

7th Sunday after Pentecost – July 7, 2024
Rejected for You

Redeemer Lutheran, HB

Series B: Ezekiel 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 12:1-10; Mark 6:1-13

This sermon is adapted and used with permission by Pastor Samuel Schuldheisz.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

When Lebron James returned to the Cleveland Cavaliers, the hometown crowds went wild. Bronny now joins his Dad on the Lakers and fans are delighted.

A young Marine returns home after three tours Overseas and the whole community throws a parade.

Your last-born graduates from college and the family smokes the fattened brisket-or hires the Taco Guy.

And then there's Jesus returning to Nazareth. You might think they'd throw a party for him or a homecoming parade, especially after healing a woman with a 12-year blood-flow, raising Jairus's daughter from the dead, and casting out demons. But no.

Jesus is rejected to rescue us from rejection.

No cheering fans. No hero's welcome. No mouth-watering BBQ. Instead, Jesus gets the Nazareth inquisition:

Where did this man get these things? Where did he learn the wisdom of Solomon? When did he learn to preach like Moses? How can a plain old carpenter's hands do such great things?

They were scandalized. They rejected Jesus. Was it the miracles? No. They liked those, especially the ones including lunch. Was it His teaching? Well, not until He started talking about Jerusalem and suffering and the cross and saying and doing things only God can say and do.

And that's what is truly scandalous about Jesus. Jesus said He was God in human flesh. Jesus forgave sin. Jesus declared that He has always existed – even before Abraham. Jesus said He would judge the world on the Last Day. Jesus said He would die and rise three days later.

They rejected who Jesus is and what He teaches. There's no doubt Jesus was ordinary. His stomach growled when He was hungry. He wept at the death of His friend Lazarus. Cut Him and He bleeds like us. And to be sure, Jesus is holy. But all of God's holiness is hidden for you in this ordinary carpenter from Nazareth, the Son of Mary. And yet, Jesus is more than a carpenter. For it is true, only God can save us from our sins. But God can save us from our sins only by becoming man and by being rejected for us.

Our bulletin cover is a Wanted Poster. Jesus of Nazareth--Wanted for Befriending Sinners. These posters from the Old West often had the familiar words "Wanted--Dead or Alive". They rejected Jesus and ultimately wanted Him dead—and good for us that through His death we are made alive and free.

Jesus is rejected to rescue us from rejection.

As the Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretells, Jesus' neighbors wanted nothing of His forgiveness: *"He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hid their faces He was despised, and we held Him of no account"* or as the ESV renders it, *"we esteemed Him not"* (Isaiah 53:3)

In the New Testament as St. John reminds us, *Jesus came to his own but his own did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1).*

Those are the two responses to Jesus – faith or unbelief. Everywhere else in Mark’s Gospel when Jesus performs a miracle, teaches and preaches, the crowds marvel, and many believe. But here in Nazareth Jesus is rejected and He marvels at their unbelief. This is how Mark draws us into the story.

After all, it’s easy to wag our fingers at the Nazareth crowds who reject Jesus, while we do the same.

Whenever we place our trust in earthly rulers, governments, or even courts – we join the crowds in rejecting Jesus. Trust not in princes, they are but mortal.

Whenever we foolishly think that our time and possessions are our own property, rather than gifts of God meant to be received with thanks and used in His service, we join the crowds in rejecting Jesus.

Whenever we fail to love and serve our neighbor as Christ first loved and served us, we join the crowds in rejecting Jesus and serving ourselves.

This is why Jesus tells this story of warning. Repent of your rejection.

And rejoice in Jesus’ rejection for you. Yes, rejoice in Jesus’ suffering and death on your behalf. For Jesus’ rejection in Nazareth points forward to his greater rejection on the cross for you and for me.

Jesus' words to St. Paul are just as true when it came to His own suffering and death. *My power is made perfect in weakness.* God's power hidden beneath the cries of mockery and the cracking whip. God's power hidden beneath the thorn-pressed, bloody brow. God's power hidden beneath the wounds and blood of Jesus. God's power made perfect in Jesus' weakness – in His rejection that accomplishes our redemption.

God's kingdom, then, isn't found in the courts of Pilate, Caesar, or the Supreme Court– but in the Crucified King and His kingdom which comes in water, word, body, and blood.

Jesus' rejection on the cross fills his Church – and this congregation – with His crucified and risen presence. Like St. Paul, Christ gives us the gift of contentment in His promises. *My grace is sufficient for you.* God's undeserved mercy toward us in Christ, is far more sufficient than anything else.

And then Christ continues to hide His power behind each of us – as masks – sending us to love our neighbor as He first loved us.

So, not only do we rejoice in our weakness, knowing that we are strongest of all when we realize we have no strength, save Christ. But we also rejoice in Christ's weakness for us. We rejoice that He who knew no sin became sin for us. We rejoice that Jesus is rejected in order to rescue us from eternal rejection by the Father. Jesus overcomes our rebellion of sin by being rejected in our place.

And this the greatest scandal of all, that your redemption isn't found in your acceptance of Jesus, but in His acceptance of you and of me. That your forgiveness, life, and salvation is given to you in spite of your rejection and rebellion of sin against Jesus. And it's given freely – no strings attached.

And yet this great scandal is also our greatest joy.

Jesus is rejected to rescue us from rejection.

Jesus gives you faith in Him, and in everything He's done and still does for you. It's all gift. God's doing. For you.

And that is truly marvelous.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.