

Jesus Comes Home

† With amazing wisdom (vv.1,2)

† Amazed by unbelief (vv.3-6)

In the name of Jesus, who is truly Wisdom from God, dear fellow disciples of our Lord:

More often than not, homecomings are not as happy as we hoped they would be. We hear of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with whatever syndrome has replaced “Gulf War Syndrome.” Somehow labels seem to help civilians deal with realities we can’t begin to understand. Most of us will never know the awful price individuals have paid for our freedom in this dear land of ours. Their physical exertion is beyond anything we experience as civilians, but the emotional and mental toll on those who have endured combat they can’t even fathom. Needy they come home to families and friends who cannot know their trauma. Love and understanding are all we can give.

But what if a soldier could come home full of power and blessing? What if His words could heal hearts and His hands sooth souls and bodies of sickness and disease? Would He be welcomed? Or would ingratitude get in the way of good? Let’s look in on Nazareth when **Jesus Comes Home** ...

† With amazing wisdom (vv.1,2)

If you look back where Jesus has been, maybe husbands and wives can best appreciate why Jesus could have been very frustrated. What wife hasn’t tried to tell her husband about some exciting time with her girlfriends only to see him glancing back at the TV, taking the heart out of her home? What husband hasn’t tried to share some great triumph at work, only to get that “So what?” look that cuts so deep into his heart? Lacking wisdom, we often just give up trying to care for each other close to home.

Our first verse starts out, “*Jesus left there...*,” and you have to look back where “*there*” was. Imagine the triumph of the twelve-year-old girl and her parents. She was dead. The mourners laughed at Jesus when He informed them of His power over death that really meant, “*The child is not dead but asleep.*” (5:39) **With amazing wisdom** Jesus had put them all out except the parents and three disciples, Peter, James and John. Powerful Wisdom only had to say, “*Little girl, I say to you, get up!*” and the dead girl “*stood up and walked around.*” What loving **wisdom** God’s Wisdom shows to their absolute astonishment. “*Strict orders not to let anyone know*” would protect His progress toward the cross on Calvary outside Jerusalem. And telling them “*to give her something to eat*”? That’s **amazing wisdom** for her to regain her strength and for us to realize how instantly Jesus healed her sickness and death.

To come home from such a triumph one would expect quite a welcome. Raising Jairus’ daughter was not all Jesus’ fellow Nazarenes would have heard about Him. Wouldn’t they have known about John the Baptist’s witness that Jesus was the Christ? Had they not been told of Jesus’ many miracles? Apparently, yes, but their ears were deaf to God’s truth. Luke reports that when Jesus went into the Nazareth synagogue, this visit or a few months later, He was asked to read like most traveling rabbis. He opened the scroll of Isaiah to those awesome words: “*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*” (Remember the Jubilee? We’re celebrating this WELS Year of Jubilee to reduce our synod debt and spread the Good News of sins’ debt forgiven by God.) *Then [Jesus] rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* (Luke 4:18-21 NIV)

When **Jesus Comes Home**, people are impressed! “*Where did this man get these things?*” *they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles!”* Amazed they were,

but not believing. They proved how foolish our assumptions are that if we could just use the right arguments, our friends would have to see Jesus as Lord and Savior. Or maybe if Pastor were here, he could set things straight for my spouse. Maybe a few miracles with the right words, and everyone would believe, right? Education does not always mean learning even in secular things. How many drivers have ignored news reports and flashing semaphores trying to warn them off the tracks of coming trains? How many movies clearly depict the violence and death of sin? Yet our society still aborts babies and ruins lives with sex and greed. Our hearts are so hard by nature that Jesus' **amazing wisdom** falls like water on hard concrete. Why shouldn't God's kindhearted **wisdom** just evaporate and blow away?

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Someone asked me a few weeks ago how in our Gospel Lesson from Mark 3, Jesus' mother and brothers came to take Him away because they thought He had lost his mind. (See Mark 3:21, 31ff.) Didn't Mary remember all that she had pondered in her heart at Jesus' birth, what the shepherds said, how aged Simeon had praised God to hold Baby Jesus in his arms at last? Couldn't Mary at least remember Jesus' first miracle making water into wine? What we would expect to be the strongest family ties don't always hold. Remember what Jesus said as He looked at His listeners in that crowded house? ***"Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."*** (Mark 3:34f NIV) What is ***"God's will"***? What makes us the family of God?

Jesus' biological family was inadvertently still getting in the way back home in Nazareth. Everyone seemed to know more about Jesus' family than scholars do today. But as the old saying goes, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Nazarenes were asking, ***"Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?"*** ***And they took offense at him.*** There's nothing in the text or in the Bible for that matter that requires these to be Jesus' cousins instead of His half brothers and sisters. Apparently, Mary and Joseph had other children after Jesus. But according to the Bible, Joseph was Jesus' stepfather because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Perpetual virginity is Romanist tradition, not Scripture.

The key here is the ***offense*** that trapped Jesus' fellow townspeople in unbelief. They would not accept His words or His miracles. Luke even reports that when Jesus talked about Old Testament Gentile believers, His Jewish townsmen drove Him to a cliff outside of Nazareth in order to rid the earth of Him. But Jesus is true God. ***"He walked right through the crowd and went on his way."*** (Luke 4:30 NIV) See why Jesus was **Amazed by unbelief**? His power and love should have meant a happy homecoming.

"Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor," Jesus said. Sadly, ***He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.*** More often than we realize our hardhearted unbelief gets in the way of God's blessings. Doubting God's love or insisting on our own way is like throwing a plastic tarp over a dry lawn in a rainstorm then leaving it there to bake in the sun. Why don't we just get out of God's way? Why don't we just believe His Word and trust His powerful miracles to do what's best for us and everyone we love?

That's why Jesus kept on teaching in the villages around Nazareth. He could not do many miracles there, or bless His friends and relatives the way He wanted yet. But faith would make them members of God's family soon. Doing God's will means believing in the One He sent. (John 6:29) Since I cannot make myself believe, I rejoice that Jesus kept going in spite of all the **unbelief** in His hometown all the way to the cross. After His resurrection Jesus scolded His disciples ***"for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen."*** But remember the prayer of the man with a demon possessed son. He asked, ***"Lord, I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*** (16:14; 9:24 NIV) And Jesus healed his son. God wants us in His family by faith with open ears and willing hearts. His Word alone can accomplish this greatest miracle of all when stubborn hearts turn in repentant faith and receive God's amazing grace in Christ alone. Then **Jesus Comes Home** to our hearts so that we can welcome Him with open arms. By Word and sacrament Jesus brings the kingdom of God and with it blessings eternal for His family of all who believe. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Amen.