and draw people to

Christ if they don't come because of Jesus they'll never come so go with the gospel just go with the gospel and when Jesus says don't take a bag or bread or money when you go he's not saying that missionaries don't need support and to be funded and be given financial help all Jesus is telling us is that what we need to be going with into our community is none other than the gospel of salvation that's what we need to be going with the message of Jesus Christ and unashamed with it unashamed with it and verse 12 it tells us that these six groups of men these missionaries they went out and preached that people should repent Jesus called them to himself and commanded them to go with the same message that Jesus was preaching the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe in the gospel and you know what Mark tells us Jesus did with these twelve apostles is exactly what he does with all of the Lord's people where Jesus first of all calls us to himself he calls us to himself calls us out of darkness into his marvelous light but Jesus calls us for a purpose ultimately for his own glory but he calls us in order to multiply the mission to multiply the mission because Jesus knew then when he sent out the twelve apostles one man is not enough one man is not enough a one man ministry is of no use the mission needs to be multiplied it needs to be extended and my Christian friend the apostle Peter who was sent out that day in [38 : 12] Nazareth the apostle Peter he later wrote that Jesus has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light not to sit and do nothing not for us to be lazy in our Christianity not for us to take and take and take not for us to be consumerists in our Christianity no Peter tells us that Jesus called us from darkness into his marvelous light that we might show forth the praises of him that's why Jesus called us to himself to send us out into the community with the gospel and it was once said that the church it's a voluntary army a voluntary army in which every Christian soldier has to make a choice we all have to make a choice we can either sit and get spiritually fat on the preaching of the word and do nothing but we can ask the Lord what will you have me to do what will you have me to do my friend

Jesus has called us in order to multiply the mission but what we forget so often and what we lose sight of is that the mission which we have been called to is one that has eternal consequences eternal consequences when Jesus issued the command to go he said in whatsoever place you enter into a house stay there until you depart from that place whosoever shall not receive you or hear you depart shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony against them assuredly I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city we all know what happened at Sodom and Gomorrah we all know what happened there they were repeatedly warned but they wouldn't listen they were called to repent on a number of occasions but they wouldn't listen they didn't respond and they rejected the offer of salvation and what Jesus is telling us here is that whether or not people reject the gospel that's not the church's priority the church's priority is to carefully and faithfully present that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation and what people do with it it's on their own head it's on their own head my unconverted friend what you do with the gospel of Jesus Christ the son of God is on your own head I will not stand for you at the day of judgment nor will any elder nor will any family member it's on your own head your blood is on your own hands and because you've heard the message of the gospel for so many years where

Jesus has sent Christians into your life into your home into your family into your workplace into your community if you remain in your spiritual condition today your judge says to you on the pages of scripture it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than it will be for you my friend you decide what you want to do with Jesus you decide may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray Lord we thank thee for the gospel we thank thee that it is a free offer a free offer to any who are willing and Lord if we are not willing that thou wouldst make us willing in a day of thy power bless us

Lord we plead apply thy truth to our hearts that we would take it with us and not leave it in the pew but that thou Lord wouldst speak to us and continue to remind us that we need thee every hour and every hour we need thee cleanse us O Lord we pray and do us good for Jesus sake Amen I shall conclude by singing in Psalm 71 Psalm 71 in the Scottish Psalter page 310 Psalm 71 singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 5 O Lord my hope and confidence is placed in thee alone then let thy servant never be put to confusion and let me in thy righteousness from thee deliverance have cause me escape incline thine ear unto me and me save down to the verse marked 5 of

[43 : 54] Psalm 71 we'll stand to sing to God's praise yours thou what says Ho coy to me with And let me in thy righteousness From the evil of thou Cause me escape in thy night After me and me save

Be thou my dwelling rock To which I ever fear his own Thou gave'st commandment me To sin for thou art my walk and heart Free me my God from wicked hands And cruel hands uncharted For thou, O Lord God, art my hope And from my youth my trust The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all Now and forevermore Amen Amen