In our Gospel reading, Jesus has arrived back in his hometown, after gaining a following, and a reputation as a preacher and teacher through his habit of teaching in the synagogues. And so, as is custom, Jesus is in the synagogue on the sabbath.

And so, I want to take some time out and share with you what I learned from pastor Mike Winger about synagogues in order to understand the story a little more. “The synagogue is a place where the people gather together kind of like a church, it is separate from the temple, which is where sacrifices took place, and priests carried out their priestly duties. And so they would meet on the sabbath, which is Saturday. They would also meet on the fifth day for worship as well. What happens on the Sabbath day, according to the Mishnah, is they would read a statement of faith which is the Shema. The Shema meaning to hear, is the Hebrew word that begins the most important prayer in Judaism. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

After the Shema, they would do a scripture reading, and after the reading there would be a linguistic interpretation. Especially to help folks who did not know Hebrew. After that they would do the address which was the speech part or teaching portion. And this is for anyone who is suitably qualified.

And, it is in this context that Jesus is in. He is in the town synagogue on the sabbath, and they have recited the Shema and they have heard the reading and Jesus is now the one teaching, and it is possible from the reading that Jesus may not have done this before in his hometown, especially since they are all amazed and asking these questions of each other. “Where did Jesus get all this wisdom from? And how is he able to do these miracles?”

The reason why the people of Nazareth reject Jesus in Mark 6:1-6 has made sense to me when you take into consideration the context and how the people have known Jesus and just could not overcome their own perception of who he used to be. The Bible even suggests an aura of positivity to Jesus at first and then something happens, and the people develop a disdain for Jesus.

In a social system where status was understood as fixed (i.e., your status at birth defined who you would always be) and honor/shame considerations were important, did they simply regard it as impossible for Jesus to amount to anything? The people of Nazareth indicate this negative perception when they identify Jesus as a “carpenter” (i.e., a low-status manual laborer) and as the “son of Mary” (i.e., hinting at a questionable fatherhood).

In the message translation I believe Eugene Peterson makes this connection well where he states, “people think they know who Jesus is, they end up asking disdainfully, “Who does he think he is?””

And the reason that they ask this question is because they do not know Jesus as who he is being revealed as. They do not know him as a miracle worker, a teacher, a prophet, let alone bringing these new teachings. And maybe they hear these rumors, and they go, come on, I know him as a carpenter he does not do these kinds of things. They are holding Jesus to an idea, to a memory that they have of Him, and Jesus is breaking out of that box that they are trying to put him in, and keep him in.

And this is too can happen to us when people can’t fathom who we have become because in there mind we are someone that we used to be, not the person that we are now. And so, Jesus has liberated himself from being just Mary’s son or just the carpenter, he has embraced his role as Messiah and his identity as the only begotten Son.

And as our minds are on the liberation of our country from English rule, I thought it important to talk about one of the ways in which Jesus liberates us. Especially when we follow in his footsteps, because one of the ways in which I see this story play out is that Jesus is liberating himself from the labels folks have placed on him in order to limit him.

He is liberated from the idea that he is just the wood worker and the status or lack thereof that comes with it. And as he does this, Jesus is leaving a lesson for us to learn, and that lesson is that through our identity as children of God, we are not beholden to other people’s thoughts about us, and through him we have the ability to be more than our past. Because of the liberating power of the Holy Spirit.

For, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” The Holy Spirit when we are baptized makes us new. And as we mature in the faith, we undergo a process from the inside out of becoming more and more like Christ. Like Christ in the sense of his character, in his ethic, in his beliefs, in his action, and in his speaking.

And as this process unfolds in our lives and we grow in our spiritual maturity, it becomes more and more possible for us to be liberated from our past and people’s expectations. Because as we grow spiritually, we are able to live more and more into our identity as children of God.

Jesus said he came to set the captors free, and we are those captors, and sometimes we are held captive by the labels people have placed on us as they try to shackle us to those expectations. That is part of the Gospel, that Jesus became human to die on the cross and be raised from the grave to grant us eternal life and reconcile our relationship with God. And part of that repaired relationship is that Jesus does not leave us where we are. One of the reasons Jesus sent the Holy Spirit in order to help us grow, and to liberate us from the things that we are shackled to in order to help us move past the past, by making us new.

And so, if you are in need of help in participating in your own liberation of your past and the labels people have placed on you for whatever reason through the Holy Spirit I want to share some information with you that I came across and some of my own. First two steps that I came across from Tony Robbins.

1. The first step to liberation is to acknowledge what is holding you back and think about why you must move on. What exactly has shackled you and become a label? Was it a failed relationship? A slight from a friend or family member that you just can’t get over? Do you need to [forgive someone](https://www.tonyrobbins.com/love-relationships/how-to-forgive-and-love-again/) – either in person or just in your own heart – so that you can let go of anger and step into a more peaceful state?

Once you have identified what’s holding you back, ask yourself: “What are the reasons that I absolutely must move beyond this?” How will your life change when you learn how to move on from the past? And how will you feel in this new chapter of your life

This is one of the most important parts of the process because it will help you stay committed to letting go of the past. Gaining a clear[sense of purpose](https://www.tonyrobbins.com/stories/what-is-my-purpose/) is essential to establishing any goal. Your purpose will serve as your emotional drive when you feel like giving up.

1. Identify your emotional habits. This is one of the most challenging parts of moving past the past because it requires deep introspection. How do you live your life? What are [your limiting beliefs](https://www.tonyrobbins.com/mind-meaning/do-your-beliefs-limit-you/)? Where do you live emotionally?

When you grow accustomed to certain emotions, even negative ones because of your label, you don’t really notice how they impact you on a daily basis. You don’t realize that you’re stuck in a negative emotional loop – you just believe you’re reacting as anyone would to any given situation. But our unique emotional habits can have profound influence on the way we look at life, the way we act and how good we are at moving on from the past. So why settle for a life where we empower the negative emotions and disempower the positive?

Identifying your emotional habits starts the shift toward a more positive experience. When you [take charge of your emotions](https://www.tonyrobbins.com/mind-meaning/who-is-in-charge-of-your-emotions/), you can learn how to let go of the past in a way that makes you feel lighter and freer instead of fearful.

And I want to add some spiritual direction to this because, You are not the person you used to be. And the mistakes that person made are not your destiny. You are allowed to have learned, to have grown, to have evolved beyond the impulsive reactions that some expired version of yourself once decided on.

You are not a victim of the people who hurt you. You don’t have to live your life in shame or fear of the wounds someone else once cast on your skin. You don’t have to keep hurting, to keep fixating, to keep carrying forward the trauma that once visited your life. You’re allowed to be whole once again.  
You are not the story you used to tell yourself. You aren’t the failure, the disappointment, the inadequate, incompetent fool you once believed that you were. You’re allowed to change your own internal narrative. You’re allowed to start loving who you are. You don’t have to keep bullying and belittling yourself because it’s easier than choosing self-acceptance. You’re allowed to build a brand new identity. You can step out of the shadow of shame. And let Jesus be your liberator.

So, I would add, to aid in this process, it is very important to hand over your situation, your past, your struggles, your emotions, your shackles to the Lord. This means not wrestling it back, it means handing it over and turning and walking away. This means going to the Lord in prayer and asking God to take it over. This can be just by itself in a conversation with the Lord, and it can also involve a symbolic act. Bring something and place it on the altar and feel the burden come off of you. Because somethings we are not able to do on our own, we need the Holy Spirit to renew us and turn us into our new creation.

Next, I would create a spiritual ritual. This may involve something like starting your day off in prayer about this shackle to make sure we do not place them back on ourselves or let people place them back on us when we se them because they do not know the person we are today. Maybe it involves wearing a cross in order to remind ourselves of our new creation. Create some sort of ritual to help you when you find yourself sliding back into the past instead of moving past it.

Lastly, I would add making spiritual growth a priority. Because it will be through our spiritual growth that we are able to understand more and more about God, and more and more about our identity in Christ. And if we do not grow spiritually, we might never understand that we are children of God and all that entails. And the more we grow spiritually, the more we can equip ourselves with the power of scripture, and build ourselves up so that when those thoughts come up you have more strength to overcome them. The goal is to be like Christ who moved past his past