



# MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church  
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**TITLE:** Sitting on the Patio with Jesus

**SERMON IN A SENTENCE:** Jesus comes to bless us with his presence, and we must choose whether we will really see him and experience his blessing—or not.

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 6:1-13

Today's scripture lesson comes from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, verses 1 to 13.

Starting at verse 1:

He went away from there and came to His hometown, and His disciples followed Him.

When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were astonished. "Where did this man get these things?" they said. "What is this wisdom given to Him, and how are these miracles performed by His hands?"

Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And aren't His sisters here with us?" So they were offended by Him.

Then Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his household."

So He was not able to do any miracles there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.

And He was amazed at their unbelief.

Now He was going around the villages in a circuit, teaching.

He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs and gave them authority over unclean spirits.

He instructed them to take nothing for the road except a walking stick: no bread, no traveling bag, no money in their belts.

They were to wear sandals, but not put on an extra shirt.

Then He said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that place.

If any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, when you leave there, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

So they went out and preached that people should repent.

And they were driving out many demons, anointing many sick people with olive oil, and healing them.

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!

-- Hello, I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!

Many years ago there was a saying that went like this: "Children should be seen and not heard." At that time children were not allowed to speak freely, and certainly not shout, when adults were present. Children were expected to stay very, very quiet, especially when there were guests in the home. Thankfully times have changed and adults now encourage children to share in conversations and they try to listen very carefully to what children say. We like to hear their ideas and learn about their interests and activities.

All of us have experienced times when we have difficulty getting others to listen to us. You may have tried to talk to someone when the television or radio is on and they are unable hear you. Or perhaps they are busy concentrating on a task and aren't aware that you are talking.

If you have a cat you know that you can ask a cat to do something and the cat just ignores you. It doesn't feel good to be ignored, does it?

In the Bible we learn that the same thing happened to Jesus. He went with his disciples to his hometown. While he was there people did not respect him or believe what he said, even though he had performed many miracles.

He sent his disciples out to tell everyone about God's love and he gave them this advice: If people don't "welcome you and they refuse to hear you" move on.

So the disciples went out and told those who would listen about the good news of God's love. And that is good advice for all of us, children and adults; that we share the good news of God's love with those who will listen.

What do you see when you look at Jesus? In the Gospel of Mark, the first thing that happens during Jesus' ministry is that he calls FOUR FISHERMEN—two pairs of brothers—Simon and Andrew—James and John. These four left their nets—and boats—and families—to follow Jesus (as we see in Mark, chapter 1, verses 16 to 20). One suspects that they looked at Jesus and saw the Lord.

Then Jesus encountered A MAN WITH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT, and drove the spirit away. The people said, "What is this? A new teaching? For with authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him!" (as we see in Mark 1:27). One suspects that the unclean spirit looked at Jesus and saw the Lord.

And then Jesus healed A LEPER. People heard about it and came to him from everywhere—so much so that Jesus could no longer travel freely because of the crush of people. One suspects that the crowds looked at Jesus and saw the Lord.

And then Jesus healed A PARALYTIC, and people "were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" (as we see in Mark 2:12). One suspects that the people looked at Jesus and saw the Lord.

And so it went—until Jesus came to his hometown. Jesus had been raised in Nazareth—a small town—perhaps five hundred people—maybe a thousand—in any event, a pretty small town—the kind of place where everyone knows everyone else—and everyone else's business—the kind of place where there is only one butcher and one baker and one candlestick maker.

When Jesus came to his hometown, you would think that they would have welcomed him with open arms. He had been doing marvelous things, and you would think that the word would have reached them—everyone else seemed to know. Maybe they would have a little parade for him—or ask him to do some tricks for them.

But when Jesus came with his disciples in tow, the people didn't welcome him like that. They did invite him to teach in the synagogue—an honor to be sure, but not a great honor—someone in that little town taught in the synagogue every week, and they passed the chore around. Anyone with something to say could usually say it.

But when Jesus began to teach in the synagogue, he surprised them. Nobody took a nap that day! Jesus started strong and got stronger. Pretty soon, the people were hanging onto the edge of their seats, unsure just where Jesus was going next, but certain that it would be an exciting ride. "Wow!" they said, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom that is given to this man, that such mighty works come about by his hands?" It sounds as if they looked at Jesus and saw the Lord.

But then they said, "Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judah, and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

Took offense! Where other people looked at Jesus and saw the Lord, these people looked at Jesus and saw only the kid who grew up down the block—Mary's son. They knew his father and his mother—his brothers and his sisters—a pretty ordinary family. So who did Jesus think he was, anyway—sitting in the teacher's seat as if he owned it—his voice sounding like the voice of God? Jesus had been gone from Nazareth for a while, and now he had come back full of himself—putting on airs.

These hometown folk might have been interested in Jesus' opinion about building a house—or shaping an ox yoke. They knew that Joseph had taught Jesus carpentry. But now Jesus—this young man—sounded as if he possessed the wisdom of the ages—and they didn't like that. Who did Jesus think he was, anyway! They looked at Jesus, and they DIDN'T see the Lord. They saw only a young man grown too big for his britches.

What do YOU see when you look at Jesus? The easy answers are Lord—Messiah—Son of God—Savior. Those are the kinds of words that we have used to describe Jesus for two thousand years, so they come readily to mind.

But I sometimes wonder if we really believe those things about Jesus—Lord—Messiah—Son of God—Savior. We live in a culture that is no respecter of persons. Perhaps it would be better to say that we live in a culture that respects no one. We say, "He puts his pants on one leg at a time!"—which is just another way of saying that he is no better than we are.

We're apt to give Jesus credit for being wiser than most—perhaps wiser than anyone—but Lord—Messiah—Son of God—Savior? The titles roll easily off our lips, but do we really believe them?

- Do we really believe that Jesus was one of a kind—God come into our midst—the one who makes it possible for us to have life eternal?
- Do we really believe that Jesus not only opens heaven to us but also gives us wisdom for our day-by-day lives right here on earth?
- Do we really believe, when Jesus tells us to love our enemies, that he has the faintest clue? Surely that must just be a bit of hyperbole—overstatement for effect! Surely Jesus doesn't really expect us to love our enemies!

Maybe Jesus was a bit overstated—exaggerated—too big for his britches!

What we see depends on what we choose to see. When the people of Nazareth looked at Jesus, they chose not to see very much. What do we choose to see?

Martin Marty is a Lutheran pastor and teacher of pastors once wrote about visiting a Benedictine abbey in Richardton, North Dakota. He was responding to a *New Yorker* article that concluded with the words, "Dakotans are losers." Marty knew otherwise.

Some Christians in North Dakota had decided to establish a Jewish-Christian dialogue, so they asked Marty to bring them a Jewish theologian. Marty invited his friend, Rabbi Samuel Sandmel. They flew together to Bismarck and then drove to the abbey at Richardton. The further they went, the more nervous Rabbi Sandmel became. He was accustomed to cities—not prairies.

I can understand the rabbi's nervousness. A city boy knows that he is safe in a crowd. To be alone is dangerous. Muggers work in lonely places. Driving through the Great Plains can be scary, because you are so alone. What happens if the car breaks down? Will anyone ever find us? Are there coyotes? Do the coyotes eat people?

I looked up Richardton on the map. It is halfway between Bismarck and Montana. The abbey is a cluster of lovely old buildings in the middle of nowhere. Around the abbey, fields stretch as far as the

eye can see. If you ever want to get away from it all, that North Dakota abbey would be a great place to do it.

But there isn't much to do there at the end of the day. After dinner, Marty suggested to the rabbi that they sit on the patio. The rabbi looked at him skeptically—as if Marty had invited him to walk through the cornfields. Marty reminded the rabbi that they had watched seascapes happily enough, and there isn't much to see there either.

So they went to the patio and sat down to share a bottle of wine. They noticed a couple of lights in the distance—and some cattle feeding on prairie grass. But then the rabbi noticed the scene changing moment-by-moment as the sun began to set. "Now it's orange-turning-to gray-to-black," the rabbi exclaimed. "Think of what Monet would have done with this sight!"

Later, as they traveled back to Chicago, the rabbi didn't seem nervous anymore. A week later, the rabbi's wife called Marty. "Marty," she asked, "what did you do to Sam? He wants us to spend our next vacation in North Dakota!"

Where one person sees only a boring prairie, another sees a landscape worthy of Monet. What we see depends not only on our eyes—but also on our hearts and our minds.

It wasn't until the rabbi took a chair on the patio and gave the prairie his full attention that his eyes—and his heart and mind—were opened to see its beauty.

That's significant. In our busy lives, we are inclined to give Jesus so little time and attention. We glance through the window at him, and then turn back to our everyday routine—and then wonder why Jesus doesn't make more of a difference in our lives—why he isn't more help. We wonder why the routine of our lives is so routine.

A few decades ago, people took time to sit down with Jesus—to give him their full attention—to really see him. Sunday was a holy day, devoted to God and family. Families sat down together for dinner and began with prayer. Parents taught their children prayers at bedtime. They took time to see the Lord.

Things have changed so much. We are distracted by cell phones—and television—and video games—and computers—and a thousand other things. Our lives are more exciting, but I wonder if they are better. I suspect not.

We say that we can't turn back the clock, and that's true. But we can make choices about how we live our lives—even today. We can choose to sit on the patio with Jesus—to give him our undivided attention—to tell him our concerns—to seek his advice and counsel—to ask his blessing—and to give him our lives. We can spend a little time each day in prayer! A little time reading the scriptures! A little time serving the needy in Jesus' name! Even with our busy lives, we can choose to take a little time to look at Jesus—and to recognize him as Lord.

Try it! Try it for a week! Try it for a month! Try sitting on the patio with Jesus! See if it doesn't change your life!

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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