# **Jesus Preaches in his Hometown**

 **I chose the picture of Jesus on your cover today because his face looks as if he is contemplating or listening to the words of his father in heaven. I think Jesus sought out as much solitude as often as he possibly could. He was so often misunderstood or derided by other people with laughter or unkind words. I keep remembering he was half human, and there must have been times when the jeers and laughter bothered him. These are some of the times he no doubt attempted to seek out wisdom and comfort from his father in heaven. Yet I don’t suppose he was ever given much alone time. He must have treasured those moments when he could hear words from his father**

**We humans haven’t changed much in these well over two thousand and some years. Some of us still are capable of saying and doing hurtful things, and some of us can be the recipients of hurtful comments. Most of us can understand how Jesus must have felt when he tried to teach in his hometown synagogue. He stood up in front of those assembled and walked to the front of the synagogue. As he became to speak, people started yelling at him.**

 **To be yelled at was nothing new for Jesus. At one point in his life, his own family thought he was crazy and should be locked up. The rich and powerful people sought to get rid of him; they thought him to be a terrible troublemaker. The Pharisees and Sadducees were always trying to trip him up, get him to say something was they thought heretical. I think the Pharisees and Sadducees must have had spies following Jesus everywhere. The spies probably reported back to the powerful folks they served whenever Jesus was doing something they thought was heretical. Sometimes the people he tried to help also wanted to hurt him. A group of people once wanted to throw him off a cliff for simply attempting to help them.**

 **When Jesus stood up to teach in his hometown synagogue these are some of the comments he heard. “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” Notice the four brothers of Jesus have their names mentioned, not so his sisters. The crowd doesn’t even mention how many sisters Jesus had.**

 **Jesus said to this crowd, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” His mentions in one sentence some of the things he must have treasured. He mentions his hometown, his own kin, and his own house. Wouldn’t we be dismayed if in our hometown we were not welcomed or respected by our relatives and not even in our own home were we welcomed? Jesus was amazed at this group of people’s unbelief. He left his home synagogue and went about other villages teaching.**

**I recently heard a politician say, people would rather follow a strong man who knew nothing, than follow another man who might appear gentle and not as strong yet know a whole lot. Strong men seem to have lots of rules and regulations. Could this explain why many people follow dictators and despots? While other people who have a whole lot of wisdom are sometimes ignored and even have many derogatory comments coming toward them? Do some people like to be told exactly what to do? Do they like to simply have all the rules spelled out for them? There were many rules, laws and regulations in the Old Testament for people to follow. In fact, in ancient Jewish tradition were 613 commandments. These rules no doubt were ingrained in the leaders of the people. Then along came Jesus.**

**Jesus was not a dictator. He did not have a whole lot of rules and regulations for people to follow. He had the audacity to even break Sabbath rules. You all remember this story. Jesus and his disciples were going through a grain field on a Sabbath; the disciples were hungry and started to eat the tops off the grain. Well, when the Pharisees heard of this, they said to Him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.” Yet for Jesus it was more important for his hungry disciples to eat some grain out of a field on the Sabbath than to be hungry. Jesus didn’t follow all of the 613 rules in the early Jewish laws.**

**In fact, we know Jesus gave us two much harder commandments to follow than 613 rules and regulations. Rules are simply followed as close as anyone can to the letter of the Law. But just hear once again what Jesus said when asked what the most important commandment was. He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. ...  On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” His words turn the whole concept of rules and regulations upside down. Every other commandant, every single word a prophet uttered depends on his two commandments, to love God and love your neighbor as yourself.**

**Yet how do we love God? We can’t see him because he doesn’t show himself to us in a human form. But rather He is in every living thing. He’s in the trees and the flowers, in all animals, and in each of us. We can only love him by loving all that is on our earth. Yet we know this is a hard to do. Somehow the love of money often gets in the way of this deep kind love for God. So much so we now are facing letting the earth become uninhabitable. Because of greed to chop down forests after forests to make more money. Because of greed to bring up more crude oil to make more money. Because of many, many other kinds of greed. It’s not so easy to love God, yet each of us can do the best we can to appreciate this gift we call our earth. To know God lives in all things and in all places.**

**Now loving each other is another hard and difficult task. Often the homeless remain homeless, hungry children remain hungry. Loving one another takes dedication and determination. Loving one another means loving ourselves as God loves us. Knowing in our hearts and souls we are loved. May God bless each of us, may we know God is always with us. Amen**