

July 7, 2024

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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.

Background:

The text for this Sunday's Gospel follows directly from last week's Gospel. The response of these people to Jesus' presence is dramatically different from what Jesus experienced as Mark had recorded in his previous Gospel text. The faith of both Jairus and the woman who had been hemorrhaging in last week's Gospel was inspiring. But here the response of the people of Nazareth, Jesus' own kin, is debilitating instead. They do not take offense in Jesus' teaching. Mark states clearly in verse 2, "...many who heard him were astonished." Rather, they reject Jesus because he is not acting the son of a carpenter.

People commonly believed each person held a certain status that had been assigned to them, and they were responsible to maintain that status. To try to rise above that status was a disruption of the social fabric of life. A major factor in determining a person's status was their family of origin. Sons were expected to carry on the trade and business of their father. Jesus would have been expected to be a carpenter like his father.

Mark signals the people of Nazareth's displeasure with Jesus by saying they referred to him as the son of Mary. Nazareth is the town of Joseph. Usually, people were designated as sons of their father, just as James and John are known as the sons of Zebedee. When a person is referred to as the son of their mother, it usually is because the father is uncertain. Mark's community would have understood the reference to Jesus being the son of Mary as a derogatory statement.

Often Jesus is portrayed as the master of insult. Here Mark portrays Jesus as being ready with his own insult. Drawing on their sacred tradition, he quotes a familiar proverb to criticize those who are critical of him, casting them in the same light as those in their familiar proverb.

Most realize that there is a great deal of Jesus' public life for which we have no record. Mark, like all the Gospel writers, had to select what events to include and which to pass over. Why would Mark include an encounter that is not flattering to the people of Jesus' hometown? Why would he suggest, in some way, that Jesus was negatively affected by the townspeople's reaction to him? This text could be problematic for Christian missionaries who are trying to convince people that Jesus was the Messiah. Would the Messiah be flustered by a negative reaction to his message? How did the early Christians find, in the Jesus who is criticized and rejected by his own family, a Jesus that they could trust was the Christ?

Reflection Questions:

1. Among your friends and neighbors, are there one or two whose success or accomplishments truly surprised you? Does how you answered that question speak to your expectations for those who grew up in your neighborhood?
2. Did you go through a period of life when you were uncertain about to what you wanted to devote your life?
3. Who were the people who have been most supportive of you as you found your own way in life? Were there also people who were discouraging?

4. What might have been some of the questions Jesus struggled with before he set his life on being an itinerant preacher?
5. Mark tells us that Jesus returned to his hometown accompanied by his disciples. What are some of the ways their presence might have affected his neighbors? What other factors might have had an impact on their reaction to Jesus?
6. What do you make of the statement that Jesus was affected by the negativity of his family and neighbors?
7. Can you take to some time to talk with God about your experience of rejection, not being able to fulfill the expectations of others, or whatever struck you in this Gospel?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to anneamarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for July 7, 2024, the Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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.

*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.
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.
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.*

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.

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.

Excerpts from Ezekiel 2:2-5; Psalm 123:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; and Mark 6:1-6

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for July 7th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the Gospel from Mark, Jesus is not well- received when he goes to his native place. When he taught in the synagogue, they asked, “Where did he get all this?” But they took offense at him. “Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary?” He replied, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place”. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

The other readings also have references to the presence of prophets, and awareness of that presence for all, whether they are heedful or not. In the first reading, Ezekiel says, "The Lord spoke to me and said, I am sending you to the Israelites. You shall say to them: ‘Thus says the Lord God!’ And whether they heed or resist—for they are a rebellious house, they are obstinate of heart—they shall know that a prophet has been among them." Psalm 123 exclaims, “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 our God.” In the second reading, from the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "Because of the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, to keep me from being too elated. I begged the Lord that it might leave me, but he said, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

We noted over the past few weeks that Jesus’ miracle-working was gaining proficiency. In earlier chapters of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus was attracting crowds of followers because he was teaching with authority, unclean spirits were obeying him, and he was healing the sick. Despite his admonition to “tell no one,” some of those he healed had spread the word. These works are not small things, but in recent weeks, the miracles worked in the Gospels were getting bigger. Two weeks ago, the boat was filling with water in a storm, and Jesus confronted and calmed the storm. The disciples, who had seen all his other deeds, were filled anew with awe: “Who is this whom even wind and sea obey?” Last week, Jesus healed one woman without his even trying, by a touch, and another was not just healed, but revived after dying. This week, because of “their lack of faith” there, “he was not able to perform any mighty deed” in his hometown, “apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them.” As if curing a few sick people by laying hands on them wouldn’t already be considered a mighty deed, if worked by anyone else, such as one of us.

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!