

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B Readings and Commentary.

Celebration Summary by Glenn CJ Byer, MA SLD: The great temptation is to equate success with God's favor. When we try to do right and succeed, then God is on our side. Today's readings present a second opinion. In the first reading God tells Isaiah that it does not matter whether or not his prophecy is successful; all that matters is that the people will know that God has visited them. The message is repeated in the second reading when Paul speaks about the thorn that plagues him; God's grace is all he needs. And even Jesus, when he comes to Nazareth meets opposition and the astonishing passage which says that because the people did not receive him, he was unable to work miracles.

The words of the psalm are words that anyone in the position of failure could use. No matter how things are going, we fix our eyes on God and accept whatever challenges come our way. So whether we are successful or not, whether we have an easy time in life or a struggle, the basic rule still applies: God is our focus, God is our life.

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First Reading Ezekiel 2:2-5

They are a rebellious house but shall know that a prophet has been among them.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel

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.

The word of the Lord

Ezekiel 2:2-5 Commentary by John Paul Heil

Main Theme: A prophet is called to be FAITHFUL despite REJECTION.

Ezekiel was called to be a prophet--one commissioned to speak the word of God--during the Babylonian Captivity of the people of Israel. As a prophet he was inspired by God ("the spirit entered into me") and given the impossible mission of speaking God's word to his fellow countrymen in exile, the Israelites. It is a "mission impossible" because the Israelites are "rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day"--and, of course, that is why they find themselves imprisoned in exile. In addition, they are "hard of face and obstinate of heart."

Although his mission is impossible, Ezekiel is called to carry it out for the sake of faithfully proclaiming the word of God. A prophet is not called to necessarily be successful, but only to persevere and be faithful to proclaiming the word of God. Whether the people of Israel listen to Ezekiel or not, at least they will know that a "prophet has been among them." Ezekiel foreshadows the prophetic destiny of Jesus, likewise rejected by his people (see today's Gospel). Like the prophet Ezekiel and Jesus, as Christians called to proclaim

and bear prophetic witness to the word of God, we are called not necessarily to be successful but to be faithful.

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Second Reading 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

I will boast in my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

A reading from the second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

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.

The word of the Lord

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 Commentary by Fr. Damien Dougherty, O.F.M.: Paul carries within himself the reasons for humiliation and he manifests these to his readers. He refers to his illness as an envoy of Satan, a minister and servant by which the demon, with the permission of God, beats and badgers him. As bizarre as this might appear,

initially, it should be recalled that the Jews considered Satan as the author of disease (cf. Luke 13, 16). The precise aim for which God allows this is that Paul will not boast in the gifts he has received or in the wonderful success of his apostolate.

The Lord did not hear Paul's prayers to distance this harassment but comforted him by allowing him to comprehend that the power of God is the grace that invigorates the Apostle and it is given precisely according to the degree of the individual's weakness. The reason is that the divine power may demonstrate and exercise all its effectiveness so as to reach its goal: the perfection of the power of God through its influence upon the human being.

Confident in the strength of grace, then, Paul can boast of his infirmities so that the power of Christ can continue to protect and console him. God comes to help him and explains all the strength of his grace only when and insofar as Paul recognizes himself to be weak, and to the degree that he is exposed to all the trials and miseries that undermine the effectiveness of his reliance upon his merely human and natural abilities.

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Gospel Mark 6:1-6

A prophet is not without honor except in his native place.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

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.

The Gospel of the Lord

Mark 6:1-6 Commentary by Tom Conry

The question of the identity of Jesus, expressed at the gospel's fulcrum (8:27 "But you, who do you say I am?"), dominates the entire text of Mark. This story about Jesus in his hometown is a good example. It follows the familiar Marcan rejection motif. The townspeople who come to hear Jesus in the synagogue are overwhelmed with amazement, for the works that Jesus has done, the reputation that he is garnering, the band of co-workers that he is leading, the words that he is proclaiming - none of these accord with his ascribed status as the son of a carpenter, whose family is well known. Mark, who is suspicious of miracles (literally here a "powerful thing"), uses this story to emphasize that the power of faith lies in its reciprocal relationship with the community. The program that Jesus is announcing and the way of life that he is proposing are not thunderbolts of wisdom imposed from on high, but rather seeds to be nurtured by the entire community of faith. Where people are non-responsive, the proclamation of the reign of heaven falls

upon rocky ground. In Schiller's more prosaic phrase,
"Against stupidity, the gods themselves contend in vain."

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