

Christ Episcopal Church
2 Emerson Street (at the corner of
Gregory Boulevard)
East Norwalk, Connecticut 06855-1330

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost:

Proper 9 (B)

July 4, 2021

DRAFT

“Compromised Understanding”

9 AM Sermon

by the Rev. Joe Parrish

The Holy Gospel according to

Mark 6:1-13

Jesus left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being 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?' And they took offence at him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honor, except in their home town, and among their

own kin, and in their own house.’ And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, ‘Wherever you enter a house, stay there until

you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.’ So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Help us, Dear Lord, to trust your love and your care.

Amen.

Are we that trustful of Christ?

So Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters. This may be heresy in some quarters, but apparently his mother Mary was quite productive of children. Jesus was the oldest child of Joseph and Mary.

What's it like to be the oldest child? Jesus was constantly under the scrutiny of his parents. Yet on one occasion when Jesus was about twelve, his parents went to a religious festival and only discovered on the way home Jesus was nowhere to be found. So the festival got his parents a bit distracted, and perhaps at age twelve, Jesus had a bunch of brothers and sisters, maybe

four brothers and two sisters; Jesus was the first of perhaps seven or more children—Mary and Joseph were quite productive. (There was no concern about college tuition back in those days. Jewish families were frequently large.) So Jesus may have breathed a brief sigh of relief to be out on his own for a while at the festival to talk with the Jewish intelligencia. Families are that way. When there is only one child, that child gets a whole lot of attention. But when there are one or two or maybe six or more others, the oldest finds quite a lot of freedom from instant attention.

Since Jesus was the perfect child he could not get involved in sibling rivalry, or could he? He was possibly a bit like the Old Testament Joseph who was constantly tattling on his older brothers. Wait. Jesus was the oldest, so his job was not tattling but taking care of his younger siblings. So Jesus was a ‘caretaker’, maybe a ‘baby sitter’—ever though about that? “Jesus, sit down and learn your Hebrew.’ ‘Aw, Mom, I did that all day yesterday.’ That did not make it into any gospel; in fact nothing about Jesus’ young life made it into any gospel until he was about twelve and got lost in the crowd

after going to the festival of the Passover; one incident in Luke is all there is in the Bible about Jesus as a young boy or even a young adult. This lack of information was so perplexing to early Christian readers that a somewhat questionable fiction about Jesus early life appeared around the second century AD called the ‘infancy narratives of Thomas’. The Infancy Gospel of Thomas is a loose collection of childhood stories about Jesus. It “fills in gaps” in the gospels of the New Testament, which almost entirely skip over the growing-up years of Jesus. It is not just about the infant Jesus but a series of

stories imagined about a child who could throw dust into the air which would become pigeons. If this fictional Jesus did not like a playmate, he could just wish him dead.

What a challenge that would be to be one of Jesus' playmates. "I want it. Sure, Jesus, take – whatever -- you want." The neighborhood kids would quickly learn to be very compliant to this fictional Jesus' wants and whims. But somehow the Biblical compilers did not see fit to include the so-called infancy narratives of Jesus into the New Testament canon.

The local crowd positions Jesus as just one of the Brothers Five--brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon with at least two sisters, who are yet unnamed.

So Jesus could be ‘encumbered’, shall we say, by the local crowd just dismissing him as one of ‘those many children of Joseph and Mary’. And when Jesus’ incredible powers became elsewhere known, those out of town reports were just brushed off—to their own detriment. The local crowd had such disdain and distrust of Jesus’ abilities, that their lack of faith was something even Jesus could not overcome.

I face a bit of that myself. How could someone eighty go to medical school? But some of my teachers and personal physicians are older than I. All I am doing is trying to learn medicine as it is taught today; they will always be more skilled in their specialty, but now there are specialties that did not even exist when they were medical students. Today dozens of organ transplants are done every day—something unheard of in 1953 or whenever they were in medical school. Somehow I am in a sort of time warp when the new opportunities are curiously more open to me

than to them. So I had better make the best of it. Immunology has moved ahead in leaps and bounds. Who would have thought of an RNA vaccine fifty years ago? Now over half the US is vaccinated with such vaccines. And these vaccines only became possible because there have been over a decade of discoveries with this same technology, but those discoveries were about how to treat certain types of cancers that have actually resulted in remissions or even cures. Our immune cells in our thymus and bone marrow are evolving every second, responding to new antigens, Now we know

the miracle of healing for many diseases is contained in the DNA and RNA of our very own cells, which our own bodies can sometimes stimulate or augment. Cancer is very often times not the end any more. Not that very long ago, that was definitely not the case. Our very own bodies have miracles happening inside every day, every second, every millisecond.

How Jesus was able to heal as he -- was - - able to heal is still a great mystery. But year by year we learn how adaptive our bodies can be if we only encourage them or listen to them. We have incredible feedback

loops in our bodies if we only listen to them. For example, a woman's responses to a heart attack are not the same as a man's; a woman's symptoms can be a jaw ache or a head ache, not just a tightening of one's chest or a pain in the left shoulder or indigestion. Medics are trying to teach us that we need to be more cognizant of things happening inside our own body. We have an amazing array of internal sensors that tell us if our heart, or liver or pancreas or kidneys are malfunctioning. Of course we can become hypochondriacs also. So a balance is needed. But if something seems

out of kilter, go to your doctor, or if it's really painful or debilitating, do not hesitate going to an emergency room or calling an ambulance. The medic's mantra is -- time is heart; time is brain. Listen. Listen. Do not shut out pain when it's trying to tell us something is clogged or malfunctioning or just not right.

Now for the more cheery stuff. The 'flip side' of all of Jesus' fame was the jealous animosity that was stirred up against him. What would you feel like if that nerd who sat beside you in the sixth grade became the poet laureate of your state? Of if they

became a rock star, or came into fame or fortune some other way? ‘Look, Johnny, see how Jesus has blossomed and here you are still tending sheep and goats.’ ‘Jesus listened to his father and became a wonderful carpenter, and here you are sweeping a bar floor for a living’. That could become very grating. So the jealousy factor against Jesus could have been quite serious in Nazareth. ‘Look there: Jesus is said to have fed five thousand and here you are still under foot eating from what your poor overworked father could bring home from the butcher shop.’ Oww.

So the local Nazarenes would not believe that one of their very own town children could have such amazing spiritual and physical powers.

In our own lives we may have ‘tamed’ Jesus just a little bit too much. Our faith may be so ‘ho-hum’ that nothing much surprises us. We may not be ready for a cure, or a better job, or a peaceful household. Those aspirations may have left our minds long ago.

But take heart. Jesus is here and Jesus does amazing things. He might turn over a few tables that needed to be turned over; he

might drive out some who may have been needing to be driven out. He might be on the side of someone we despised for not much reason at all except our own jealousy. Turn our eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. For ways of the world will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

[Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus > Lyrics | Helen H. Lemmel](https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Turn_Your_Eyes_upon_Jesus/)
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Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus |
Hymnary.org

1. O soul, are you weary and troubled?

No light in the darkness you see?

There's light for a look at the Savior,

And life more abundant and free!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in
His wonderful face, And the things of earth
will grow strangely dim, In the light of His
glory and grace.

2. Thro' death into life everlasting, He
passed, and we follow Him there; O'er us
sin no more hath dominion--For more than
conqu'rors we are!

3. His Word shall not fail you—He
promised;

Believe Him, and all will be well:

Then go to a world that is dying,

His perfect salvation to tell!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in
His wonderful face, And the things of earth
will grow strangely dim, In the light of His
glory and grace.

Amen.

Description:

Jesus does amazing things. Having faith in him we become conquerers. Through him we too will do the impossible.

Tags:

Jesus, brothers, sisters, infancy, narratives, home, town, synagogue, ho-hum, jealousy, miracles, feeding, healing, Nazarenes, family, siblings, rivalry, neighbors, local, eyes, turn, faith