

Mary's Son the Carpenter

Mark 6:1-6

I had not seen him in over a year. We grew up together on the same street in our village. I remember as a child playing stick ball together with the other children our age. Every group of kids has a pecking order. The usual outliers are folks like Lunatic Larry the village idiot and Smart Bart the local genius. We tend to dismiss one because



they annoy us and shun the other because we feel stupid in their presence. But most of us huddle in the muddled middle and measure our worth by comparing ourselves to others who are not so different from us. Such was the way I initially viewed Mary's oldest son Jesus. He was like me only a little more quiet.

After his father Joseph died, he took over the carpenter shop and helped provide income for Mary and his six brothers and sisters. I remember him as a hardworking responsible fellow. He might have been more religious than the rest of us but he didn't flaunt what he knew. Then about eighteen months ago he turned the business over to his brothers and left town. Curious rumors drifted back to the village of his activities. He acquired a group of followers. He taught large crowds. Some even said he could heal people of their diseases. It was strange talk that didn't fit assumptions I had made of him.

Three days ago he and some of his new friends returned home. He was asked to speak at the synagogue on the Sabbath so I went to listen. The whole town was there. He told us some engaging stories and quoted from the prophets. But what captivated me was his presence. He exuded such confidence without being arrogant. He possessed a humility and intensity of spirit that was stunning. A couple of religious officials were present who drilled him with questions. He responded with grace and humor and questions of his own that left all in the room dumbfounded, including the officials. "Where did he get such wisdom and insight," we all wondered. As he spoke, I could feel rise up inside me a sense of elation and longing that I didn't even know I had. What he said and the way he said it caused some part of me to wake up. He was magical and mesmerizing and even a little scary all at the same time.

But then the mood in the room instantly changed. Someone said, "Wait a minute, isn't this Mary's son the carpenter? His mother and siblings live down the street. We watched him grow up. He was just an ordinary bloke like the rest of us."

Inside my soul I could sense an immediate change. The part of me that experienced wonder and surprise was displaced by an indignant part that measured pecking order and worth. I heard it say, "If Jesus is as brilliant as you sense he is, then you must be a dumb-ass-know-nothing yokel. My flight path of elation suddenly veered towards despondency. To prevent myself from drowning in navel-gazing despair, I did what most every other proud Nazarene in the room did. I closed my eyes and metaphorically stuck my fingers in my ears to prevent any new revelation from coming in. I refused to believe despite the evidence for belief right in front of me.

Though I had seen something and felt something that spoke to a deeper center of my life, the tide of opinion in the room was running against Jesus. Who was I to stand against it? I depended on the other knuckle heads in the room for my livelihood. I had a family to feed. Why risk community disapproval by speaking up? So I didn't. I kept my mouth shut for a long time. But the longer I keep silent, the greater an ache in my soul grows for beauty, wonder, and the desire to be lifted from the humdrum monotony of my existence.

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When 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? ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, ^[a] Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

⁴ Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Author's Note

I wrote the above story in an effort to help myself find an intuitive connection to the story found in Mark 6:1-6. It is the work of my imagination and therefore not true, though I believe Mark's gospel account is true. Faith in God is more than adherence to a set of theological beliefs, though it includes that. It is more than submission to a moral code, though it includes that too. Faith is trust in the God who loves us. His love is meant to engage our conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings. The process of imagining and writing is a spiritual discipline that I have found helpful for my journey with Christ. Painting, by the way, is another way to do the same thing. I offer the above words and artwork as a sample of what you might do for yourself.

Steve Stuckey
November 2017