

Introductory

“Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you back.” Frost

Harper Study Bible lists parallels in Matthew (13: 53-58) and Luke (4: 16-30) for what it calls “Second Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth.” None of those texts is appointed to be read by the TLH one-year lectionary. Matthew and Luke are not appointed for LW or LSB. Mark 6: 1-6 is appointed for Pentecost 7 and Mark 6: 7-13 for Pentecost 8 in LW.

There are two things going on in this pericope. Jesus being rejected calling the Twelve. It is generally thought that Jesus was twice rejected by the people of Nazareth. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all have accounts of rejections. The rejection account of Luke (4) comes early on in Jesus’ ministry, and the accounts of Matthew and Mark place it later.

Matthew and Mark are describing a different event from the one recorded by Luke (4: 16-30). This text is the second rejection, also described by Matthew. This second rejection of Jesus by the people of Nazareth is seen in light of the earlier rejection as recorded by Luke. At that time, there was conversation that ended up with them wanting to kill Him.

Today’s text also needs to be seen in light of an incident that we looked at a few weeks ago, the one recorded in the third chapter of Mark, the one where the mother and numerous siblings of Jesus come to take Him away, the one where He responds to being informed of their presence by saying that those who follow Him are actually His family.

At that point, His family are clearly not with Him, not even Mary, and here they are conspicuous by their absence. It was a small town, and everybody knew everybody’s business, and the family of Jesus was – at the least – embarrassed by his notoriety. Here, by their absence they are affirming that they don’t support Him in what He is doing.

The impetus for what happens here is that Jesus has returned to Nazareth for a second time, and He goes to the synagogue and starts teaching. There is no reason to believe that He at any time left the synagogue during this exchange, and there is every reason to believe that the exchange was there and between Him and religious leaders and teachers.

Growing up there, Jesus had likely sat at the feet of many of those teachers and obeyed what they had commanded Him. It clearly galled them that He has now exceeded them. People can be like that. Besides that, they had already rejected Him once and tried to throw Him off a cliff. That didn’t work. Maybe saying He’s nothing special will work.

Textual Notes

Rejection at Nazareth

1. Going inland from the Sea of Galilee, Jesus “ἐξῆλθεν ἐκεῖθεν, καὶ ἔρχεται εἰς τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ - went from there and came into his hometown.” The noun describing Nazareth is “πατρίδα.” The word occurs eight times in the NT, including in 6:4, and is used to indicate what we might call one’s hometown, and you only have one of them.

Until I married and moved out, I had lived in the same house on the same street in my hometown of Milan, IL from about two years old. When we lived away from home, like a lot of pastors live away from home, there was always a certain familiarity there in the hometown, on the old street, in the old house, that was not there in any other place.

My father still lives in that house, and we live about ten miles from it, and I get to Milan about weekly, and it will always be my hometown, and it will always have a feel like no other town. I used to stop by the hardware store, owned by my best friend from high school, and catch up on things. But he died a couple of years ago, and it’s not the same.

Mark says, “ἀκολουθοῦσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ – His disciples followed Him.” That word is the term describing those who fall between “crowd” and “apostle.” The crowds were interested in the show, the Apostles had been hand-picked by Him to do what they were to do, and disciples are people who want to learn from Him and often they believe.

2. And now “γενομένου σαββάτου ἤρξατο διδάσκειν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ – when the Sabbath came, He began to teach.” The first verb, γενομένου, is an aorist participle, and in this case it means the teaching took place in conjunction with the Sabbath. The teaching took place “ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ - in the synagogue,” on Friday evening or Saturday morning.

The verb for teaching, διδάσκειν, is a present infinitive; focus on the connection of the act to the person. Like any good teacher, teaching is very much a part of whom He is. Teaching has always been a part of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Besides being the site of various prescribed OT ritual, Temple was where religious education took place.

The same can be said for the synagogue, and a quick peek at the web site of my local synagogue reveals educational opportunities there for adults as well as for children. Besides learning the Torah and the like on Saturday, during the week Hebrew is taught at both the Rock Island and Davenport synagogues, who are in the process of merging.

The Islamic Center of the Quad Cities offers Sunday School from 10:00 to 1:00, but at this time it’s one of the “cancelled” activities, presumably due to The Thing. Religions with a book who appeal – more or less – to the mind seem to be a better fit for man and his brain than the pagan and Pentecostal, which focus almost exclusively on emotion.

By the time of Jesus, the Jews were moving from being a people of the building – Temple – to being a People of the Book, the OT. That shift was caused by several factors, not the

least of which was the Diaspora. For Jews who had vacated Palestine, it was impossible for them to offer daily sacrifices, but they could – and did – establish synagogues.

You couldn't do sacrifices in synagogue, but you could read the Word, and there was a spot in the service after the reading of that Word for a qualified person to expound on that word, and Mark does not tell us exactly what Jesus says, but whatever He said, it raised some eyebrows, “οἱ πολλοὶ ἀκούοντες ἐξεπλήσσοντο – many, hearing, were astonished.”

The verb “ἀκούοντες – hearing,” is a present participle, continuous act, and they were “ἐξεπλήσσοντο – astonished” by the teaching of Jesus. The verb “ἐκπλήσσω,” literally “to strike out of one's senses” (BAG), is a word often used to describe the response to the teaching of Jesus. What kind of a speaker causes that sort of a response in the hearer?

Probably not a boring speaker. They are actually able to put their astonishment into words, λέγοντες Πόθεν τούτῳ ταῦτα, καὶ τίς ἡ σοφία ἢ δοθεῖσα τούτῳ; καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τοιαῦται διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ γινόμεναι – saying ‘from whence to this man these things, and what the wisdom given to this man, and such the power through his hands are done.’”

Remember teachers that you have had or books that you have read or movies that you have seen that leave you absolutely gob smacked. I still remember the first time I heard Jim Rome on the radio. It was the early to mid-nineties, I was on I-35 north of Kansas City, scanning channels, and Rome came on, and I used to listen to him every day,

Then he got political. I was on Hwy 41 west of Milwaukee mid-late 80s when I first heard Rush Limbo. I would schedule driving time around his show and when the app came out, I got it. Then he died too. Whatever else you think about President Trump, I can sit and listen to him until the cows come home, and I didn't have to be taught how.

Sometimes Pastors will whine about the responsibility of the hearer to listen. Others will put forth the thesis that people have to be taught how to listen. I could not disagree more. Nobody has to teach me how to listen to Rome, or to Limbo, or to any other good speaker, and we never see Jesus teaching His hearers how to listen. They just do.

Earlier this year, I listened to Bomber Mafia, Malcolm Gladwell's latest. I told my father not long ago that I've been reading WW II books since I was a kid, and I don't need to know any more about that little tiff, yet there I was, fascinated by Gladwell's account of the bombing campaign against Germany and then against Japan. I couldn't put it down.

I said as much to my wife, who is much more interested in creating and growing plants than in killing and destroying humanity, and it's an Audible, so she gave it a shot. When she got done painting the room, she found herself two-thirds of the way through the book, and she could not put it down. Much of what we learned you could call “astonishing.”

In particular, they noted the “σοφία – wisdom” that had been given to Him.” The verb “given” is in the passive tense; Jesus was the recipient of wisdom from an unnamed

source. The source was God, and Jesus almost certainly learned theology from teachers right there in that very synagogue, some of who were probably among the congregation.

They also note the “δυνάμεις – power” that emanated from His hands. This ought to be taken as a reference to His ability to do miracles. Our brains are made to categorize, and if you want to break down into two things what Jesus does in the Gospels; He preaches (teaches), and He does miracles. To put it another way; what He says and what He does.

Nazareth would have been aware of miracles by hearsay and also by having seen them with their own collective eye. In chapter three, Mark relates healings, and tells us that a lot of people “from Galilee” (7) followed Jesus, and presumably saw the healings. Later on, we hear that Jesus went “home” (19) and is acknowledged to have cast out demons.

3. The wonderment of these particular people at the words and actions of Jesus is because of their familiarity with Him; they rhetorically ask “οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τέκτων – is this not the carpenter?” The first word indicates that they expect the answer to their question to be “yes,” and it is, Jesus is a carpenter. Some would call it “builder” or “contractor.”

As is often the case today, more often in that day sons followed fathers into the same vocation. In the parallel from Matthew, the townies observe (13:55) that Joseph was “τέκτων – carpenter.” We know that Joseph was a carpenter, and here we are told that Jesus is as well. Mary is His mother, and four brothers are named, and He has “sisters.”

Like most rhetorical questions, this one expects an affirmative answer. Yes, actually He is a carpenter and those are His family, and Joseph is noteworthy because of his absence. In those days especially, a man’s identity is very much tied into the identity of his father, and Matthew’s account in fact includes that. His absence here is nothing short of glaring.

In Matthew, the claim – in the form of rhetorical question – that Jesus is the son of Joseph is on the lips of the townspeople, who are not in a friendly mood. No doubt there had been talk of the real biological father of Jesus over the years. Their words amount to a public declaration that whatever you might think, they think Jesus is nothing special.

Often, when meeting people from Milan who can’t quite place me, I will tell them that I’m “Lyle’s Boy.” Jesus is the builder, son of a builder who used to live next door, you know, Mary’s boy. I went to Talmud Torah with his brother. Ya, and He worked on my dad’s roof a couple of years ago. Some say Joseph isn’t his biological, but who knows.

We know that the shepherds told a lot of people what they had witnessed, and people like Anna and Simeon understood the theology of Jesus. Do we not suppose that the account of that birth and all that surrounded it came to the ears of the people in His hometown? You wonder why somebody – maybe Mary – doesn’t speak up and just say it.

When the Nazareth town folk talk about the brothers of Jesus, and they go ahead and name them, they do so in a familiar and very straightforward manner. But when they talk

about His sisters, they do not name them, which is not unusual, but they rhetorically ask if the sisters are not “πρός ἡμᾶς – with us,” a question expecting an affirmative answer.

That phrase “πρός ἡμᾶς,” is a preposition of location followed by a noun in the accusative – motion into. It is an unusual phrase, and it occurs only four times in the NT. We find the phrase here, in Matthew’s parallel, and twice in Luke (16:26), in reference to the “great chasm” that exists between Lazarus in heaven and Rich Mann in Hell.

When it comes to family matters, they think that a great chasm has opened up between Jesus and the people of Nazareth, and the claim of His skeptics is that His sisters have sided with them, and not with Jesus. Of these men, the ones who are doing all the talking, it says that they are “ἔσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ – they lost faith in Him.”

The verb is “σκανδαλίζω,” and the word is almost always translated “offended” or “took offense,” and I would encourage us to stop using that English word to translate that Greek word. The KJV uses “offended” here and in other places, but when the KJV used the word, it actually meant something. These days, not so much. In fact, it means nothing.

Merriam-Webster.com quotes Shakespeare as equating the word with sin; “if it be a sin to covet honor, I am the most *offending* soul alive.” That’s what it meant then. How many people these days connect the word “offend” to sin? In fact, you can make the case that these days a lot of things offend people, but sin is one of the few things that does not.

An offended person, when pressed for an explanation of “I’m offended,” keeps repeating, “I’m offended,” or the cognate active, “You have offended me.” You know the kind of silliness I’m talking about. Maybe we should just completely remove the word from our vocabulary, give it a “time out” for a few years, or maybe do away with it altogether.

The NT word “σκανδαλίζω” actually means “to set a snare” or “to cause to stumble” and brings with it connotations of trapping an animal. In the NT, it means that Satan is attempting to ensnare prey, causing it to stop believing in Jesus and come on over to his side, thereby exchanging eternity in heaven for the everlasting punishment that is Hell.

4. Jesus responds to that with His well-known saying about prophets and the home-town folks, a saying related also by Luke and Mark and even John (4:44.) He uses the figure of speech known as Litotes, understatement in which something is expressed by negation of the contrary. He mentions three groups who do not honor a prophet like Him.

The ordering of the three groups is from those people close to closer to closest to Him. First, He mention “πατρίδι – home town,” then He talks about “συγγενεύσιν – relatives,” and finally, closest to Him, “οἰκία – His own household. The meaning of the saying is clear and the veracity of it observable, and if you google it, mostly Bible verses come up.

5. He was “οὐκ ἐδύνατο ἐκεῖ ποιῆσαι οὐδεμίαν δύναμιν – not able to do there not any work of power.” The first verb is in the imperfect tense, emphasizing a continuing state,

followed by an aorist infinitive verb, focus on the act, not the person. Isn't Jesus God and able to do anything He wants? Then He goes ahead and miraculously heals sick people.

It is noteworthy that the thing (δύναμιν - power) they found noteworthy just a few verses ago is the thing that He can no longer do in their midst, and He piles on the negators for emphasis. We ought not to be troubled by the apparent impotence of Jesus that seems to be indicated by the verb “δύναμαι,” – preceded by a negator – in reference to miracles.

The word means, “to be able, have power, whether by virtue of one's own ability...or *through favorable circumstances*, or by permission of law or custom” (biblos.com). The clear limiting factor here is the lack of “favorable circumstances,” and in the parallel text Matthew tells us what is lacking; “διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν – because of their unbelief.”

What could be more of a case of casting pearls before swine – and Jesus is against that – than doing miracles for unbelief. In much the same way, we only administer the miracle of the Sacrament to people who believe the miracle of the real presence, and we do not cast those holy things in front of those swine who refuse to believe it.

6. Now it's Jesus' turn to think and feel what they had felt and thought, “ἐθαύμασεν διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν – He was amazed at their unbelief.” He was both surprised and amazed at the unbelief of the spokespeople. He was probably surprised and amazed on several levels: seeing, but not believing, hearing, but not listening, denying the obvious.

What probably surprised and amazed Him most was how quickly and how severely these people whom He had known all His life turned on Him. The One who is about to admonish those He will send out to “shake off the dust that is on your feet” and leave those who do not receive His Word, shakes the hometown dust off of His feet.

Leaving there, “ἐριῆγεν τὰς κόμας κύκλῳ διδάσκων – He goes to other villages, where He is teaching.” This is a good principle, and one that should be followed today. If you don't want me around – with a few exceptions – I'm not going to stay around. If I am serving as a pastor in a place where people don't want me, I'm going to leave.

Sending the Twelve

7. He had selected them earlier (3:13-19). Now “προσκαλεῖται τοὺς δώδεκα, καὶ ἤρξατο αὐτοὺς ἀποστέλλειν δύο δύο – He summons the Twelve and begins them to send out.” The word used here is “προσκαλέω,” literally “summoned to Him” these men, and then sent them out in pairs, and later on they will go into their appointed mission fields alone.

The Mormons have retained the buddy system, and the Lutherans have modified and adapted it. If you are married and you want to be a missionary overseas, you are required to take your wife. The wife is expected to do church work, and our married missionaries are required to bring two people, but receive a paycheck for only one. No exceptions.

And “καὶ ἐδίδου αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν ἀκαθάρτων – He was giving to them authority over the unclean spirits.” This is the ninth time in Mark that we have run into “πνευμάτων τῶν ἀκαθάρτων – unclean spirits,” and Jesus has several times already shown His mastery over them by besting them in theological combat.

The Twelve now have that same authority, and we see (13) that they did in fact use it. According to Luke, The Seventy who are later sent out also had that same authority, and Luke relates to us (10:17) that it worked for them. They, not all, were given that sort of authority, and that supernatural authority fades away, as Paul says, and as we observe.

These days, Pastors are sent out with Word and Sacrament, which have authority over unclean spirits. Exorcism is a thing, and as America continues to get away from orthodox Christianity, Satan takes note, and he sends out the demons. The default for people who don’t believe demons exist is to call that “mental illness,” which is also a thing.

8. Before they left, “παρήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδὲν αἴρωσιν εἰς ὁδὸν – He instructed them that they should take nothing.” The word “παρήγγειλεν – instructed” is used when somebody is telling somebody else – in this case telling the group – what to do. He tells them to take nothing, with one exception; “εἰ μὴ” ῥάβδος – except a walking stick.”

That’s the one exception, a purely functional allowance. They were going to be putting on a lot of miles, and they would have been traveling almost exclusively by foot, and to properly walk one needed a proper stick. For reasons why they needed the stick, go to WIK on “Walking Stick.” Is there anything for which WIK *doesn’t* have an article?

Things that they were not to take included: bread, a leather bag, and a money belt. The first forbidden item is “ἄρτον – bread,” and the word include a loaf of bread and almost certainly includes the wider definition; food of any kind, but mostly bread. Carbs are the fuel for the body, and if you’re going to be walking a lot, you’re going to need fuel.

Almost all fuel for humans has come from three sources: rice, wheat, and maize (corn). In her book *Victoria, the Queen*, Julia Baird says that once, as a money-saving measure, “she decided to limit palace bread rations to one pound per person per day.” That means they previously had been rationed more than a pound a day. For fuel. And it can be tasty.

So don’t fill up the gas tank before you take off on your trip. The second item not to take is “πήραν,” a leather version of Jack Bauer’s green cloth bag, but probably not filled with guns and hand grenades and cruise missiles. The third item not allowed would be like a fanny pack, only smaller, and you would carry coins, not granola bars and sunscreen.

9. Now the dress code; “ἀλλὰ ὑποδεδεμένους σανδάλια, καὶ μὴ ἐνδύσησθε δύο χιτῶνας – but having bound sandals (to feet), and not two garments.” The first phrase is perhaps an idiom for the equivalent of “kids, get your shoes on, we’re leaving really soon.” He tells them not to take two “χιτῶνας,” a word that refers to clothing worn near the skin.

They are to trust in the Providence of God and His people for their sustenance while traveling. As a practical matter, they will not look like tourists, like they would have had they been carrying those things forbidden. Traveling light means blending in with the crowd, moving easily from place to place, and having nothing for robbers to steal.

10. The next instruction, “Ὅπου ἐὰν εἰσέλθῃτε εἰς οἰκίαν, ἐκεῖ μένετε ἕως ἂν ἐξέλθῃτε ἐκεῖθεν – If whenever you should enter into a house, remain there until you should go out from there.” The sentence is full of conditional language, various forms of the American word “if,” and heavy use of the subjunctive mood. No two places will be the same.

He is not speaking of any specific house, but the rule applies to whatever house they are in. Every town, every home will be different, and you should be selective. Robertson (WP) has it right when he says, “they were to avoid a restless and dissatisfied manner and to take pains in choosing a home. It is not a prohibition against accepting invitations.”

11. Using more conditional language, Jesus clearly warns them of the possibility that not everybody is going to be equally excited to see them. He says “ὅς ἂν τόπος μὴ δέξηται ὑμᾶς μηδὲ ἀκούσωσιν ὑμῶν – that anyhow a place does not receive you nor hear you,” and that is how it always has been, was for Jesus, and it’s the same way these days too.

And if that should be the case that a town or a household does not receive your word“ then, “ἐκπορευόμενοι ἐκεῖθεν ἐκτινάξατε τὸν χοῦν τὸν ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν ὑμῶν εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς – leaving there, shake the dust which is under your feet, your testimony against them.” The shaking is in the imperative mood; It is commanded, not optional.

This is another saying of Jesus that has come down to us in the vernacular. It was a common practice in OT and NT times for a Jew to literally shake the dust off of his feet upon leaving Gentile soil, symbolically – somewhat literally – removing unclean Gentile soil from his own clean body. They should move on, and not give them another thought.

He often uses the Jewish abhorrence of all things Gentile – a common thing – to explain things. The scorn with which the Jew regarded Gentile land and territory is the kind of scorn that The Twelve should have towards those who reject The Word of Jesus spoken through them. They should move on, not take it personally, and go on to the next town.

He then talks about the Last Day, the Final Judgment, referencing Sodom and Gomorrah, the twin OT cities that had become so thoroughly corrupted that God executed a death sentence on them, destroying them with fire. There could have been, in NT times, no more graphic picture of utter depravity than those twin cauldrons of sin.

And yet, Jesus says, it will be better for them than for the town who reject The Twelve. This is a reminder to faithful Christians, and especially to faithful Christian pastors, that they may and will be scorned by the world, but they are loved and supported by God, the same God who will visit His Almighty Scorn upon those who reject Him and His Word.

12. The Twelve did go out, and consistent with the preaching of Jesus and John the Baptizer before Him, “ἐκήρυξαν ἵνα μετανοῶσιν – they preached that they should repent.” No matter what else, no matter what form it takes, Christian preaching is always about repentance because the Christian life is always about continual repentance.

13. Likewise like Jesus, καὶ δαιμόνια πολλὰ ἐξέβαλλον – they cast out many demons,” and I think Pastors in America should start boning up on your exorcising skills. Lutheran Service Book is not going to be much help on that, and you’re on your own when it comes to anointing the sick with oil as well. We wouldn’t want to scare the children.

I have actually read *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare: True Accounts from the Lutheran Church of Madagascar*, written by our own Robert Bennett, published by our own CPH Publishing. I have not read *My First Exorcism: What the Devil Taught Me* by Harold Ristau, who is also one of us, published by not CPH.

Besides casting out demons, “καὶ ἤλειπον ἐλαίῳ πολλοὺς ἀρρώστους καὶ ἐθεράπευον – and they were anointing many sick people and healing.” Nor is there anything in LSB about using oil on the sick, but James (5:14) encourages it. I had thought that LSB was going to include a service with anointing the sick with oil...maybe next hymnal...

Law/Gospel

Rejection/Acceptance - Because Jesus was rejected here by those who had been closest to Him, and later on will be rejected by His Father, we are accepted by that same Father, and made a member of His Family.

Sickness/Wellness – Sickness comes because of sin. Jesus heals sick people, showing us that He defeats sin and sickness and giving us a picture of heaven.

No Word/Word – If this seems to be a recurring theme, that’s because it is. Without the Word and Sacrament – the Word added to visible elements – we have no faith, no family, no salvation. But we do have the Word, and so we are blessed to have what the Word gives.

Satan Wins/Satan Defeated – Satan is our great enemy, and he sends demons to torment us. Jesus and the Apostles defeat demons, and on the cross He defeats Satan and his power over us.

Sermon Titles

Rejection and Mission

Home is the Place...

Hymns

Hymns about Jesus are always good.

Rev. Steven L. Anderson
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Grand Mound, Iowa

Resources

ACC – Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Mark).
Intervarsity Press, 2002

BAG – Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated by
William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1979

BCLY – William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark..* The Westminster Press, 1975

FGG – James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*. Concordia Publishing House,
1993

MGM – W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, H.K. Moulton, *A Concordance to the Greek
Testament*. T & T Clark LTD., 1978

MM – James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek
Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982

ODCC – F.L. Cross, Editor, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford
University Press, 1978

RNK – Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1976

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, 1977.

WP – A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Baker, 1930

VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *An Expository Dictionary of
Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

WIK – www.wikipedia.com

BIB – www.biblos.com

GBO – www.greekbible.com

Digital Classics Library - www.perseus.tufts.edu

Internet Classics Library – www.classics.mit.edu

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - www.ccel.org

Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html