

## A PEOPLE OF FAITH

Tuesday Evenings in March 2020 at 7.30, **24** and 31 March  
A series produced by John Rackley asking what it means to have faith in Christ  
at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Faith and Struggle

#### HANDOUT 4

A time when some people struggled to have faith in Jesus

A story of struggling faith Mark 6:1-6

Jesus came to his home town, Nazareth and his disciples followed him.

On the Sabbath he began to teach the synagogue and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this from?

What is this wisdom that has been given him?

How does he get this kind of power in his hands?

Is this not the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Simon and are not his sisters here with us?"

They took offence at him.

"Prophets have honour everywhere" said Jesus, "except in their own country, their own family and their own home".

*He couldn't do anything remarkable there*, except that he laid hands on a few Sick people and cured them.

Their lack of faith dumbfounded him.

(Mark 6: 1-6)

*And he did nothing remarkable there because of the lack of faith*

(Matthew 13:58)

This is a troublesome story

: Jesus wasn't as universally popular as some portrayals of him would suggest

: Two gospel writers give two different reasons why few were healed in Nazareth.

: The powerlessness of Jesus was not easy to report

: Small town parochialism wanted to keep the local boy in his place

: Jesus himself was troubled; is there a hint of bitterness/resentment in his quotation?

: He was certainly amazed that the people who had known him all his life could only see him as one of theirs'; a product of his upbringing.

#### So what sort of faith was missing?

- Faith that is willing to be surprised
- Faith that is ready to change its mind and see what is familiar in a new way
- Faith that sees the range of possibilities in any circumstances
- Faith that has the courage to face the unknown

This sort of faith was absent in Nazareth. Its absence thwarted the witness and work of Jesus. Were they were smug or arrogant with treasured assumptions about who God would choose as a messenger?

They seem to be hiding in the security of their certainties. They preferred to stay in the lessons of the past rather than welcome God's activity through Jesus in the present.

In the end this was a poignant experience for Jesus.

Wouldn't he have been looking forward to seeing old friends and some his synagogue teachers? A time to catch up, say thank you and talk over what was happening beyond their tiny little village.

But they had small minds. He was no longer one of them. He was welcomed with rejection.

He left and did not look back – and ever since he has been burdened by the name of the place which had not time for him – **Jesus of Nazareth**.

**This story reminds us that there is always a choice when you are exploring the Gospel.**

**This the choice**

**Are you a follower of Jesus or a resident of Nazareth?**

**Are you part of the Jesus movement or a member of Nazareth's suspicious synagogue?**

Gerard Hughes

Faith is entrusting ourselves to the mystery in which we are living, trusting that love is at the heart of it, so that it is safe to explore, unsafe to rest in what we consider our present certainties...

**Nothing so much masks the face of God as our security in our certainties.** With faith in God we see everything as provisional and are always open to new possibilities.

*God where are you 1997*

**The Journey of Faith**

We travel as pilgrims from the little light we have  
through the darkness

into a greater light than we can imagine.

So will begin the last and greatest adventure of all  
as we are drawn into the splendour of the full light of God.

*Eddie Askew*