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St. Mark 6:1-6:

Will Continue To The End

- I. The Skandalon.
- II. The Sin.
- III. The Object.
- IV. The Effect.

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St. Mark 6:1-6

Dear Friends in Christ,

In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul writes to Timothy: "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season." What Paul writes applies to all teachings of the word. It's the "out of season" that hits. That's exactly where churches that teach salvation by God's grace through faith in Christ, and that the Scriptures are the inspired, inerrant, authoritative word of God stand: *out of season*. Not in step with the world's thinking and wants.

In 2 Timothy 4:3 Paul writes: "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching..." That's exactly where churches that hold tightly to salvation by God's grace through faith in Christ, and that the Scriptures are the inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word of God find themselves; the time where most of the present day church will not "endure sound teaching."

In 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul writes: "...endure suffering...". That's precisely what no-one wants to hear. It's like this: The word of God, particularly the Commandments, give stability and quality to life. Without the word everything unravels. Look at what has happened to marriage, traditional family values, education, law and order, medicine, church, decency, politeness, gentleness, self-control, common sense. You name it. It started in the garden and . . .

WILL CONTINUE TO THE END

I. The Skandalon

He went away from there and came to his hometown . . . And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the Synagogue and many who heard him were astonished, saying..."What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary?"...And they took offense at him.(vv.1a & 3b).

This was a hometown son. They were offended by the One who had done "such mighty works": Healed a demon possessed man, a woman who had suffered affliction for years; offended by Him who had raised a little child from death to life.

The word translated "offended" is the Greek word **skandalon**, which is noted as "a stronger word than the English 'offended'". And this: "In secular Greek the concept includes setting a trap, being entrapped, tying a noose, or laying oneself open to punishment." Greek scholar, A. T. Robertson wrote, "(The people) were trapped like game by the skandalon because they could not explain him, having been so recently one of them." They were entrapped by their thinking." As Scriptures teach, "...Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (I Cor.1:23)." But listen to this . . .

II. The Sin

"And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished...(v.2a)." Astonished. Amazed. Mixed feelings. It's always that way with Jesus. A woman by the name of Edith Beck wrote, "Take another look at the Cross and see the revelation: it is a sword

that cuts our conscience; it is a key that unlocks our prisons; it is a royal scepter under which we will live eternally with Him in His kingdom.”

It's the first part of that quote that draws us to the cause of the scandal. “The Cross...is a sword that cuts our conscience.” This is what traps people. Remember Jesus before Pilate? Remember when the people shouted, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!”(Jn.19:15). Remember when Pilate finally acquiesced to the mob's demand? Why? Why?? Because Jesus fed empty stomachs? Nonsense! Because He welcomed little children and those deemed social misfits? Ridiculous! Because he healed the blind and lame? Absurd! Because He raised the dead? Insane!

So, why crucify Him? Because when you cut through the magic of the *feel good* there's that hard confrontation Christ makes with our sin. That's the shot He called: the sin that brings conflict and war - spawns disease, accident, and aging - nurtures decay and death - draws humanity into corruption and violence - and finally, consigns everyone to unending lovelessness and agony - hell.

Jesus said, “Whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God (I Jn.3:18.)” This is the “scandal” of Jesus Christ. He didn't come into this world to commend us for being good and wonderful. He came to condemn our sin in His body at the Cross! Whoever believes has forgiveness and eternal life. Whoever does not believes is condemned.

III. The Object

The scandal was the commonness of Jesus as testified by our text; again the words, “How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us (vv.2b,3)?”

Dear friends, even we, in our culture and time, expect certain things to be spectacular if they're going to have any impact at all! And look, God visits humanity as one of us. The hometown crowd was not impressed! “Is this not one of us?”, they asked. “And they took offense at him.” They were scandalized by him; entrapped by what they thought God should be and how He should present Himself.

And look, brothers and sisters, look at the commonness Christ leaves with us: written Words - Words combined with water for working faith; baptism - Bread and wine for a Holy Supper. Shouldn't God be a bit more spectacular, entertaining, appealing; offering more of the “stuff” that's being dished out today?! Please...please!!...listen: If you miss the commonness yet miraculous of what God gives in Word and Sacrament you've missed it all!

As this world draws to its Last Moment, we would do well to remember this from Scripture:

“The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who do not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess.2:9-11).”

You see, there is one who offers the spectacular and appealing. He's the liar and murderer: Satan and his deceptions. On behalf of the pastors, we'll stick to the "commonness" of the Means of grace He has chosen: Word and Sacraments . . . and not the whining of those who have decided the church is not necessary - or that it needs to be in a perpetual process of change.

And we cannot ignore this: We, too, are objects of scandal, for we are His choice to witness the truth to others. In a way, we are like a "prophet...in his hometown." It is as Scriptures say:

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human might boast in the presence of God (I Cor. 1:27-29).

IV. The Effect

And so, we come to the effects of the scandal:

And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief (vv.4-6a).

It's not that difficult. On one hand, the rejection of Christ because He isn't what one wants or thinks He should be is entrapment into eternal punishment for sin. On the other hand, hear the words of Jesus: "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father; that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day (Jn.6:39,40)." Whoever believes Christ earned forgiveness of all sin will be forgiven and have eternal life.

Christ, out of love for all, allowed His veins to be pierced and His blood to flow to wash away our damning sin. As John wrote, "...the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (I Jn.1:7)." The world doesn't see its need for Christ. It exists, generation after generation, thinking this world will get better and better. Has it? Will it? So, what is the real scandal? This will continue to the end.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott