



Mark 6:1-6

**1 Jesus went to his home town and his disciples accompanied him. 2 With the coming of the Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, 'Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him? 3 This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us? And they would not accept him. 4 And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is only despised in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house.' 5 And he could work no miracles there, though he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them. 6 He was amazed at their lack of faith.**

Other readings: Ezekiel 2:2-5 Psalm 122 (123) 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

This gospel reading gives us an account of the visit of Jesus to his 'home town', which we know to be Nazareth. Just as he has already done in Capernaum, here too he teaches in the synagogue on the Sabbath. But the reaction of the townspeople is not positive. How can this local man be gifted with so many fine qualities? They are determined to find fault with his wisdom and with his actions. They go on to speak of his family. They know his mother, and they know his relations. His humble origins rule out anything special. 'And they would not accept him.' The sense of the Greek word used here suggests they were determined to find excuses for not accepting him. John's gospel will express this with the momentous words: 'He came to his own, and his own would not accept him.' (John 1:11)

This passage is important in the unfolding drama of the gospel. It was not only the religious and political leaders who were against Jesus. Jesus quotes what seems to be a common proverb in antiquity: 'A prophet is only despised in his own home.' The passage ends with the strange remark that 'he could work no miracles there'. The healing work of Jesus is not forced on those who do not wish to receive it, and who are not open to the new deeds the Lord is doing.

The text from the prophet Ezekiel confirms that, like Jesus, the ancient prophets of Israel often experienced rejection. St Paul, facing 'a thorn in the flesh', hears those comforting words of the Lord: 'My grace is enough for you.' We too should trust the goodness of God in our efforts to witness to Christ.

*What does the rejection of Jesus in Nazareth teach us?*

*What do you think motivated the attitude of Jesus' compatriots?*

*Let us pray for those who face opposition because they live according to the values of the gospel.*

*Let us pray for missionaries and for those who witness to the truth amid injustice.*