

# Mark - in Nazareth Again

by J. Glyn Owen

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*Jesus returns to Nazareth to share the good news of God's salvation, but is rejected by his own people due to their prejudice and lack of compassion.*

**Duration:** 45:48

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:5-6, Matthew 13:54-58, Mark 6:1-6, Luke 4:16-21, Luke 9:6, John 4:44

**Topics:** "Nazareth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the story of Jesus returning to Nazareth after performing miracles and teaching in other places. The speaker emphasizes that the inclusion of this seemingly 'alien strand' in the Gospels, which speaks of apparent failure, is significant. They highlight the various aspects of Jesus' ministry that have been portrayed so far, such as his power over disease, demons, and nature. The speaker also references Isaiah 61, suggesting that Jesus' actions align with the prophetic words about the Messiah. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of understanding Jesus' first visit to Nazareth in order to comprehend the significance of his return in Mark 6.

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## Transcript

Now shall we turn prayerfully together to the gospel recorded by Mark, and we continue our studies in this wonderful gospel, reading as the basis of our meditation this morning, the first six verses in chapter six, Mark chapter six, verses one to six. And he, that is Jesus, went out from thence, and came into his own country, and his disciples followed him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue.

And many, hearing him, were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and of Judah, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching. Now, Mark has already presented us with some of the facts that were destined to play a major role in the hardening of the convictions of these early apostles concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a great discipline to see how the writer adds little by little, one massive fact after another, to the total picture of the realities, the truth concerning the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. And as the gospel writers do that, we are able to see of course the kind of thing that made them believe that he was the Christ, the Son of God. The kind of events, the kind of authority that they saw exercised by him, the kind of ministry that he performed, which in due course so convinced them that he was Jesus, the Son of God, the only Savior of men, that they were not only prepared to devote their lives to preaching about him, not even to lay down their lives in death.

We've already seen how Mark's portrait is gradually filling out. We've seen Jesus as the Lord of disease and the Lord of demons. We've seen Jesus as the authoritative teacher.

We've seen him handle the very waves of the sea and handling the very sea of Gennesaret as if he were nursing a little baby and telling it to go to sleep. We've seen him quelling the storm, the fears in the hearts of his disciples and do much else. And just now in the last episode that we were considering, led by Mr. Schaff, you remember that our Lord Jesus has just come from one of the outstanding miracles to date when he brought back from the very jaws of death a young girl of 12 years of age and out of sheer mercy handed her back to her parents alive from the dead.

Now at this point in the narrative, we have what some people might think is an alien strand. If it were not true, this would certainly not have been included in the Gospels. If you were writing a record of somebody whom you acknowledge to be your Lord, your hero, your ideal, I suggest to you that you would never have included this strand in the story because it speaks of apparent failure.

Let's look at it. I want to divide what I have to say this morning in this way. I want us to look first of all at Jesus and his relation to Nazareth and then Nazareth and its attitude to Jesus.

Let's look first of all at Jesus and his native Nazareth. Leaving his birthplace, Bethlehem in Judah, Jesus moved with his parents to their native Nazareth at a very early age in his life, Luke 2.39. And it was there that he grew up as a boy in the terms described by Luke. The child grew and became strong.

He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him. Now all that took place in Nazareth. It was from Nazareth that Jesus accompanied his father and mother to Jerusalem when he was 12 years of age.

You remember the episode when we find him left behind and arguing or questioning rather the leaders in the temple. And it was to Nazareth again that he returned from there and we are told that he was obedient to them and he developed in wisdom as well as stature, had favor with God and with men, Luke 2.52. Later on when his public ministry had begun, however, news reached Jesus that John the Baptist, his forerunner, had been put in prison, Jesus left Nazareth and moved into Capernaum. You will notice how from that point forward, Capernaum became the center of his activity.

Oh, he went back to Nazareth more than once, as we shall see in a moment, but it was Capernaum on the lake side that became the center of his ministry, the focal point. People still called him, of course, Jesus of Nazareth, though the gospel writers clearly refer to Capernaum as his home. Now the King James Version misses that, but if you are reading the New International Version or some of the other versions you will notice in Mark 2.1, we read that he was at home.

You see, by that time Capernaum had become his home. But now, Jesus returns again to Nazareth. Now I'm referring now in the first place to our reading from Mark chapter 4. Though it is not universally agreed

among students of scripture, it seems more in line with the facts to conclude that Luke describes the first return visit of Jesus to Nazareth since he had left it and become domiciled in Capernaum.

He goes back now to Nazareth as the one who had stood on Jordan's banks, first of all passed through the waters and been baptized by John, then stood on the Jordan's banks and saw the heavens opened and heard the great voice saying, you are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. He goes back to Nazareth as the one upon whom the Spirit not only descended, but as John tells us, remained upon him. He goes back to Nazareth.

Oh, he has so much to tell the people of Nazareth. Having arrived there, our Lord waited until the Sabbath day before he chose to unburden his heart and tell the folks of his own township, the boys and the girls with whom he went to school and sat in the synagogue together, and tell them what he wants to tell them about God and about himself and about the way of salvation. When he went into the synagogue, he was probably invited to be the reader of the scroll and then the commentator.

And there was handed to him the scroll of the scriptures in the Hebrew language. He unrolled it and whether it was the appointed reading for the day or whether he just himself chose it, we cannot dogmatize, it was probably appointed. He came to the place in Isaiah chapter 61 where it reads, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. He finished the reading. He rolled the scroll together again, handed it back to the person in charge, and then he did as the rabbis did.

He sat down to speak. We're told that he only began. The probability is that he never finished what he was going to say because of the way events turned out.

He began to say to them and listen to what he said. Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Oh, they'd heard the passage read many a time before, but they never heard it read as it was read that morning.

I'm not referring to anything in Jesus' voice nor in his physical manner. I'm referring to the fact that that very morning Jesus says, there the scriptures were foretelling someone who should come and be endued with the Spirit to do a work of God. Today, here in Nazareth, here in this synagogue, you folk who've come to our morning synagogue service, today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

The anointed one is the reader and the commentator. The congregation was taken aback. Bewilderment struck them as a thunder clap.

They could not, of course, speak evil of him. They had nothing evil to say against him. They couldn't speak of him as a scoundrel.

They've never known him to be a liar or they would have said so at this point. But they just could not take it in. And you remember how they say, it's impossible.

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. Now, that word for furious means what it says. They were really angered.

They got up. They drove him out of the town. They took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built in order to throw him over the cliff.

But he walked right through the crowd and went his way. Now, the language of what took place is very reminiscent of what happened at the martyrdom of the first Christian martyr Stephen. You have a look at it in due course.

Something very, very similar took place here. Just as they took Stephen out, first of all, to a precipice and then they threw stones at him, they take Jesus over to a precipice and they're about to throw him over, probably to throw stones at him and kill him by stoning. But he passed through sovereignly, for his hour had not yet come.

The incident adds a new dimension to John's words. He came unto his own, Nazareth, and his own received him not. So what? Does Jesus wash Nazareth off his hands, as it were? What would you do? If you've been thus rejected, and if the company that you have gone to preach the gospel to, or to bring glad tidings to, if they take you to the brow of a hill with a view to getting rid of you once and for all, because they think that you really are either insane or a cheat, what would you do? Now, my friends, you've got to see that first return visit to Nazareth before you can understand the one in Mark 6. Now I come to my text.

Jesus returns again to Nazareth. Oh, the grace of the Savior. There are two things that are brought together here, and I have no great time to deal with them separately this morning, but I want you to see how two things are intertwined, interlaced, and they need to be seen.

And I invite you to take a good look at them at your leisure. First of all, there is the Savior's courage, and secondly, there is the Savior's compassion. Now, a time was when Christian preachers made much of the courage of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For some reason or other, I don't know that I've heard a sermon on the courage of Jesus for a very long time, nor read one for that matter. But I think that in this easygoing age, this age that pampers to men and women, this flabby age, we need to see that our Savior had courage. And that frankly, it is impossible to be a loyal disciple of his without somehow or other getting something of his courage into us by his Spirit.

Now I can only refer to it. It's found here, but I want you to see it all the way through, in the way he spoke to the scribes and the Pharisees, the accredited teachers and spiritual leaders of his day. In the way in which at last he comes to the city of Jerusalem and goes to the temple priests, the high priests, and all those in charge in the temple there, and deals with them single-handedly.

And ultimately, of course, cleanses, as he says, his father's house, which they had made a den of thieves. And all alone. I tell you, I tell you, our Lord Jesus had courage.

And you see it, of course, finally, when he rides into Jerusalem as the promised king, presenting himself to the holy city. He goes alone. He goes without any armor.

He goes in his perfection. He goes in his manhood. And he presents himself to them.

And he heals himself to die in the knowledge that he's Lord of all. But he had the courage. In the way he addressed Pilate and Herod and so forth.

It's all there, but it's here in principle. But the thing I want you to notice very especially is this. Our Lord's courage is not something carnal.

It's not sheer bravado. It's not that he's replying to somebody who's dared him to do this. You know the kind of thing, you dare me to do it and so I do it and I grit my teeth and I get going.

It's not that. You see, if you were to examine the inner side, the heart of our Lord's courage, what you find inside it, in the kernel, in the heart is compassion. It's not a man grinding his teeth and saying, I'm going to do it.

I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it. It's a man saying in his heart, I must do it because I love them.

I was brought up with them. I sat in the same school with them. We were together in the synagogue.

They're mine. And even though they threaten to murder me, I've got to go back. And back he goes.

And you see, the courage finds at its heart this warm, glowing grace of God that was incarnate in the Savior. Brothers and sisters in Christ, do we know anything of this? Oh, we need it. You know why it is we are able to be so silent and so full of sloth and indolence? It's because we have so little compassion in our hearts.

And because we have so little compassion, we have so little courage. The courage for which the Bible calls and summons us is this kind of courage that grows out of compassion. Woe is unto me, says the apostle Paul, if I preach not the truth.

He says I would be prepared myself to be damned if only Israel, according to the flesh, was saved. That's why he had compassion. You have the same kind of thing in Moses in the Old Testament.

He was willing that his name should be wiped off the book of God altogether. If only, if only Israel was saved and if only God had mercy on his people. And of course, this spirit really lives on throughout the New Testament into post-New Testament times.

You have it. I have no time to go after illustrations this morning, but let me just refer to the widows of the missionaries that went to the Orca Indians. You remember how they were massacred and the widows went back again.

The Lord be praised. You see, this is grace. They went back again and they preached the good news and they opened their hearts' treasure and they said, we want to serve you who slew our husbands.

That's it. It's the same spirit. It's not bravado, but it's compassion, gendering courage of the divinest order.

Jesus' attitude to Nazareth. Nazareth and the returning Christ. Now, much has happened since Jesus went back to Nazareth before.

And everything that has happened has really added to the stature of the Lord Jesus in the eyes of men. Or should I add, in the eyes of the unprejudiced. We have seen, of course, that the more he did, as far as prejudiced people were concerned, they turned it all against him.

And even though he cast out demons, some of them were so prejudiced, they said, it can't be in the name of Jehovah or his power. It must be because you're in league with a prince of demons. Well, now, that kind

of prejudice apart, generally speaking, everybody was seeing that our Lord Jesus was someone different, to say the least.

They go beyond that. Was someone different, and they spelled it out if we had time to go after it. All that I'm saying is this.

If the people of Nazareth are at all in tune with what's going on, then surely when he comes back on this occasion recorded by Mark, surely they'll want to make some amends. Surely those synagogue leaders, surely those very religious older men, as they were called in the Hebrew, surely those very religious leaders will want to do something to amend things and give now a modicum of welcome to the one whom they tried to kill before. No.

There is a kind of prejudice, you know, that is fatal. And of all prejudice, religious prejudice is the most likely to be fatal. And this is a case in point.

I can only refer to what is mentioned here and do so briefly. I want you to look first of all at the confusion they expressed. Whether confusion is the best word to describe the ensuing mental and moral attitude, I'm not quite sure, but that remains to be seen.

But there was most certainly a dark, dismal confusion here that seemed to obliterate the facts completely and make them act senselessly. I want you to notice, for example, they recognized his evident superiority and confessed it. Look at verse two.

When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. And then they turn around and they say, they give, they express their reactions. Where did this man get these things? They asked, what's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles? Now, the point is, you see, he hadn't brought so many miracles in Nazareth, as we shall see in a moment, but they do know something of what's been going on elsewhere.

And they do recognize that he's altogether different from everybody they've known. He has a wisdom which is unique, and he has a power which is unique, and they say so. They were amazed at the superior wisdom that marked his teaching.

I don't know whether it is true to say that they compared him with their own teachers, as the Gospels do elsewhere, when Matthew, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, for example, says they marveled because he had authority. He spoke with authority, not as the scribes and the Pharisees. He had something authoritative in his person, that when he spoke, men knew that he spoke the truth.

But then, of course, we must add to that the fact that he was no mere talker. He said that he knew God, and he spoke out of a knowledge of God which no one else appeared to have. But that knowledge of God was proved by the fact that God worked with him, and he worked with God.

They were working together. The divine signature was upon his deeds, as well as upon his words. But these people quibbled.

Though they recognized his evident superiority, they quibbled about and noticed the irrational, the illogical way in which they tried to defend probably their previous attitude to him. Isn't this the carpenter, they say? What on earth does it matter who he is? What does it matter in what guise he comes to them? If it is evident that the Spirit of God is upon him and God is working with him, what does it matter that he was a

carpenter until a couple of years ago? Isn't this the carpenter, they say? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, and they go through all the boys, and then they refer to the girls, and his sisters here are with us? It's quite ludicrous, really. This has got nothing at all to do with it.

What they're saying in effect is this. He can't be the person he claims to be, because all the rest of the family are so normal and so ordinary. Now that just is not rational.

They see the facts, they recognize his wisdom, they recognize the testimony to his power, but because the rest of the family where he was brought up, to whom he belonged, to which he belonged, are not of the same order, and he's so different from them, they say, well, sorry, we can't take it. They remain blinded to the reality. Now whether they thought he was a cheat or a fraud, I cannot tell you.

Though they could find no reason for such a charge, or whether, as someone has suggested, whether they were plainly jealous of his wisdom, I really do not know. I cannot dogmatize. But there are those who tell us that the emphasis should be, what is this wisdom that is given to him? Now I don't know whether this holds water.

It may, it may. It may be the nuance, it may be the punctuation here, and the emphasis. What's this wisdom that has been given to him? We've got boys who've grown up, they've grown up in the synagogue, they've remained with us, they've gone through the schools, they've been taught, they know the scriptures, they've read the Torah, what about our boys? But this boy came and left and he's gone, and we hear all sorts of things about him, and he makes great pretensions.

What's this wisdom that is given to him? I don't know. But one thing I know, the confusion they expressed. And basically they were confused because they were prejudiced.

They would not have the testimony of the facts. Now look at the condemnation they earned from the Savior in their midst. First of all, they elicited his word of rebuke.

Jesus said to them, only in his own hometown, among his relatives, and in his own house is a prophet without honor. There's a sad touch about that. He's talking to the villagers of Nazareth here, but he also makes reference to his own house.

For at this point in time, those of his own house did not believe in him. A prophet, he says, is not without honor, save in his own country, in his own village, in his own company, and in his own home. Now this is something queer, isn't it? I don't know how you explain this.

You see, in other realms, if you're a sportsman, or if you're a scholar, or if you're a politician, and you do well, and you climb the ladder, and you get to the top of the pole, that's the wrong word, but if you get up there, you go back to your own village, and boy, don't they make a fuss of you. They'll fete you, they'll be out to welcome you, you'll be asked to speak in every corner, and there'll be people shaking your hands, and welcoming you, and putting their arms around you. Is the local boy done good, you see? But if you become a prophet, a man of God, and the Spirit of God is upon you, and the Spirit takes you back to your Nazareth to uncover the sins of those that sat with you in school, and in college, and for whom you worked, and with whom you work, then you're without honor.

Doesn't apply in other spheres, but it does apply to the prophetic sphere. Families don't like members from within the family opening up the old shores, and showing the sewer underneath. Villages don't like that,

towns don't like that, cities don't like that.

It's only the stranger that can come in and expose the hideous realities. But I want you to notice the mercy of Jesus, even in saying what he says. Oh, the heart of the Savior.

Oh, the purity. Oh, the glorious motives that always dominated him. You know, in a sense, he doesn't even take this personally.

He might have. He could have justifiably taken it all personally, and then just turned his back like that. Do you know what he says? You know what he says? This is just an example of the proverb.

In other words, he says, well, after all, this kind of thing happens everywhere. It isn't only happening to me. He passes it off like that.

He doesn't allow himself to be hurt, and to show that nothing has really grieved his spirit in the absolute sense, and turned him sour, he continues to preach in other villages also. They elicited the Savior's word of rebuke. They robbed themselves of his works of mercy.

He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. Now, we must not rashly conclude from this that man's unbelief can frustrate the sovereign purpose of God ultimately. He would be a very foolish person who tried that.

You and I cannot ultimately say to God, no, and stand against him. You can't do that. Puny creature can't do that.

Our God is God. We are his preachers. He holds us in his hands, and ultimately, the purposes of God will mature.

His kingdom will come. He will fulfill his purpose, because he is God. He is God.

What then does it mean? He could not do any miracles there. Well, now you notice that is qualified, except he did do some. Lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.

He did show that he had the power. But you see, the point is this. It's as simple as this.

Because the people did not believe that he was the Messiah, the anointed one, the promised one of Isaiah chapter 61, because they didn't believe that he was the Messiah with power from God to heal the sick and to raise the dead and to forgive the guilty. Because they didn't believe that, they didn't bring their problems to him. And so very few were healed.

But those who came were healed. Now, my friends, this is a very telling application. The measure in which you and I really believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ is the measure according to which we bring our needs to him, to be met by him.

Now, the shoe pinches here. I have a fear that I can preach better on the theme of the deity and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ than I can actually bring all my needs and my troubles to him at all turns of life. It is easier to say with the creed, I believe he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified dead and buried.

It's easy to say that when our belief does not really gear our souls into action, whereby we bring all our pains and all our problems and all our needs to him, because we believe that he is what we say we believe he is. But you see that whatever you say about the folk here in Nazareth of old, they were here consistent. They didn't bring their sick out for him to touch them because they didn't believe he was able to do anything.

They didn't bring the demon possessed because they didn't believe that he could do anything about it. So they didn't bring them. And so only a few were healed.

Only a few had some semblance of faith to bring their needs to him. And you know, it may be exactly like that here in Knox this morning. I wonder whether there are some of us here this morning, we've brought no need to the Savior.

We've come into the sanctuary largely to be spectators and listeners, but we've got no need, haven't we? If we only saw our own lives as heaven sees us, we would see that we are miserable and blind and naked and destitute and impoverished, but we don't see it. And we don't bring the needs we know to him because our faith in him is largely a paper faith, a confession faith, but not a vital faith. My friends, this touches the nerve of our Christian profession.

I'll tell you, the people who will go away from morning worship today, dancing and rejoicing and blessed, they are those who brought their burdens to the feet of Jesus, who brought their sins to the house of God to confess them and be forgiven, who brought their temptations and are opening up and saying to him, Oh Lord, I've got all this problem. You know all about it. Do something and look to him in faith.

But there are many who don't do that, you see. And this is so sad. The people of the world judge a church by the number of folk who come and go.

It means nothing at all. In the last analysis, the real community of faith are those who bring their problems and bring their needs because they believe he can do something about it. Are you among them this morning? Listen to these scriptures.

Oh my. And I must close. Listen to these scriptures.

They're so challenging. I was just thinking of them last evening as I was pondering over this. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Listen to this. When Jesus said to one man, Do you really believe that I can do what you've asked me to do? And the man said, Yes, I do believe. And Jesus said to him, Matthew 9, 29.

Then right, he says, According to your faith, so be it to you. According to your faith, so be it to you. I ask you, my friend, where would you and I be if Jesus said that to us this morning and only and exclusively dealt with us on that basis and said to every man, woman and boy and girl among us, Okay, according to your faith, so be it and left us there.

And if you haven't got the faith to come and you haven't got the faith to ask and you haven't got the faith, I'll give you nothing. Our God is so gracious. He gives us so many things we never asked for.

This is part and parcel of the grace and the wonder of our Lord. You see, this is the principle he tries to teach us. This is the way he wants us to walk.

But so often when we when we go on and flounder and do not live by faith, yet he blesses us. So he loves us. But what if he did say to you, According to your faith, be it to you, you live that way.

I wonder how much some of us would have. Would not our cups be very, very dry? Would not our lives be very, very empty? If you have faith, said Jesus, as small as a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move. Nothing shall be impossible to you.

Last thing I must say is this, that they made Jesus amazed. He wondered, he was amazed at their unbelief. Now, it is not within our province to reconcile divine omniscience with divine surprise.

And I can't do it. If you ask for something that is a key to it, I suppose we have to say that Jesus was divine and human. He was God incarnate.

And we have to, we have to say that he could only be surprised in his manhood. All right. But ultimately, we cannot fathom this kind of thing.

But listen, my friend, twice in the Gospels, we read that Jesus was surprised, taken by surprise. The ones he was taken by surprise was when a Gentile pagan man with no religious background at all, until perhaps he had come to live among the Jews and he had read something of the Old Testament scriptures. I don't know, but he was brought up a sheer pagan.

And he came to ask Jesus for something. And Jesus said to him, you know, he said, I've never, I've never seen such faith. No, not in Israel.

And he was amazed. He was, he was amazed at the faith of a man with such little background. But here you see, it's the other way around.

He was amazed that a people with such a religious background and heritage, with people who could be so rational and friendly on the human level, with those who knew him and in a sense had loved him in his early days and had evidently helped him, who knew the family, and there were certain ties that bound them together, but could be blind to the testimony of the spirit of promise that gave him authority in his teaching and ability in his laboring. How do we close? My friends, I think we ought to close in the first, we ought to do in the first place, the one and only thing that every believer can do when you take a passage like this seriously, you can acknowledge the wonder and the glory of the person of our Lord. Worship him, adore him.

Some of our hymns have greatly contributed to that this morning. Worship him in your heart, adore him, ask for grace to trust him. There's something else.

I believe that some of us Christian people need to ask for pardon for our crazy unbelief that makes us Jekylls and Hydes. Two people living in one. Today we're one, tomorrow we're something else.

Today we walk with by faith, tomorrow we walk by sight. And we're halting between two opinions. And my friends, if we can only get the biblical view of the gravity of unbelief, I believe we should be on our knees confessing the sin of unbelief and asking for mercy.

There may be among us this morning someone who is uncommitted to the Lord Jesus at all. I don't know what the message means to you, I don't know how you've been looking at it, I don't know how you've been thinking. But I trust you have seen some glimmer of the greatness and the goodness and the glory, the

grace of the heart of Jesus of Nazareth.

And that you see that this kind of thing does not stem with men. It was not common to his family, it was not common to his nation, it was not common to the world, it's not common to mankind today. This kind of grace that seeks the lost and is prepared to die for their salvation and to go back again to Nazareth to save the lost, this kind of thing is not ordinary.

Where does it come from then? I'll tell you. Listen. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The compassion in the Savior's breast that sent him back to his would-be murderers and sends him back to some of you today who've turned a blind and a deaf heart to him many a time is the same kind of compassion and love with which God sent his Son into the world. It is divine. Let us therefore bow in penitence as we conclude.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God and our Father, we come before you in these closing moments asking that our response to your word shall befit the occasion and our own condition. Forgive us that we sometimes do become almost impervious to the realities of our own individual lives, and there's a kind of crust, an armor within which we hide from the thrust of your truth.

Spirit of God, penetrate that armor. Sensitize our minds and our hearts and our wills and lead us that we may be truly men and women of faith. And because we are thus linked with him in whom was all compassion and is all grace, we too may bear some semblance to him as we learn to walk in by faith in him and in fellowship with him.

Pardon, O Lord, our many sins in his name. Amen.

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