

## Mark 6:1-13

### Even if they won't listen

So ... people found a way to ignore even Jesus. More than this, they were angered and indignant that he would dare to step above his perceived station and place in their lives to speak with them, to teach them, to heal them. We should remember this the next time our kids, our spouse, our siblings ignore us or indicate by their behaviour that they think we don't have a clue what we're talking about!!



“Where did he get all this?” they ask [about Jesus]. “What wisdom is this that has been given him? How does he perform miracles? Isn't he the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters living here?” And so they rejected him.” [Mark 6:2b-3]

Jesus' first response is one of surprise, that people could have so little faith. His second response, coming immediately after the first, was to send out the 12 disciples to spread the good news of the gospel and to heal the sick.

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh announced he was going to try to fly across the Atlantic Ocean by airplane – solo. No one had ever attempted to fly over the Atlantic by airplane before. When word reached Lindbergh's hometown of Little Falls, Minnesota, a skeptic remarked, "No man will ever fly all the way across the Atlantic Ocean. And if someone does, it *won't* be anyone from Little Falls!"

A prophet is without honour in his/her own town! Evidently, so too is a pilot. Nevertheless, hometown honour and credibility or not, we are called to be and do all that God has created us to be and do. Rejected or welcomed with open arms, listened to or ignored, we, like the 12 disciples are being sent even today, to be witnesses for Jesus, to share our faith, to spread the good news of the gospel.

There is a story about a man named George. He sat in the back row of the sanctuary on the preacher's right. A permanent scowl was chiselled on his face. His posture announced to all that he was a man not easily pleased. Ushers tip-toed around him. Whenever his name came up in conversation around church hallways, someone would always ask, "Why does a grouch like that keep coming to worship?"

No one ever came up with an answer. One thing was certain – George was particularly hard on preachers. "I have heard hundreds of sermons over the years," he announced to his last pastor, "and I haven't heard many sermons I've liked."

Some who sat near the back row wondered if George ever actually heard a sermon. Each week as the preacher began, they would inevitably hear a steady "click, click, click" from George's pew. If anyone nearby turned to identify the source, they might see a stained glass sunbeam reflecting from George's chrome-plated fingernail clippers.

"Preacher," George said at the narthex door one day, "I don't get much out of your sermons." Before he could restrain himself, the long-suffering minister blurted out, "I know, George. But at least you're getting a weekly manicure."

So, let us be warned. We who are now Christ's body – hands, feet, heart, voice – in and for the world are given no guarantees of success. As someone mused one day, "following Jesus does not mean that we will always be met with positive responses of acceptance and

encouragement, even on the home courts of our families, friends, neighbourhoods, churches, and nations.”

Preachers sometimes wonder, even those who come to worship wonder, if anyone is listening. John Duckworth describes what the whole preaching experience can be like in a poem called, "Casey at the Pulpit,"

The smile is gone from Casey's lip; his notes are clenched in hand;  
He pounds with great intensity his fist upon the stand.  
And now he starts to make his point, and now he lets it flow,  
And afterward the people tell him, "Pastor, way to go!"  
Oh, somewhere in this favoured land the Son is shining bright;  
The organ's playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;  
And somewhere folks are learning, and somewhere Christians shout;  
But there is no growth in Mudville -- Pastor Casey's been tuned out.

There may be many reasons why the message can get tuned out, whether it comes from a pulpit or is spoken to a friend during the week. Perhaps, for some people, the message is too familiar and they've heard it all before. Perhaps there is a sense that the messenger is nobody special. And every so often, even on Sundays, a preacher will hear, "Reverend, I didn't come to church to be preached at."

Some may feel that all this religious stuff is old fashioned and outdated, strange and only for those who aren't enlightened. For others, the gospel is so unfamiliar to them that they don't know what to make of it, whether to trust that the good news is for them. Conversely, some people have never really heard the good news – that God has created all that is, each and every life handcrafted; that God loves the world, and each of us, so much that he holds back nothing, not even his Son, in order to show us his love for us – that he treasures us, cherishes us, longs to be in relationship with us; that God knows everything about us and loves us anyway; that God forgives our sin, completely cleaning the slate, forgetting that we have ever sinned or strayed; that God cares for us, for every heartache and every joy, for every failure and every success, for every trial and every triumph; that God is as near to us as the breath we breathe, as essential to our living as air and water; that God never counts the days we are astray, only the moments until we come to Him to love and be loved by Him; that God loves us so much that He can't bear to take His eyes off us.

Following Jesus doesn't mean that we'll always be met with positive responses of acceptance and encouragement. Nevertheless, following Jesus does mean that we will go out, to tell his story, to show others where he meets them in their story. It means that, having embraced the forgiveness and love of God in our own lives, we will offer the promise of that forgiveness and love to others, for their healing and for their living. It means that, being the recipients of God's lavish, extravagant blessings, we will share all that we are, all that we believe, all that we have with all to whom God sends us, leads us.