

WHERE DID HE GET THOSE THINGS?

Mark 6:1-13

People living in the big island of Hawaii have been seeing shocking sights of the Kilauea volcano erupting. It makes a big impression on them because the smoke fills their communities, fire has destroyed some homes, and they feel the earth shaking. But that probably makes little impression on us thousands of miles away with no danger of an eruption nearby. It also probably makes little impression on us with posturing coming from North Korea; again we live so far away from that. Our lives are far more impacted by the local weather, our health, and our jobs.

So do we understand what is going on with the people of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth in our Gospel lesson? Jesus goes into the synagogue and teaches in a way that shocks the people. "Where did this man get those things?" they ask. They know Jesus as the son of Joseph the carpenter. What right does He have to preach to them new, profound things from God?

But we probably aren't going to get quite so upset about that. Certainly we believe Jesus is God and can make any claim He wants, but more probably we don't care because we have so many other pressing matters. What does Jesus have to do with a broken down car, a leaky roof, getting a job, getting a grant, curing a headache? We talk about Jesus in church and maybe also in Bible study, but what does He have to do with the rest of our lives?

Jesus is a big deal to the people of Nazareth because He comes to their town. If a big comedian or rock group comes to Ames, a lot of people may go to the event, but many won't. Ames is a lot bigger and more diverse than Nazareth. In Nazareth most everyone is a Jew, so they all go to synagogue on Saturday and they don't do it to please grandma. Going to synagogue is the highlight of the week for many people. They have no TV or screen connected to the internet or a video game. They have no cars to jump into to go to the store (besides all businesses are closed for Sabbath). If Jesus gets up to talk to these people, they will hear Him. It is something that will make an impact on them.

Of course it does. Jesus speaks, and they are shocked. "Where did this man get these things?" When Fred Hoiberg came back to coach basketball at Iowa State, it was a big deal. First of all, NCAA basketball is big in Ames. Second, Fred was a

popular player. Third, there were high hopes that he could turn around a program that had soured. It didn't offend people that Fred was coming back to coach because he was so well known as a player. You expected Fred to know something about basketball.

But Jesus is just the carpenter's son. If he comes back to build plows, you would expect that. But for Him to preach in such a bold way in the synagogue would be like having the neighbor kid become your boss. That is shocking, hard to handle. "Where did He get these things?"

If Jesus doesn't shock us it is because He is not a big deal to us. We often are more concerned about what Matt Campbell is going to do with ISU football or where we go on summer vacation or what some guy or girl thinks of us. When Jesus becomes big in a person's life what happens? Things get shaken up. Look what happened to Jesus' disciples. They ended up being killed because they followed Jesus.

Think of our own lives. God asks you to give first to Him, then lets you keep the rest. You don't just give what is leftover. But what if I don't have enough left? He tells us to turn the other cheek. But what if I get taken advantage of? He won't let us give the excuse, "Let someone else do it." But what can I do? He comes to unsettle things in my life. But what if I want to just take it easy? If Jesus really does mean something in our lives, then we won't sit still in our chairs. We will ask, "Where does He get such things?"

Jesus said in His hometown, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives, and in his own household." Jesus was too close for them to hold Him off at a distance and not be bothered by Him.

God also became a part of our hometown, our relatives, and our own household as He became one of us in Jesus. In Jesus we can't put God off at a distance and not be bothered by Him. In Jesus, God exposes our weaknesses and gets us wondering, "Where does He get these things?" Most people in our country say they believe in God and they pray. But does it just stop there? Then Jesus isn't going to make them squirm. Then He doesn't matter to them. At least of people of Nazareth did get upset with Jesus.

“Where does this man get these things?” The answer is nothing less than from God, Himself. Jesus is the Son of God. What He says is not nice or helpful, it is the most important thing in the world! Our whole lives rest on knowing where Jesus got those things. If we don’t know, then all He said, all He promises is useless to us.

If we know where something comes from, it can help us decide how good it is. Something from our garden or a local garden will taste a lot better in the summer because it is fresh and not shipped from far away. It used to be fifty years ago that a product from Japan was cheap and would break soon. Now it means quality. Name brand clothing will often be a better quality than what a discount store sells as a bargain.

Knowing where Jesus comes from, who He is, says something not only about the quality of what Jesus tells us, but the importance. Something really important makes a difference in our lives. It will unsettle us, get our attention, and not be something we put off. Jesus came to get us to ask and mean it, “Where did He come from?”

People spend a lot effort trying to prove the Bible is true. They point to how scientific and historical evidence there is to support what the Bible says. They compare the Bible to other old literature and say, “We have better evidence for this than many other books we accept.” That is true, but those books aren’t usually asking us to entrust our whole lives to what they say. But Jesus has come to get our full attention, to get us to place all ourselves into His hands. Then it is a big thing to trust in Him. Then we really do need to ask, “Where did He come from?” And then we can see, that He is from God, He is God!

Sermon delivered by Pastor Mark T. Heilman
July 8, 2018
Memorial Lutheran Church and Student Center
Ames, Iowa 50014