

Wherever Jesus walked, He encountered many who were sick and diseased. Every town He entered had multitudes in it who needed His miracles of healing. Every town, that is, except His hometown of Nazareth. This town is quite exceptional. The people here in Nazareth much have an incredible immunity to disease. Hardly anyone here is sick. Maybe it's the water. Whatever it is, Nazareth appears to be the healthiest place in the entire land.

When Jesus arrives here, we're told that the only miracles He does are to lay His hands on a few sick people to heal them. Not multitudes; just a few. And so, when Jesus leaves town after this, the place must be one hundred percent healthy, right?

Wrong. You heard what came before these words: "*(Jesus) could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.*" It's not, therefore, that Nazareth is an exceptionally healthy town. There are multitudes here also who are sick and diseased. But Jesus cannot heal them. He can do no miracle, no mighty work here. And we, of course, ask: Why not?

It's their unbelief. Jesus marvels at it. In Matthew chapter 8, Jesus marvels at the faith of a centurion. Here in Nazareth, He marvels in the opposite manner. Not just at their lack of faith, which even His disciples had from time to time. In Nazareth He marvels at their active unbelief.

And so, we have to ask: Is God limited by us? Does a person's lack of faith render Jesus powerless? Is He unable to act in mighty ways within someone who actively rejects Him?

If this is true, then Paul would never have become St. Paul, because he was actively against Jesus before Jesus did a mighty work in him and made him His apostle. In fact, no one could ever become a believer in Jesus, a Christian, for we are all born in unbelief, opposing God as His enemies.

So, what's up with Nazareth? The people here are exceptional, true, but not in a good way. This is where Jesus was raised. He rubbed shoulders with the people there. They know Him, and they know His family. And they know His occupation. "*The carpenter,*" they call Him. "*Is not this the carpenter?*"

You don't go to a carpenter to be healed of a disease. You ask him to make a table for you, and you pay him for his labor. But you don't kneel down before him and unload all your burdens, your sins and guilt, and everything that is wrong with you.

For us, too. If Jesus were to be known by you as the carpenter, you would gladly sit in the church pew that He made for you, but you would not worship Him from that pew.

When Jesus arrives in Nazareth, His reputation preceding Him, it's obvious by all His mighty works that He has come in the power of God, that He is a prophet, and more than a prophet. To have this truth staring you in the face, and yet to dismiss it and call Him the carpenter, is evidence that the people of Nazareth are within the grip of unbelief.

Thank God, because it's by His grace alone, that this place is not Nazareth. Jesus has done, and continues to do mighty works here. Each and every baptism into His death and resurrection is a mighty work. Each and everyone of you who has been growing in the knowledge and love of the Lord is evidence of God's mighty work in you.

No, Jesus is not laying His hands on the sick people among us and healing them. He did that for a few in Nazareth, but the greater works He could not do there. But He does them here. Jesus did not come to be a carpenter. Nor did He come to be a physician to heal physical illnesses. He came as the Great Physician of body and soul to deliver sinners from the power of sin, death, and hell. A carpenter works with wood. A physician of the body works with those who are ill. Jesus works with sinners, those who are diseased in body and soul.

And so, I need to say this: I really hope that you are sick and diseased. I know you are, as I am too. But I pray that you know this, that you have a disease no doctor can cure. It's your sinful condition.

But that's why Jesus is here. To do His mighty work of saving you from your sinful condition. Rescuing you from the clutches of death. And delivering you from the power of hell. And whatever unbelief lurks in your heart, it is not greater than He who went to the cross for you. Jesus is not the carpenter, and yet He used wood, the wood of the cross to save you.

He shed His blood also for the people of Nazareth. He could do no mighty work there. But He could lay down His life for them, and He did. Their unbelief could not prevent Him. Their rejection did not stop Him from spreading out His arms on the cross to embrace them.

The same is true for you and me. I cannot say this enough – nothing you have done in your past can prevent Jesus from doing His mighty work of salvation for you. However sick with sin you have been, however diseased you are now in body and soul, it does not stop Jesus from being merciful to you. He forgives you for all of it. From the healthiest among you, to the one of you who is the most sick with sin, all of you He declares to be forgiven.

Since you know Jesus, not as the carpenter, but as your living Lord and Savior, you can come to Him in prayer, come to this Table that He made for you by His own blood, and unload on Him. Your burdens. Your sins and regrets. Give Him everything that is wrong with you. Everything that is wrong in your life. He takes it all. He forgives it all. And He takes you within His loving embrace. And friend, there is no better place to be. Amen.