**HOW TO KEEP FROM MISSING OUT**

**(Matthew 13:53-58)**

Do you ever feel like you are missing out? It’s a common feeling. That blockbuster movie is released. It seems that everyone is taking about it, but you aren’t because you haven’t seen it, yet. You feel like you are missing out.

That new restaurant opens up in town. Everyone is talking about what they ate, what they thought, what they liked and didn’t like. You aren’t because you haven’t gone there, yet. You feel like you are missing out.

You seem pretty content with your life, and then you log in to your Facebook account. You see the vacations that your friends are taking, the places they are going, and the things they are doing. You start thinking, “Man, I’m missing out!”

Here is something to remember about Facebook posts. People only post the good stuff, the impressive stuff. My daughter went to Hawaii recently. She posted pictures of her playing in the ocean, of her taking a nature hike up a beautiful mountain. She didn’t post any pictures of the horrible sunburn she got while kayaking against the wind to a nearby island.

Last weekend my wife posted a picture of us at a truly wonderful restaurant in Stillwater. I didn’t post any pictures however, of the frozen beef and bean chimichanga I heated up in the microwave a couple of days before that.

We only post the impressive things because we secretly want people to feel like they are missing out but not us.

Today, we are going to look at a passage in which a large group of people truly did miss out. In fact, it was an entire town. Look with me at Matthew 13:53-58. From this passage, we are going to glean several things we can do to keep from missing out on the most important things in life.

Nazareth was the town in which Jesus grew up. Jesus, of course, was born in Bethlehem. His family fled to Egypt when the angel warned Joseph that Jesus’ life was in danger. He spent the next couple of years of his earthly life as a refugee. But from then until He began his public ministry at the age of 30, Jesus lived in Nazareth. The people of Nazareth knew Jesus’ mom, Mary. They knew Joseph, the man who had raised him. In v. 55, Jesus is referred to as “the carpenter’s son.” It is possible that at one time, Joseph was the only carpenter in Nazareth.

By the way, the Greek word which is translated as “carpenter” (*tekton*) really meant “craftsman,” “builder.” In Jesus’ day, few things were built from wood because wood wasn’t nearly as available as rock. Every house was built out of stone. There would have been some wooden objects, of course, but Joseph likely learned how to cut, shape, and lay stone. He obviously taught Jesus because in Mark 6, a parallel passage to this one, it is Jesus, not Joseph who is referred to as “the carpenter.”

Also, it is important to note that this story is told in each of the first three gospels (Matthew 13, Mark 6, and Luke 4). Clearly, the people of Nazareth completely missed out on the day Jesus showed up in their synagogue. This is the only time we know of that Jesus returned to His hometown. The gospels record only one occasion when Jesus came back to the home of His boyhood.

On this singular occasion, **the people of Nazareth missed the Messiah.** He was standing right there in front of them, but they didn’t recognize His true identity. To them, He was just that little boy who grew up in their town.

Luke 4 gives us the Old Testament text that Jesus read and what He said about it that day He was in the synagogue at Nazareth, but **the people missed out on His message.**

Both Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus was not able to work mighty miracles because of the people’s unbelief. Jesus will not, more likely cannot, work in an atmosphere where there is no faith. **The people missed out on the miracles Jesus would have done otherwise.**

Those folks from Nazareth missed out on the **Messiah;** they missed out on **His message,** and they missed out on **His miracles.**

I hope that it is your desire to not miss Jesus, to not miss what He wishes to say to us, and to not miss the great and mighty things He wants to do on our behalf. What do we need to do to keep from missing out? That will be our focus as we examine this passage.

1. **WE WILL NOT MISS OUT IF WE COME TO CHRIST BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.**

Notice v. 53. The last five words of that verse in my version are sobering words: “He went away from there.” The NIV also uses five words: “He moved on from there.” The KJV says it in only four words: “He departed from there.”

The *there* to which the verse refers to is Capernaum. You remember that when Jesus left Nazareth and began His public ministry, He made Capernaum His home and the headquarters for His ministry. Jesus took trips out from Capernaum to the villages and cities all about, but He would always return to the little town of Capernaum.

Jesus may have come back a couple of times, but in chapter 16 Jesus leaves the Galilee altogether not to return until after His death and resurrection.

The town of Nazareth only got to see Jesus one time after He begin His ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing, and they failed to take advantage of that one opportunity. They squandered it.

The City of Capernaum had numerous opportunities, but they failed, too. They only succeeded in heaping greater guilt upon themselves. Jesus warned in Matthew 11:23, “And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”

The more opportunities we have to hear God’s word and the more times we fail to respond to that word by believing on Jesus, the degree of our guilt only grows. The only way to be released from that guilt is to believe on Jesus, and we need to so as soon as possible, because there will be a time when He departs and when He will no longer knock on the door of our heart.

The Bible teaches that Jesus was crucified between two criminals, and they, too, were dying on a cross. One of those men trusted Jesus. He made good use of his last opportunity to trust Christ. The other man blew his opportunity. He missed out on his last chance to believe in Jesus.

One preacher observed, “One sinner was saved that day so that none should despair but only one so that none should presume.”

William Willimon is a Methodist minister. He has been a bishop for the Methodist Church. He was a chaplain at Duke University. Listen to the story he tells:

Early in my ministry, I served a little church in rural Georgia. One Saturday we went to a funeral in a little country church not of my denomination. I grew up in a big downtown church. I had never been to a funeral like this one. The casket was open, and the funeral consisted of a sermon by their preacher.

The preacher pounded on the pulpit and looked over at the casket. He said, “It’s too late for Joe. He might have wanted to get his life together. He might have wanted to spend more time with his family. He might have wanted to do that, but he’s dead now. It is too late for him, but it is not too late for you. There is still time for you. You still can decide. You are still alive. It is not too late for you. Today is the day of decision.”

Then the preacher told how a Greyhound bus had run into a funeral procession once on the way to the cemetery, and that that could happen today. He said, “You should decide today. Today is the day to get your life together. Too late for old Joe, but it’s not too late for you.”

I was so angry at that preacher. On the way home, I told my wife, “Have you ever seen anything as manipulative and insensitive to that poor family? I found it disgusting.”

She said, “I’ve never heard anything like that. It was manipulative. It was disgusting. It was insensitive. Worst of all, it was also true.”

It is true that it is not yet too late for you; so, don’t delay. Trust Christ today. Place your faith in Him. Don’t let anything get in your way. Don’t miss out on your chance to be saved. **Don’t let pride** get in the way. **Don’t let fear** keep you from doing what you know deep down you need to do. Come to Christ before it is too late.

1. **WE WILL NOT MISS OUT IF WE FOCUS ON THE MESSAGE, NOT ON THE MAN.**

At first, Jesus hearers were amazed. They were astounded. They were completely impressed by the things Jesus was saying. But then, they started asking questions: “Where did Jesus get all this stuff He is talking about.”

On another occasion, when Jesus was in Jerusalem, John records for us the gossip that was going on about Jesus. We read in John 7:15, “The Jews therefore marveled, saying, ‘How is it that this man has learning, when He has never studied?’” In other words, they are saying, “Jesus hasn’t been to college. He hasn’t earned his bachelor’s in Rabbinic Studies. What business does He have to presume to teach us? He is no more qualified than we are.”

The fine people of Nazareth were offended by Jesus. “How dare He! He’s just a carpenter. Why is He pretending to be somebody?”

Consider this story told by Linda Dupree, a school teacher in Louisiana:

As the only English teacher in a small rural school, I had the mixed pleasure of teaching my own three sons. They begged me not to call on them in class, use them as examples, or tell any family stories—to which I agreed. On the first day of class, they each invariably would choose a seat in the far corner and refused to make eye contact. I left them alone. But making it to the high school English class was a rite of passage for the rest of the students, who were eager to participate in Mrs. Dupree’s class. I watched as my children began to see me through the eyes of others. One day my oldest asked me in puzzlement, “Mama, do they know who you are?” I’m sure he was referring to the fact that I was “just” a mother. To which I responded, “Son, do you know who I am?”

Jesus was more than just a kid who grew up in Nazareth. Instead of getting all tied up over His real identity, consider what He actually said. Let Him speak for Himself.

Luke’s gospel records some of what Jesus said that day. Turn to Luke 4:16-21. Let me walk you through those verses. That was a dramatic day, and Jesus was making a bold claim.

I encourage you to wrestle with Scripture. Read it for yourself. Jesus has a way of creating faith in the hearts of those who read His word.

Author Jim White tells a story about a man he knew whose name was Hubert Mitchell. Hubert memorized the entire New Testament. As a former missionary in his sixties, Hubert spent his days in downtown Chicago, going from office building to office building. He would go to an office and ask the secretary if he could have five minutes with her boss to talk about a personal matter. Frequently, he would be ushered into the boss’s office, and he would say, “I only have five minutes, but I want to ask you, did you read your Bible before you came to work this morning?”

The boss would look at him as if he were crazy, and say, “No.”

Hubert would smile and reply, “Sir, you sure missed a blessing. I’d just like to share with you what God spoke about to me in the Bible this morning.” Then, he would open a New Testament and hand it to the boss, and say, “Let’s start right here.” Hubert would sit back and start quoting it word for word.

The boss would listen, amazed. After five minutes, Hubert would say, “My time’s up and I’ve got to go. Wasn’t that a blessing?” Hubert reported that on most occasions the boss would ask him to stay longer, and they would talk.

Hubert Mitchell led men to Christ all over downtown Chicago just by stopping by the offices of men he did not know and by quoting to them the Word of God.

We are here in the last paragraph of Matthew 13. Think back to the first paragraph of this chapter. Jesus talked about a sower who went out to the sow his seed. What did the seed represent? It was the Word of God. And who is the sower? It is you and me. And what did the various soils represent? They represented people’s hearts. So, what is it that we are to go out and try to plant in the heart of people? We are to plant the Word of God. Our job is not to publicize our church or to build up our denomination. We are to make much of the Word of God. That is what God uses and what God blesses.

If you don’t want to miss out, then come to Christ before it is too late. Next, focus on what He has said. Finally . . .

1. **WE WILL NOT MISS OUT IF WE RESPOND TO THE LORD WITH**

**COMPLETE TRUST.**

According to v. 54, the people in Nazareth had heard about Jesus’ mighty works. In Mark 6:2, the people ask, “How are such mighty works done by His hands.” In Luke 4:23 Jesus quotes the challenge He has received from the people of Nazareth, “What we heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.” They are daring Him.

It is clear, however, that the people didn’t really trust Jesus. The *New Living Translation* records Jesus as having said, “A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his own family” (13:57). Matthew ends chapter 13 with the sigh, “And He did not do many mighty works because of their unbelief.”

In a sense, unbelief handcuffs the hands of Jesus.

If you and I want the Lord to work mightily in our midst, we must trust Him. Part of trusting Him involves obeying Him—doing what He says.

The gospels tell us that Jesus performed a multitude of miracles, but the NT just records 35 specific miracles that Jesus did. Matthew reports 20 of them, Mark 18, Luke 20, and John only 7. John, however, never calls them miracles. He refers to them as signs because they signify who Jesus really is. They are flashing neon lights telling us that this is no mere man. The first two miracles that Jesus did occurred in the same city. I want us to briefly look at those two.

Notice first what happened in John 2. Jesus attends a wedding at which His mother was also present. Jewish weddings were long, festive affairs. It wasn’t uncommon for a Jewish wedding feast to last a week. At such weddings the wine flowed freely. At this wedding, the wine had run out, and Mary came to Jesus with the news, “They have no wine.” Mary was saying to Jesus, “You need to do something about this.” Look at what Mary says to the servants in 2:5. You know the rest of the story how Jesus had the servants fill large stone jars with water, and He turned that water into wine.

In this story, the actions and words of Mary teach us everything we need to know about what goes into receiving a miracle from Jesus.

**First, if you need a miracle, go to Jesus.** Think about it this way:

* If you have need and you go to **a friend,** you will receive all that a friend can do.
* If you go to **a doctor,** you will receive all that a doctor can do.
* If you go to **a counselor,** you will receive all that a counselor can do.
* If you go to **a social worker,** you will receive all that a social worker can do.
* But if you go to **Jesus,** you will receive all that Jesus can do.

**Second, if you need a miracle, do what Jesus says.** Look again at what Mary said to the servants in v. 5. Mary didn’t know what Jesus would do, but she was confident He would come through for this needy couple. The fact that the wine had run out was not a minor inconvenience. It was a social disaster. Mary knew that Jesus would save the day. We are not told how, but somehow Mary knew that the obedience of the servants would be needed.

Folks, we are Jesus’ servants, and we need to do whatever He says. If our obedience is prompt and complete Jesus will work mightily on our behalf. All we need to do is to go to Jesus and do what He says.

Now, I want you to look at Jesus’ second miracle. Let’s read John 4:46-54. Someone observed that the first miracle involved **the joy of a wedding** and the second **the sorrow of a family.**

* In the first miracle, Jesus made it possible for the joy of the occasion to continue, but in the second miracle He made it possible for the sadness of the family to be removed.
* The first miracle was done because of the obedience of the servants, and the second miracle was performed because of the faith of the father.

You and I need to exhibit the faith that this father showed. Notice what the father did. Like Mary, he went to Jesus with his need. Then, he believed Jesus. He took Jesus at His word (4:50). He acted on the belief by going back home. When his son got well, the man connected the timing of the boy’s recovery with the time Jesus announced his son would be made well.

Look at what happened with the father realized the two events happened at the same time (5:53). First, the man believed Jesus’ word. Once the man believed in Jesus, his family joined him in that belief.

Some years ago, Adrian Rogers, the pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee was visiting a lady in the hospital. As he prayed for her, he heard a lady across the hall cry out, “Come see me, too.” He continued visiting with the lady he came to see, and then again, the lady across the hall called out, “Come see me, too.” Dr. Rogers walked over to meet her. She was an elderly lady, obviously in great pain. It was apparent that she didn’t have much time left.

When she saw Dr. Rogers, she said, “I’m not ready to meet God. Mister, can you help me?”

Dr. Rogers answered confidently, “Yes, Ma’am, I can.” He told her the good news about Jesus death on the cross to pay the penalty of sin. He then promised her, “If you will trust Him, He’ll save you.”

She asked, “Will you help me?” Dr. Rogers led her in the sinner’s prayer. She repeated each phrase repenting of her sin and asking Christ into her heart.

When the prayer was over, Dr. Rogers opened his eyes expecting to see the peace of God on the lady’s face. But there was still no peace. The lady said, “I don’t see how just saying that can do any good.”

He replied, “You’re right. Just saying the words won’t do any good at all. It is believing in Christ that saves you. Let’s pray again, and this time, really put your faith in Jesus.”

They bowed their heads again. This time the woman prayed, “Lord, I really trust you.” When Dr. Rogers opened his eyes this time, he saw the peace of God surrounding that lady’s countenance. Her face was shining.

Salvation is not a matter of walking down an aisle; it is not a matter of praying a prayer; it is not a matter of joining a church or getting dunked in a baptistry. It is a matter of trusting Jesus from the heart.

Have you done that? If you have, you know the difference that faith makes. If there has been no difference in your life, then you haven’t truly trusted Christ. Place your faith in the Lord Jesus, today. Don’t miss out on the difference He will make in your life.