



Emo Christian Reformed Church

Care & Share

JESUS – REJECTED BY HIS OWN

By Dr. Marno Retief

How many of you can remember the first time you went on a date with your future wife or husband? You probably spent most of the date staring into their eyes, thinking about just how perfect they are and just how lucky you were to have found a human being who was simultaneously as stylish and good-looking as a runway model, as intellectually gifted as Einstein, as caring as Mother Teresa, as good a talker as Oprah, and as spiritually mature as the apostle Paul. Yes, you were absolutely awestruck by this person in front of you! In your eyes, they could simply do no wrong. But as time went on, your opinion of the person began changing slowly but surely. As you spent more and more time with them, you got to know them better and better, and you began to realise everything was not quite what it seemed. This person wasn't as perfect as you thought they were. And gradually you started finding fault with the way they do certain things. All of a sudden, those little mannerisms and eccentricities of theirs which you initially thought were so cute, now began to really bother you. And you found yourself openly disagreeing with their views on certain things. And before you knew it, the old idiom, "familiarity breeds contempt," started making complete sense to you. Of course, this is not only true of romantic relationships, but also have our relationships with family, friends, and work colleagues. Yes, and of course, also true of our relationships with fellow church members. As time goes on, the flaws and faults of other people become more and more apparent to us. To some extent, this process is natural, healthy, and inevitable. But there's a dark side to this process. As we become more and more familiar with people, we also seem to lose our ability to recognise their specific talents and gifts. The longer we know them, the more our capacity to recognise their unique strengths seems to diminish.

The same can happen in our relationship with Jesus. Without necessarily realising it, we can start thinking we know Jesus very well – we've got him figured out! We think we know precisely what he can do and will do. The danger of developing such an attitude is especially relevant for those of us who grew up in Christian homes and have spent most of our lives in church. Since we've heard about Jesus from a young age and we've been taught hundreds of things

about him in Sunday school, catechism, youth, and Sunday services, we think we pretty much know all there is to know about Jesus. So, Jesus has become completely predictable to us. We've domesticated him. He's simply one of us – part of the family. Nothing he can do can upset or surprise us. That's the attitude the people of Nazareth displayed toward Jesus. When they looked at Jesus, they thought back to his childhood years as the son of Mary and as a brother to various siblings. They thought about his training and work as a carpenter. That was their frame of reference for Jesus. They weren't willing or able to view Jesus outside of the box they put him in. When confronted with Jesus' powerful teaching and the reports of about his miracles, they refused to allow those revelations to change their view of him. Instead, they kept on trying to fit Jesus into their preconceived ideas about him. Are you doing the same to Jesus? Are you trying to fit him into some kind of box or mould? Listen – it's not easy to admit this. We're fine with accusing unbelievers of treating Jesus this way. But it's much more difficult admitting how we as Christian try to limit Jesus in the same way.

The reason this is so difficult to admit is because we can so easily start to see our own limitations as normative. If something or someone doesn't fit our experiences and abilities, then we immediately categorise it as false or impossible. We make ourselves the primary point of reference, and not Jesus. This is what the people of Nazareth did. When they looked at Jesus, they saw someone who could only do what they're able to do. They knew what carpenters do, so they couldn't imagine Jesus doing anything beyond that. They knew Jesus' mother Mary and his siblings – and they couldn't imagine God calling anyone from Jesus' family to do something extraordinary. In fact, the text says, "[T]hey took offense at him." How could someone from such an ordinary background amount to anything special? It's the kind of attitude that reminds me of Nathanael's remark about Jesus recorded in John 1:46 (ESV), "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" In their minds, Jesus would always be one of them, subject to the same limitations they were subject to. They simply couldn't see how there was anything special about him.

Pytheas of Massalia should arguably be known as one of the greatest explorers of who ever lived, yet I'm sure – for most of you – it's the first time you've heard his name. Pytheas was a fourth century BC Greek geographer and explorer who claimed to have travelled as far north as what we today call the Arctic Circle. The only problem is his contemporaries refused to believe him. They refused to believe how one of their own people – a man who was apparently from a poor socio-economic background – how he could truly have had the ability and unrelenting determination to do something so courageous. Yet, judging by his description of his journey, many modern scholars now believe he really did reach the Arctic Circle. Yet, his own people, the ancient Greeks, couldn't imagine how it could be true. After all, there was nothing in his background that suggested any chance of greatness. So, they reckoned he had to be lying. Maybe some of you can relate to this – people look at your history, your

background, your family, and they come to certain conclusions about you. They make up their mind about you. They presume to tell you what you can and cannot do. Does that sound familiar? And you know what? You can try to argue with these people, you can try to change their minds, you can change yourself to try and impress them, but listen to me – nothing will help. If the example of Jesus, the perfect Son of God, wasn't enough to sway the hearts and minds of those who doubted him, nothing you can do will ultimately change people's minds. You see, people with such an attitude only see what they want to see. They think they know you and because their primary point of reference is themselves, they will keep on viewing you through their own limitations. And what's more – don't think only unbelievers will treat you this way. No, even other Christians – the people from whom you least expected it – yes, even fellow believers can treat each other this way at times. And as I said, this is how the people of Nazareth treated Jesus.

But this attitude of familiarity – of thinking we've got Jesus all figured out – is spiritually dangerous. It's dangerous for a number of reasons, but our text highlights two reasons in particular. First of all, familiarity with Jesus can be spiritually dangerous because such an attitude can frustrate God's mighty works in your life. When you limit Jesus to what you think he's capable of, you effectively rule out the possibility of Jesus performing greater miracles in your life. The people of Nazareth's attitude toward Jesus had an extremely negative effect on Jesus' ministry there. Just listen to the shocking way in which Mark describes the result of their attitude: "And he [that is Jesus] could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:5-6, ESV). Now what's going on here? Is it really possible that their unbelief frustrated Jesus' ministry in Nazareth? Isn't Jesus' power and authority to perform miracles sovereign? Does this text imply that Jesus somehow needs people's faith before he's able to perform a miracle? Well, let's be clear: Jesus is completely sovereign in his power and authority. He doesn't need anybody's assistance to perform miracles. However, there's a different principle at work here. While Jesus doesn't need people's faith to perform miracles, he prefers to perform his mighty works in a context where people believe in his ability. That's why the text mentions how Jesus only healed a few people in Nazareth. Noticing the unbelief of his own people, Jesus intentionally chose to limit his miracles among them. Jesus never forces himself on a group of people. When he's not wanted, he respects their decision and leaves.

You see, when a group of people reject Jesus – when they reject his person and ministry – Jesus chooses to limit his miraculous works in such a climate of unbelief. However, where there is an openness to the power of Jesus, Jesus chooses to do many mighty works in a climate of belief. I often hear how believers criticize atheists, agnostics, and other unbelievers for failing to believe in Jesus. They say, "How can these people be so unbelieving? Why can't they just believe? They should stop being so hard-hearted and stubborn!" And I fully understand and appreciate their frustration. Yet, what I don't hear so often is Christians

examining their own disbelief. Because, if we're really honest with ourselves, we'll also acknowledge the ways in which we as Christians also display unbelief at times. I can understand why an atheist doesn't believe in the power of Jesus, I can understand why a Muslim doesn't believe in the power of Jesus, but why do some Christians fail to believe in the power of Jesus? What's their excuse? I'm convinced that is the primary reason why certain churches and ministries are more associated with divine healing than others. The more a church or ministry acknowledges the almighty power of God in and through Jesus Christ, the more manifestations of the power of God we expect to see.

This highlights an important principle for the spiritual lives of believers and for the spiritual health of any congregation. Are we actively cultivating an atmosphere of belief in the miraculous power of Jesus? Or are we frustrating the manifestation of Jesus' power by our unbelief? Now let me make this clear: I'm not saying that the ministry of divine healing should form part of every worship service we have, but as followers of Jesus, we should always maintain an openness to the possibility that God may choose to do something truly supernatural in our gatherings. We need to maintain an attitude of openness to the power of God. That is what is important. Each time we gather, our prayer should be, "Lord Jesus, we acknowledge your ability to do the impossible. Lord, you are welcome to come and do your mighty works in our midst. Whatever you want to do, however you want to do it, we are open to your ministry in our lives, Lord Jesus." It's this welcoming attitude that's important in our relationship with Jesus, both as individuals and as a church. So, let's not limit or underestimate the power of Jesus by our unbelief – let's welcome him in his fullness and power. Moreover, let's remember that the reason why Jesus seeks such faith from us is not that he needs it in order to perform miracles, but because such faith glorifies God. As the Reformed pastor and theologian Sam Storms so powerfully puts it:

Why did Jesus emphasize faith? Neither he nor his Father need it. They are not hampered or hindered by the faithlessness or prayerlessness of either the disciples or this man. The reason is this: *faith glorifies God*. Faith points us away from ourselves to Him. Faith turns us away from our own power and resources to His.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

In September we will start a new season of school, university, church activities, etc. How do we deal with this personally? Will we be on the side lines or participate? We encourage you to share your gifts and participate as the Lord leads you.

Also, please remember our students/young adults who are away from home so they feel cared for by their home church. We are blessed to have so many young people/children in our church family. When each of one these were baptized, we as a church family, promised to keep them in our prayers.

As Bible study groups start, please try to attend. How often don't we read a passage from the Bible and say, "I never read that before".

We wish our students and teachers a fruitful year ahead. Don't give up when things seem impossible. Be determined. A little stubbornness won't hurt either 😊. May the Lord bless the 2021/2022 year. Have a successful year of "learning".

We praise God for the birth of Jax Rodney Miller, born on Tuesday, August 17th. Congratulations to parents, Kyle & Kali and grandparents, Gerald & Colleen. After Jax was born, he was flown to Winnipeg in need of medical attention. We are thankful that all is well now and Kali and Jax are home.

We also praise God for the birth of Kip Bennie Kaemingh who was born on Friday, August 20th, 8lbs and 19.7 inches long. Congratulations to parents, Tanner & Stevie Lee and grandparents, Dale & Kathy Kaemingh.

Remco & Mindy Van Zwol have new cell phone numbers. Remco's number is 807-444-5608. Mindy's number is 807-444-5985.

Just a reminder – to let Jeannette know of any changes to your contact information (address/phone number/email, etc.). Once again, students (or their parents) who are away, please forward your contact information to Jeannette so we can stay in touch with you.

The Dorcas Society met on August 23rd. Our new board is: President/Thea Kaemingh, Vice-All/Donna Sinninghe, Treasurer/Carol Kaemingh, Secretary/Wilma Wielinga. At our meeting we set a date for our annual Stampot Supper for November 29th, Lord willing. Because we are in need of funds, we spent some time brainstorming new ways to raise money. We may be having a silent auction/penny table at our Stampot Supper. More info to follow. New season, new opportunities.

Please remember to pray for each other.

- Jack Wielinga has recently talked to his lung doctor. Tests show that the mass in his lung has decreased in size again! The doctor now thinks that it may not be cancer and will test again in six months. Jack is still waiting for a date for his heart procedure.
- About three weeks ago, Willeke Van Zwol broke both bones in her arm and was brought to Thunderbay. After putting her arm in a cast, Willeke was able to return home.
- After an accident at home, Brian Petkau (son of Bobbie & Erin) has recuperated from his injuries.
- Remember to keep the Retief's in prayer as they are awaiting visas for Benita and the children.

Were you born in September? We wish you a happy and joyful day, celebrating your birthday. Our seniors celebrating birthdays are Ralph Fluit on the 12th, Arend Wielinga on the 28th and John Ploegman on the 29th. Those celebrating 40+ anniversaries are Karel & Donna Vos (48th on the 1st) and Dwight & Carolyn Stang (42nd on the 29th). We wish all couples celebrating anniversaries in September a Happy Anniversary. May the Lord bless all marriages with love and understanding.

Received from Ian & Jessica Friesen (August 9):

Hello friends, family, and supporting church families,

Praise God! We have arrived safe and sound! Ian and I are going to sleep in our own bed tonight after 2 months of being away! (If jet-lag will let us sleep, that is!)

We had an amazingly uneventful trip back - exactly what we asked God for. We left Emo, Ontario one week ago for a flight from Thunder Bay to Toronto and spent 2 days in Hamilton visiting old friends and new friends. Then we flew from Toronto to Istanbul. Knowing that the flights from Istanbul to Almaty are only every 3 days, we decided to spend our 53 hour layover doing a 2 day tour of Istanbul and we had a wonderful time! Our tour guide showed us amazing (ancient) buildings and structures all over the city. When we took off on our final flight home (Sunday evening), we realized that we traveled by taxi, bus, subway, boat, and plane, all in one day! We have attached a few pictures of our time in Istanbul below. You will notice I have a scarf on my head whenever we are in/near a mosque to show respect to the worshipers there. Our next prayer letter will have more details about our time and more pictures too!

Thank you for your prayers for us! We are so thankful for you all and are so thankful for the time we had in NA with so many of you. The time flew by - it is hard to believe we will be driving to school tomorrow morning to start a week of teacher meetings and actually start teaching a week from today! We are excited to meet the new teachers joining our school, and to see our previous colleagues once again after a summer apart. Mostly, we are looking forward to seeing our students again next week.

God bless you in this new week, and new school year as it begins for most of you a little later than for us. We are praying for you, thanking God for you always.

Jess & Ian



Received from Mark & Tina Mast:

Dear friends at Emo CRC,

We wanted to let you know how deeply grateful we are for the blessing of your prayers and support of the ministry we conduct with One Hope Canada. Thank you for the recent gift you sent to OHC on our behalf. May the Lord bless you for your generosity.

It has been a wonderful summer of making Jesus known even with some of the limitations that have been placed upon us. We are so thankful that the Word of God is not bound and that there are people who are hungry and thirsty and to be at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you again for your partnership in the Gospel and all that we do.

May the Lord bless you!

Looking to Jesus,

Mark & Tina

Received from Pease CRC, Peace, MN:

With gratefulness to God, the Pease Christian Reformed Church will be celebrating their 125th Anniversary on Sunday, September 12 at 9:30AM. There will be a special worship service followed by a time of fellowship and refreshments. As a proud member of Classis Lake Superior and as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are thankful for your partnership with us in the gospel and invite you to join us rejoice in God's goodness and faithfulness. In Christian Love, your friends at Pease CRC; Pease, MN

"Taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed are those who take refuge in Him!" (Psalm 34:8).

MINISTERING WITH



August 2021

Greetings from Mark & Tina Mast

It has been an extremely warm and dry summer, but we have been grateful for all the opportunities to conduct many Bible schools at area homes and churches. Our theme has been: **"I Spy God's Blessings!"**

"Bible FUN!!" for Summer 2021 has also been launched and 149 children and their families have received **"Bible FUN!!"** packets that we prepared and distributed. Below are a few notes from people who have been encouraged through the ministries we have conducted:

"I am so encouraged by how you are maintaining a 'what can we do' attitude in the middle of this 'pandemic'! It's so easy to get on the hamster wheel of thinking about and discussing all that we can't do. Thanks for being a voice to the opposite!" DP

"What a gift the Lord has given you...a story teller that can bring to life the Scriptures in a way that anyone can easily understand. You radiate God's love in your voice and on your face... Only eternity will reveal the full impact of your life. Many blessings to you and your family. I continue to keep you in prayer as the Lord leads. One Hope Canada has a great ministry... Your true heart really shows through... I have some people I would love to share your video clips with - because you tell the salvation story so clear and simply." MP

"We were so impressed to open up our packets for the kids and see all the great materials and fun things you've planned! We've completed two days of Bible FUN!! and the kids are anticipating what comes next! Thank you so much for your hard work Masts!! JW

"Thank you Mark and Tina. We are praying many young ones will say yes to Jesus." SS

"Thank you again for your wonderful messages and ministry... We are so grateful for your biblical teaching and awareness of the spiritual warfare that is happening in our country and around the world. We have greatly enjoyed welcoming you into our home through your YouTube messages. It has been a great blessing to watch and discuss as a family. As well as bringing back so many great memories of VBS from my own childhood." SW

If you would like to join the **FUN!!** check out our YouTube channel: <http://tiny.cc/markmastvideos>
Thank you so much for the blessing of your prayers, encouragement and financial support in this endeavor. Pray that many will come to personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Please also pray for our ministry plans this fall/winter. We are already seeing the Lord open many doors to serve Him! It has been such an amazing summer of seeing God do awesome things! **#ThankYouJesus**

We continue to host and provide two weekly Zoom **Worship Services** on Sundays, and a weekly Zoom **"Prayer & Praise"** gathering every Wednesday. We continually marvel at the far-reaching places this affords us to proclaim the Gospel. Thank you for praying. **#JesusSaves**

Thank you for your partnership with us. May the Lord bless you for your faithful prayers and support.

Looking to Jesus, Mark & Tina

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Please be sure to indicate that your gift is for **"Mark & Tina Mast"** in the designation box.



September

2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 *Karel & Donna Vos (48th)	2 Brantley Kelly	3	4 Jasper Van Zwol Ben Wielinga *Chris & Tammy Wielinga (21st)
5 Darryl Marissen 10:00 WORSHIP	6 Gertie Boven	7 Adalynn Foster Colleen Wieringa	8 Aubrey Van Beek Owen Veldhuisen	9 Dan Mack	10	11 Kaylene Agombar SUNDAY SCHOOL KICK-OFF
12 Ralph Fluit 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	13	14 Harrold Boven Levi Hettinga Kaity Veldhuisen	15	16 *Jake & Jenna Esselink (10th)	17 Karel Vos	18
19 Rhyan Veldhuisen 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	20	21 Emily Esselink Dianne Heerema	22	23 *Ed & Reta Dykstra (26th)	24 Cassandra Wielinga	25 John Laplante
26 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	27 Abbi Crans Holly Kaemingh *Feitze & Andrea Van Zwol (7th) 9:45 DORCAS	28 Arend Wielinga *Harrold & Gertie Boven (36th)	29 John Ploegman Lydia Veldhuisen *Dwight & Carolyn Stang (42nd)	30		