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JESUS: GOD'S POWER IN ACTION

Rejection and Mission

Bible School Lesson for March 23*

By Dale Reeves

If you follow sports like I do, perhaps you heard of the “play of the year” last fall. Seventeen-year-old Jake Porter was a member of the Northwest High School football team in McDermott, Ohio. In three years of suiting up, he had never run with the ball or made a tackle. But he seldom missed practice.

Hometown Hero

Jake has chromosomal fragile X syndrome, a disorder that is a common cause of mental retardation. That’s why it seemed crazy when, with five seconds left in a game that Northwest was losing 42-0, Jake trotted out to the huddle. The plan was for him to get the handoff and take a knee. Northwest’s coach and Jake’s best friend, Dave Frantz, called a time-out to talk about it with the opposing coach, Waverly’s Derek Dewitt. The play resumed and Jake got the ball, but instead of taking the knee, he followed the advice of his teammates and started to run—but in the wrong direction! The back judge rerouted him toward the line of scrimmage. Suddenly, the Waverly defense parted like the Red Sea and urged Jake to head toward the end zone. Players on both sidelines thrust their helmets to the sky and applauded his touchdown.

It all happened because a couple of coaches saw him for what he was—a modern-day hero. Dewitt is the first black coach in the 57-year history of a conference made up of schools along the Ohio-Kentucky border. He’d already heard the “n” word at two road games that season. Yet he was willing to give up his first shutout for a white kid he’d met only two hours earlier. When Frantz spoke with Dewitt about Jake getting the ball, Dewitt insisted he not run out the clock, but instead score. After the incredible play of the year, Jake spoke with NBC, ESPN and affiliates from CBS and Fox about his

49-yard run. Jake thought it made for a comeback victory and “won the game.” He thinks he was the hero that day. He’s absolutely right.

Hometown Prejudice

In our lesson text today, we witness a disturbing account of Jesus’ hometown, Nazareth. Because the townspeople did not see Jesus for who He really was, because they did not hail Him as a hero, Nazareth is tagged as the place where “a prophet is without honor.” They just couldn’t get past the image of the little boy who played in their streets. There is an intriguing statement in Mark 6:5. “He [Jesus] could not do any miracles there, except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them” (*New International Version*). The *New Living Translation* renders it, “And because of their unbelief, He couldn’t do any mighty miracles among them. . . .” Matthew 13:57, 58 says it was because of “their lack of faith” that He did not do many miracles there. Obviously, Jesus could have performed miracles, but chose not to. The purpose of His mighty works would not have been understood because of the prejudice against Him.

What would it have been like to be a resident who had seen young Jesus grow up? Can you imagine the thoughts? “I feel sorry for his brothers and sisters, growing up alongside ‘Mr. Perfect!’” “How could the snotty-nosed boy whom we saw skin his knees actually be the Son of God?” “There must be some kind of trick in the miracles he is supposedly performing!” “We saw this kid grow up! He can’t be the Messiah!” The hometown folks couldn’t comprehend superhuman ability coming from the son of a humble carpenter. Most scholars feel that there were two rejections at Nazareth, the first one perhaps a year earlier, recorded in Luke 4:16-30.

According to this account, Jesus

Home Daily Bible Readings

- March 17Mark 6:1-6
- March 18John 7:37-44
- March 19John 7:45-52
- March 20Matthew 10:5-15
- March 21Matthew 10:16-26
- March 22Matthew 10:37-42
- March 23Mark 6:7-13

had four half-brothers, James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon, and, although they are not specifically named, we are told that Jesus had a couple of half-sisters. If you grew up in the shadow of an older sibling who excelled in everything—from academics to sports to music—then you can probably relate. Perhaps Jesus’ siblings said things like Tommy Smothers said of his brother Dick, “Mom always loved him best.” No doubt Jesus’ family members had to fight jealousy on a regular basis.

Hometown Obedience

How are you perceived in the town where you grew up? Do some of your relatives still see you as the little boy or girl whose cheek they pinched with a grin every Christmas? Somehow, we must rise above these perceptions and move on to maturity. Jesus did. Rather than dwelling on the unbelief of the Nazarenes, Jesus went about teaching from village to village. And He invested His time and energy in those who had decided to follow Him, His twelve disciples. Because of their belief in Him, they were able to preach with effective results. People repented, demons were driven out, and many sick people were healed (verses 12, 13).

One has to wonder what kind of impact these “mighty miracles” had on Jesus’ immediate family of doubters. Although Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him while He walked the earth (John 7:5), they were present in the upper room after His resurrection and ascension to Heaven (Acts 1:14). James became a prominent leader in the church in Jerusalem and wrote one of the most practical epistles in the New Testament. One of Jesus’ other

brothers authored the epistle of Jude.

What about you? Have you ever asked yourself what great things God has not been able to accomplish in your life because of your unbelief? What has He been waiting to do, but unable to do because of the doubts you have displayed? We have two choices: we can reject His mission for our lives because of fear and doubt, or we can accept His authority—and respond with reckless abandon to the promptings of His Spirit. We can choose to react like His family and the townspeople of Nazareth, or as fully devoted disciples awaiting instructions from our Master. If we are willing to be obedient, we can say with the apostle Paul, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9, *New Living Translation*). He awaits our response.

THE LESSON WRITER:

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Lesson text: Mark 6:1-13. Printed text: Mark 6:1-13. Memory text: Mark 6:4. *Lesson based on International Sunday School Lessons, ©2000 by the Lesson Committee.