

Mark 6:1-6

Pentecost 7; July 11, 2021

The Pellicano was the world's most unwanted ship. For two years from 1986 to 1988, she was nick-named the *"hobo of the high seas."* No one wanted her. 11 countries on four continents had turned her away. The problem was not the boat. Though Rusty and Barnacled, the 466-foot freighter was seaworthy. The problem was not the ownership. The owners have kept the license current and paid the taxes. The problem was not the crew. They may have felt unwanted, but they were efficient. Then what is the problem? What was the reason for years of rejections? Why is the Pellicano the most unwanted ship in the world?

Simple. She was full of trash. 15,000 tons of trash. Orange peelings. Beer bottles. Newspapers. Half-eaten hotdogs. Trash. The trash of Philadelphia's long summer of 1986 that's when the municipal workers went on strike. The trash had piled up higher and higher. No one would take Philadelphia's trash away.

That's when the Pellicano entered the picture. The owners of the cargo vessel thought it was a good idea at the time. They thought that they would turn a quick penny by transporting the rubbish. The trash was burned, and the ashes were dumped into the belly of the boat. But no one would take it. Initially it was too much. Eventually, it was too old. It was said to contain elements of aluminum, arsenic, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, zinc and toxic dioxins contained in ash from a Philadelphia city incinerator. Who wants potentially toxic trash? It seemed like a good idea at the time. But the *good idea* turned into being a *nightmare*.

It seemed like a good idea at the time to have Jesus come and speak in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. The little town of Nazareth, which had a population of 400 people at the most, had its very own celebrity. The town that supposedly nothing good ever came from had finally produced the greatest of names: *Jesus*. He was the most famous person or thing to ever come from Nazareth. He was the person that everyone was talking about. He was well-known for traveling and doling out wisdom. On top of that he was producing miracles. After all, he had just calmed the storm, raised a little girl from death and healed people of incurable diseases.

Jesus was coming back to his hometown. Most of them probably knew him when he was growing up. At this point everything seemed to be going right. For a while, everything did. Jesus arrived in Nazareth accompanied by his disciples. Jesus got to see some familiar faces. 6:1 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.

^{6:1} **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.** So far so good. Jesus got up and started preaching and teaching from God's Word and the people were absolutely amazed at Jesus' power, wisdom, and perspective. People were probably saying things like, *"Wow, I never thought of it like that before,"* or *"I have never learned so much in my entire life as I have today."*

Yet, the more they listened, the more things began to change. Mark writes: **"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? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him."**

Ever heard the phrase: *"Familiarity breeds contempt?"* The concept is simple. The longer that you know someone, the more you get to know about that person. As you get to know that person longer, the more likely that you will begin to discover the negative things about people. The more you learn about their short-comings. How does it show its ugly head? Couples will drift apart. The little things at work begin to bother you more and more. Then comes anger. Guilt. Pessimism. Bitterness. Bigotry. Anxiety. Deceit. Impatience. It all begins to pile up.

That's what began to happen in the synagogue that day. The more Jesus talked, the more people talked about him. You can hear the contempt begin to come off their lips. *"Where did this man get these things? What's this wisdom that has been given to him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?"* After all, they figured he was just the son of a carpenter, just a common worker. *"He's no better than the rest of us. In fact, we knew him growing up. We know his*

mother Mary. We know all his brothers whom Mary and Joseph conceived after Jesus was born. We even know his sisters. There's nothing special about Jesus. Who does this guy think he is? God? Yea, right?" They could not get past the idea that Jesus was any more than the carpenter's son. They took offense at him for no good reason. They were tripped up by their own familiarity with him and didn't come to the logical conclusion of who he really was, the Son of God.

Mark tells us: **"He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith."** That statement of Mark catches us off guard. What does it mean that Jesus could not do miracles there? Jesus didn't lose his power to do miracles. Miracles are not a reward for believing. In other words, if you have this much faith, you get this much of a miracle. God does not need your faith to do a miracle. So, what does Jesus mean?

Think of it this way. What was the purpose of Jesus' miracles? What purpose does a miracle show? Jesus did miracles to show people he was who he said he was. They were meant to help grow in their faith. But the people of Nazareth that day didn't want to grow in faith. Their familiarity bred contempt. They just could not see that day that Jesus was who he said he was. They could only see him as the carpenter's son and the son of Mary. Nothing more than that.

Yet, something amazing did happen that day. Jesus kept on preaching. He kept on speaking. Even when they pushed back, it didn't stop Jesus opening his heart to them. He still loved them in spite of their rejection. He does not let the opposition he faces in Nazareth become a dead-end street. Rather, Jesus kept on preaching his message with urgency. In spite of their opposition, Jesus' mission didn't change. He came to see and to save those who were lost. Even after Jesus was rejected by his hometown, he still would die for their sins. They mocked him, didn't trust his words, and yet Jesus spoke words of truth and comfort to them.

Jesus is on a mission of grace: Then and now. A bruised reed, He will not break. A smoldering wick, He will not snuff out. Jesus has been sent by His Father to bring good news. He fulfills this office. He will bring good news, send His disciples to bring good news, and, in His death and resurrection, become good news for all. Regardless of how the world responds to Jesus, Jesus will respond to the world in love. He still wants people to see his self-sacrificial love and life that will never end with him in heaven.

So what happened to the Pellicano? It is said that it dumped its load of garbage off the course of Singapore. No one would fully admit that's what happened. But the trash ash was gone. Jesus takes us who are filled with sins and throws it overboard. Through the cross he sees us as forgiven sinners. For that miracle, we give him thanks. Amen.