



Small Group Guide: Close but Can't See

Matthew 13:53-58 | Mark 9:21-24

Sermon Summary

Pastor Tony explored how people can be so close to Jesus—knowing about Him, growing up in church, understanding biblical facts—yet still miss the point of Christianity entirely. Using Jesus's rejection in His hometown (Matthew 13), we learned about the causes, costs, and cure of unbelief.

Main Point: The point of Christianity is not getting things FROM Jesus; it's getting Jesus HIMSELF.

Key Takeaways

1. The Cause of Unbelief: Closeness (familiarity) and Jesus's claims (His demand for total surrender)
2. The Cost of Unbelief: Missing the power of God in your life
3. The Cure for Unbelief: Crying out "Help!" with desperate faith

Discussion Questions

Understanding Unbelief

1. Why do you think the people closest to Jesus (His hometown) were the ones who rejected Him? Have you experienced this dynamic in your own life—where family or close friends are the hardest to reach with the gospel?
2. Pastor Tony said, "You can be so close you can't see." How is it possible for someone to grow up in church, know Bible stories, and still not truly know Jesus?
3. What's the difference between being "amazed" by Jesus and actually following Him? (See verse 54-57)

The Claims of Jesus

4. Jesus's claims demand a verdict—He wants complete control of your life. What areas of your life are hardest to surrender to Jesus? (Dreams, finances, relationships, career, etc.)
5. The people in Jesus's hometown were offended by His claims. What claims of Jesus do people find most offensive today? What about you personally?

Faith and Doubt

6. Discuss the difference between the unbelief in Matthew 13 ("Jesus, you're boring/ordinary") versus the unbelief in Mark 9 ("I believe; help my unbelief!"). Which one represents genuine faith?
7. Pastor Tony shared that there are only two types of Christians: "a perfect one (Jesus) and the rest of us called strugglers." How does this truth encourage you when you're going through doubt or difficulty?
8. When have you experienced a "Mark 9 moment" "I believe, but help my unbelief!"—where you desperately needed Jesus but didn't feel your faith was strong enough? What happened?

Missing God's Power

9. Matthew 13:58 says Jesus "did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith." How do you balance God's sovereignty (He can do whatever He wants) with the reality that He "comes where He's wanted"?
10. Be honest: Is God wanted in your life right now? Are you desperate for His power, or have you become comfortable with a "fleshly" Christian life?

Gospel Identity

11. Pastor Tony read through the "ABCs of Gospel Identity." Which identity statement resonated most with you? Which one do you need to remember on your worst days?
12. James went from being a denier of Jesus (Matthew 13) to a servant willing to die for Him (James 1). What made the difference? How does the resurrection power of Jesus change everything?

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following:

1. Pray the Mark 9:24 prayer daily: "Jesus, I believe; help my unbelief!" Be specific about where you're struggling and need His help.
2. Identify one area of your life where you've been keeping Jesus at arm's length. Take one concrete step to surrender that area to Him this week.
3. Reach out to someone in your life who is "close but can't see"—a family member, friend, or coworker who knows about Jesus but doesn't know Him personally. Pray for them daily and look for an opportunity to share the resurrection power of Jesus with them.
4. Review the ABC Gospel Identities list daily. Write down three that you need to remember most, and speak them over yourself each morning.
5. Evaluate your desperation level: Are you desperate for God's power in your life, or have you become comfortable? Journal about what needs to change and bring it before God in prayer.

Personal Reflection

Take 2-3 minutes of silence for each person to consider:

- Am I a Matthew 13 person? (Close to Jesus but not truly believing)
- Or am I a Mark 9 person? (Struggling but desperate for Jesus)
- What does my life reveal about whether I honor Jesus or just appreciate Him?