

A lady in a faded gingham dress and a man in a homespun, threadbare suit walked into the office and asked to see the president of Harvard University. The receptionist thought that such backwoods hicks did not need to be in such a place. She told them, "he is busy all day." They said, "we'll wait." After several hours, she finally called the president and asked if he would give them a few minutes just to get rid of them. He agreed. The couple sheepishly walked into the office as the president got up in a huff and strutted toward them. The lady said, "we had a son who attended Harvard for a year and loved it. But about a year ago, he was killed in an accident. My husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him somewhere on campus."

The president was shocked. He said gruffly, "we cannot erect statues for everyone who attended Harvard and died. The place would look like a cemetery." "Oh no," the lady quickly explained. "We don't want to give a statue, we want to give a building." The president rolled his eyes. He looked at them in their unsophisticated clothing and said, "A building! Do you have any idea how much that costs. We have over seven million dollars in the physical plant here at Harvard." The lady was silent. The president was pleased. The lady turned to her husband and said, "Is that all it costs to start a university? Why don't we just start our own?" Her husband nodded. The president looked bewildered. At that point, Mr. & Mrs. Leland Stanford walked away from Harvard and went to Palo Alto CA where they established Stanford University as a memorial to a son that Harvard no longer cared about.

Someone here today may not think Jesus is all that the Bible says He is. You may look with skepticism on the uniqueness of Christ, his virgin birth, his miracles, his sacrificial death. You may think that the story of Jesus is an old, worn out tradition that has no relevance to your life. But think twice before you write him off. If you do, you will forfeit a gift so valuable that money cannot buy - eternal life and a personal relationship with the God of the universe. Today, let's give our attention to "The Carpenter Who can fix Anything!"

Did you know this is the only place in Scripture where Jesus is directly called a carpenter? And the Carpenter is returning to his hometown Nazareth, where he grew up and had spent close to 30 years of his life. But why? Well, it's not for a family reunion, or to get reacquainted with old friends and neighbors. He's coming back home to work. He's coming as a Carpenter to do a job. Things need fixing in Nazareth. Hearts and lives are not what they should be.

I believe He had been there once before, namely 9-10 months earlier. At that time His fellow townspeople had rejected Him so violently they tried to throw Him off a cliff. Why would He come back? Pure grace. He wanted to give them another chance. And then there was his family. Either cousins, or children that Mary and Joseph had had, after Jesus. Like us, he didn't want to see his family lost.

It was probably Friday night when Jesus arrived in Nazareth. The next morning is Saturday (the Sabbath Day) and so Jesus goes to church. He attends services at the local synagogue. Now when a rabbi visited a local synagogue it was customary for him to be asked to read from the Scriptures and teach the congregation a lesson from the Scriptures. So Teacher Jesus is invited to step forward, and we're told he began to teach. The reaction is that many who

heard him were amazed. Probably much the same way Doug Stindt who used to be a teacher at ST. Paul's in Saginaw, would have said about me. "Schulzy became a preacher. I thought he'd follow in His father's footsteps and sell insurance and real estate. Look at him now. Amazing! The people who knew Jesus, and had seen him grow up wonder where he got his wisdom. This is a blue collar guy, worked in the shop. Isn't this Mary's kid? His brothers and sisters were no academic wizards.

The reference to Jesus as the "Son of Mary" can be seen as a derogatory way of referring to Jesus. In the first century, sons were identified by reference to their fathers. My wife's maiden name is Fredrickson. Son of Fredrick. The family line was tracked by the Father. To associate Jesus with his mother was a social dig against him.

We must also remember the image that the people had in their minds of Jesus. He had left Nazareth alone, and as a carpenter. He returns with a group of followers, and as a Rabbi. It is also important to note that when Jesus left town, some of the towns folk's probably frowned upon his leaving. Remember that Jesus was the oldest male child in his family. Joseph was now dead and if the father of the family was dead, the oldest male child was expected to assume the role of the head of the household and stay around to provide for the family. Jesus may have been viewed by some, as the son who shirked his family duties and responsibilities by leaving the family to fend for themselves. His neighbors were probably not too eager to welcome this deserting self-proclaimed prophet back into their circle of friends.

Mark then tells us that after Jesus began to preach in the synagogue, "They took offense at him." You would think that the people of Nazareth would have welcomed Jesus as a local boy made good and rolled out the red carpet for him. But instead, they took offense at him.

Mark doesn't tell us exactly what it was Jesus said that day in the synagogue, but we can assume that he probably read from the Book of Isaiah which would have been customary. Jesus would make it clear that there are no self-repair jobs when it comes to the sin broken human heart and soul. That the human being was like a house devastated by a hurricane of sin. Totally helpless and lost! No person likes to hear that He is sinful by nature and deserving of everlasting punishment. We don't even like it when we're criticized in some small area. Then, Jesus proceeded to tell them He had the necessary tools to make them right with God. To rebuild them. That he was the Messiah. The people in the synagogue took offense not only because of what Jesus said, but because of who it was that said it. This guy claims to be the Messiah.

The Messiah these people were waiting for would come into town riding on flaming chariots through the clouds, or something like that. There would be beautiful heavenly music and hordes of angels that would accompany their Messiah. God's chosen Messiah certainly wouldn't be some ordinary, everyday carpenter who leaves town and quietly returns a couple of years later to visit his deserted family.

Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith. In verse 5: "***He could not do any miracles there, except laying His hands on a few sick people and healing them.***" How sad Jesus must have been to realize that here, in his own home town, people he knew, who pinched his cheeks when he was a baby, who he played ball with, didn't care that he was coming to bring them the

water of life and the bread of life, coming to help and heal them. He couldn't perform miracles because of their lack of faith. These people were so offended by Jesus and his words, that they didn't even want to bring their sick, dying and demon-possessed to him for healing. Imagine that, they would rather let their loved ones be sick or possessed by the devil than to acknowledge anything about Jesus. People still take offense at Jesus. They don't think His words are important. So they stay away. Even worse, they don't bring their children or their spouse with them. So they keep their loved ones away from the one who can help them, save them, bless them. I would rather let my uncle Bill suffer in hell eternally than to have him laugh at me if I tell him about Jesus. |

Jesus is saddened today as He looks at a former Christian nation, the United States of America.. In churches up the road from Open Bible, they no longer teach that all of Scripture is God's inspired Word. Marriage is no longer taught as between one man and one woman. Live together situations outside marriage are tolerated. Open Communion is offered to all, no matter what you really believe. Doing service projects and listening to messages which don't point to your sins, and the need for Savior predominate. So if you go to a church that still follows the teachings of God's Word, guess what, you are going to face persecution, just like Jesus did. People will say to you: So you go to that conservative, strict Open Bible. They haven't changed with the times. Don't feel badly about this. Don't feel badly if you talk about Jesus, and it seems that your friend, doesn't accept what you say. In fact, you can do everything right, and say everything right about your Savior, and still have people reject you. As in Nazareth, familiarity breeds contempt. It's so easy to get a Bible and other Christian literature, so easy to attend a worship service, or to hear Christian broadcasts. So easy, that it almost seems cheap, and Americans treat faith in Jesus Christ, and treat their Savior Himself, very cheaply. So we shouldn't be surprised if people reject us.

We throw billions of dollars at social ills in the United States, but things don't get any better. They just get worse. Our problems as a nation are primarily spiritual, and only Jesus has the solutions. The people of America need to get re-introduced to the Man whose hands worked with wood, and whose hands were nailed to a wooden beam of a cross. Only Jesus can repair a sin wrecked heart. Only He can make a heart new by Baptism and the power of His Word. Only Jesus can truly repair a person, a family, a marriage, that's been wrecked by sin. Only He can give the certain hope of eternal life.

Ordinary. From the outside, Jesus looks like an ordinary carpenter, an ordinary guy with brothers and sisters. Someone who possibly can't be the Son of God, and our Savior. But let me assure you He is. God always uses ordinary looking people to accomplish great things. So ordinary person, go and tell others of the only Carpenter Who can Fix Everything. Don't get down on yourself if you are rejected. Rather, take up your cross and follow him.