

The text that we are about to read will be coming from the 6th chapter of the gospel of Mark. The gospel of Mark records several obstacles that people are encountering in hearing the good news. The gospel of Mark records the crowds being concerned that Jesus is forgiving sins.

The crowd is concerned by the types of people that Jesus is choosing to hang out with and how the disciples are not fasting as they should and not appropriately keeping Sabbath. People are concerned that Jesus is talking about radical changes that may undermine the religious establishment. All of this is making some people around Jesus really really nervous.

In today's text we are going to see that anxiety about Jesus spill over into his hometown of Nazareth. It is true that Scripture, specifically the gospels of Luke and Matthew, record that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. However, Jesus grew up in the small town of Nazareth. Many scholars think that Jesus was born in Nazareth and not Bethlehem but that is secondary to today's passage.

In this passage Jesus is going to be returning to his hometown of Nazareth with his disciples following him. We will be hearing about how well he is accepted and we will also hear about instructions he gives to his followers about what they need to pack to follow him.

Read Mark 6:1-13

We are now in July and this is a month that many of us will be going on vacation if we have not done so already. Vacation means different things for different people. This also is a time when some kids get to visit relatives or maybe head off to camp.

Whenever we leave home we make sure that we have certain things packed that we will need wherever we are going. Some people pack well and some not so much. We are going to watch a clip and see if this resembles you, anyone you know, maybe your family of origin?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NR0mXnBP5k>

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus gives instructions to his disciples concerning what they need to take to begin their journey of being followers of Jesus. We probably noticed that it was a simple list of items. A staff is needed but no bread, no bag, and no money. Shoes are allowed but no extra clothes.

Jesus then instructs them to set off on their journey but that a lot of people will not be receptive to them. Some will turn them away and reject them. Jesus knows something about rejection. We hear in this story that people in his hometown take offense at Jesus.

In fact, it appears that Jesus' attempt at ministry in Nazareth turns out to be a big failure. We are told that he is able to heal a few folks but that he is amazed at their unbelief.

Do you know what it is like to put forth your best efforts into something and then feel like you did not make much of a difference? Ever found yourself saying things like, "why try?" or "I'm never putting that much effort into something like that again" or "why bother since I just get criticized for my efforts?"

We've all had those moments of despair when something did not turn out like we had hoped. Or we worked hard on some type of project only to see it fail. Or we put forth lots of effort into building a positive relationship with someone only to see the other person reject us in some way.

We all know what it is like to be rejected. But in this passage of Scripture we are given some pretty simple advice. Shake the dust off of your feet and move on. In other words, don't obsess over something that you can't control. Don't let it control your life. Move on to the next adventure that is to be before you.

I have to keep reminding myself and others at times that most events in life are a marathon and not a sprint. In other words, we will hit snags. We will hit walls. We will experience rejection in some form. And when we do, we can remember these words from Jesus to move on. Shake off the dust and move on.

To move forward we may need to follow the advice of Jesus and pack simply. Many of us are carrying lots and lots of baggage in our lives. Baggage from failed relationships. Baggage from failed vocations. Baggage from bad church experiences. Baggage from failed attempts at succeeding at something.

Sometimes our baggage can be heavy. Sometimes the baggage we carry from resentment of past events weigh heavy on us. But we are invited by Jesus to cast off all of that excess baggage and move on.

Today we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Communion reminds us of the sacrifice that Jesus carried out on our behalf. The sacrifice of Jesus to shed old baggage and look forward to something new.

As we partake of Holy Communion today we are invited to shed what we need to relinquish and be open to the new opportunities that God is creating for us.
AMEN.

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-Given: July 8, 2018 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)