

There are only two times in the gospels where we read that Jesus is amazed by something and one of them is found in the gospel we heard today.

All through the gospel of Mark,,, Jesus was the one doing amazing things.

The people have been amazed at his teaching because he taught with such authority.

They've been amazed by his ability to heal all kinds of diseases and cast out demons.

Last week, we read that the disciples were *completely astonished* when Jesus raised a twelve-year-old girl from the dead.

And we can understand that. Jesus did amazing things!

But what in the world could amaze Jesus, the creator of the universe, the one who has seen it all?

That whole concept of Jesus being amazed is something hard to imagine because I imagine it would take something pretty special to amaze the Son of God.

There are a lot of things that can amaze us.

This week I found a list of really amazing, but completely useless facts and I thought I'd share some of them with you.

#1. A cockroach can live several days with its head cut off.

#2. The human thighbone, the femur, is stronger than concrete.

#3. Most of the dust particles in your house actually come from dead skin.

#4. It's impossible to sneeze with your eyes open.

#5. Dolphins sleep with one eye open and half their brain awake.

#6. One quarter of all the bones in your body are in your feet! (52 out of 206)

#7. There are more plastic flamingos in the United States than real ones.

Those are some amazing, but useless facts.

But that's not what Jesus found amazing in the gospel we heard today.

"A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house."

So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them.

He was amazed at their lack of faith.

That's one powerful statement. Jesus **could not** do any mighty deeds there.

It doesn't say that Jesus **would not** do any miracles there.

It says that he **could not** do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.

But can't Jesus do anything?

I mean after all isn't he God?

Yes, he's God.

But He responds to faith.

We've seen it all throughout the gospel of Mark.

He responds to the faith of a person with an unclean spirit.

He responds to the faith of Jairus.

He responds to the faith of a bleeding woman.

He responds to the faith of thousands of people who come to him for healing.

But in his own hometown, in the neighborhood where he grew up, the unbelief was so strong and the darkness so thick that he was amazed at their lack of faith.

What a sad thing to cause Jesus such amazement.

I can just picture Jesus saying.

"I can't believe that you people can't believe with all the evidence I've have shown that the King is here and the kingdom of God is near. What else can I do?"

I said earlier that there are two times in the gospels where Jesus was amazed and both times it has to do with faith.

I find that very interesting.

In today's gospel Jesus was amazed by their lack of faith.

But in Luke 7, Jesus is amazed because of the abundance of faith he found in a Roman centurion.

He was a Roman soldier stationed in Capernaum in charge of 100 men, which is why he's called a centurion.

And when his servant is sick he sends for Jesus, but he doesn't want Jesus to come to his house because he feels so unworthy.

Yet he believes that Jesus can heal his servant even from a distance just by saying the word.

And when Jesus finds that kind of heart and hears that kind of faith we read in Luke 7:

Jesus was amazed at him.

Faith is what thrills Jesus. That's what he's looking for in you and me.

He wants us to believe him and when we do we enter into his family.

We become his brother and his sister, his son and his daughter.

We receive forgiveness of our sins and eternal life and become members of his kingdom, all by faith.

He wants us to believe him everyday we get out of bed and arrange our life around his teaching and his values.

He wants us to be doers of the Word and not just hearers.

He wants us to trust him even when we have a whole bunch of unanswered questions about what's going on in our life and in our world.

He wants us to believe that he loves us and cares about us and knows all about what's going on and he is using all of it to mold us and make us into men and women more like himself.

He wants us to believe that he will reward those who earnestly seek him.

Jesus is looking for faith that's alive and energizes us to live for him and his kingdom.

That's what he's always been looking for and that's what he's still looking for, but he didn't find it on the streets where he grew up.

So sadly he leaves Nazareth.

Faith is what gets Jesus excited. Faith is the one thing that amazes Jesus. I started out today with some amazing, but useless facts.

But I want to close this with an amazing, but very useful fact. Listen to this description of Jesus that never ceases to amaze me and let it multiply your faith in him today.

It's a piece that's simply called "One Solitary Life."

"Here was a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman.

He grew up in another town, worked as a carpenter until he was thirty, then for 3 years was a traveling preacher.

He never wrote a book, never owned a home, never had a family, never went to college, never held an office, never went more than 200 miles from the place where he was born.

He never did one of the things we usually attribute to greatness.

He had no credentials but himself.

And while he was still a young man the tide of popular opinion turned against him.

His friends ran away. One of them denied him.

He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial and was hung upon a cross between two thieves.

While he was dying his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth,,, and that was his coat.

And when he was dead, he was taken down from that cross and laid in a borrowed tomb through the pity of a friend.

Twenty long centuries have come and gone and today he is the centerpiece of the human race, the leader of the column of progress.

And I stand well within the mark when I say that all the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever been built and sailed, all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all the kings that have ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of humankind upon this earth as has that one solitary life."

All these facts should make us stand and be amazed at what God has done for us. He sent His only Son to be our Savior.

Maybe the gospel we heard today about what happened in Nazareth is a warning to us.

The question I have today is, will Jesus find faith when he looks at His church in America.

Let us all pray that he does.