

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 4, 2021 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 2:2-5

As the LORD spoke to me, the spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard the one who was speaking say to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day. Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you. But you shall say to them: Thus says the LORD God! And whether they heed or resist-for they are a rebellious house-they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

Psalm: Ps 123:1-2, 2, 3-4

R. (2cd) Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.

To you I lift up my eyes
who are enthroned in heaven-
as the eyes of servants
are on the hands of their masters.

R. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.

As the eyes of a maid
are on the hands of her mistress,
so are our eyes on the LORD, our God,
till he have pity on us.

R. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.

Have pity on us, O LORD, have pity on us,
for we are more than sated with contempt;
our souls are more than sated with the mockery
of the arrogant, with the contempt of the proud.

R. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Brothers and sisters: That I, Paul, might not become too elated, because of the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Gospel: Mark 6:1-6

Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "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.

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

At last we are back to “Ordinary Time” for our liturgies. We have run through all the special times: Lent, Easter, Easter season, the Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Peter and Paul and so on. Time to settle down and have some ordinary weeks, to know Jesus in his ordinary life. But what do we find as we return to the ordinary? We find Jesus preaching and nobody listening. He has come back “to his native place,” Nazareth, and even though the people were astonished at his wisdom, their immediate reaction is to “take offense at him.” Why? Why did they not welcome him and listen? For one thing, it was his home town, so people already had him in a category—carpenter, the guy who lives down the street, son of that working couple Joseph and Mary. Who does he think he is preaching all this new stuff? We do not have a record of what he said, although in chapter four of Mark he had told the story of the seeds that fell on different kinds of ground and how some grew, but the rest had only shallow or no soil from which to develop. The Gospel for this coming Sunday is an illustration of the parable. Nothing can grow from barren soil.

You and I should ask what kind of “soil” we ourselves are. When the Word of God has taken seed in us does it get any nourishment, or do we just go along like pre-programmed computers? This is a searching question, something to pray about, tough, likely to make us uncomfortable. If he preached that way in Nazareth, perhaps he was too rough on them and that is why they turned away. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that “*he was not able to perform any mighty deed there.*” This always has been a rather puzzling situation. After all, if Jesus is the Messiah, he should be able to work whatever deeds he wants to, no matter what the reaction. But this is the underlying point of Sunday’s Gospel. Jesus’ healing and preaching are not something one person does in order to process another, sort of like a surgical doctor operating on a patient (or like a mechanic fixing a car). We sometimes picture it that way when we pray for things. Fix it, O God, fix it. Instead, Jesus was always pointing to the relational nature of everything he did. When he did a miracle he would say “your faith has saved you.” What? I thought you saved me, Lord. Yes, but there has to be a fertile seed-bed first. Faith is the rich soil that lets God be planted in and flourish within our lives. He will never force teachings or miracles on us until we are ready to relate to him in love. This is why Sunday’s Gospel ends with the words “He was amazed at their lack of faith.” We have to release Jesus and God from the categories we have fixed them into. We may have to have our own ground plowed up a bit to let the rich fertility inside us be opened to the seeds of love, wisdom, hope and faith that God wants to plant there. We need to start putting love first.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Do you think the ordinary prophet has great success or runs into opposition most of the time? Have you and/or your ideas ever been rejected when you tried to change something for the better? How do you handle rejection?
2. If you went out shopping for weaknesses or crosses to bear would you pick the ones you already have or would you pick different ones? Why? Do you find God in your weakness? Can it be a constant source of grace?
3. Pope Francis spoke about the need for prophecy (and unity) in the church today. How might you recognize these prophets? Will they be manifesting the love of God somehow? In his homily in the Mass for the new Archbishops he said, “... prophecy is born whenever we allow ourselves to be challenged by God, not when we are concerned to keep everything quiet and under control. When the Gospel overturns certainties, prophecy arises. Only someone who is open to God’s surprises can become a prophet. We need lives that manifest the miracle of the love of God. Not forcefulness, but forthrightness. Not palaver [to talk unproductively and at length], but prayer. Not speeches, but service. You want a prophetic church? Then begin to serve and stop talking. Not theory, but testimony.”

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who in the abasement of your Son have raised up a fallen world, fill your faithful with holy joy, for on those you have rescued from slavery to sin you bestow eternal gladness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen