

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time B – 2021
Eze.2.2-5///2Cor.12.7-10///Mark 6.1-6

For the last few weeks we have been hearing stories of our Lord's life all from Mark's gospel account.

→in rapid succession and in each instance we have seen the somewhat raw side of Jesus' personality.

→when he calmed the storm Jesus chastises the disciple by asking.... "have you still no faith?"

→last week we heard about Jesus healing the woman weakened by a relentless hemorrhaging only to make his way to Jarius' house where cynical bystanders laughed at him. His response....he shut the cynics out, slamming the door in their faces and making no apology....

→and now today...we hear a story that should have been full of festive joy and lingering pride.

→the hometown boy returns to Nazareth...the people who watched him grow up gather in the synagogue...only to have their comfort change into confusion...and their trust into doubt

→no sooner does Jesus finish his teaching do the people voice their questions...three of them come at rapid fire pace.

→each question a bit more biting and sarcastic than the last.

→the first questions his authority... "where did he get all this."

→the second question...a bit more piercing ... "what is this wisdom that has been given to him?"

→and the last question is preceded by what seems to be a flattering compliment... “what deeds of power are being done by his hands!”...their praise is soon followed by a question filled with sarcasm... “is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, are not his sisters here with us.?”

→the real meaning being...that no carpenter could still the storm, cast out demons, heal the sick, and raise the dead.

→the litany of questions end with a comment that says it all: “and they took offense at him.”

→one would think that upon returning home...Jesus would have got the warmest of welcomes...but instead...the hometown crowd was his toughest audience.

Is he not the carpenter...the son of Mary?...Don't we know him?...where did he get all of this?

→i.o.w. just who does this Jesus think he is?

→And they took offense at him.....they rejected him...they shunned him

PAUSE

→this passage is often used to show **how** a lack of faith or our own blindness can prevent us from recognizing God's messenger and those sent to bring it to us, EVEN when they might be walking right beside us.

→just like the people in today's gospel...sometimes our stubbornness keeps us from hearing the Gospel or even worse from proclaiming the Gospel to the people we know the best.

---And the unique thing about this gospel passage is that.....the story it tells **even though it happened two thousand years ago**can also happen today----- right in front of us.

PAUSE

---how many friends or family members or even ourselves manage to leave things about our past behind us—everywhere except at home. ...

---how often do many of us forgive everyone around us but have a terribly hard time forgiving ourselves?

---[and] how often will many of us listen to **everyone** but we refuse to accept or hear the advice from those who care for us the most...everyone of us as a teenager can remember thinking that everyone in the world was right and knew better ----except our parents.

→how many of us will pray constantly and hope daily for a miracle, but remain blind to the ordinary gifts of life....the blessings and good things that are right before us.

→this Gospel passage today reminds us that God shares his message with us every day of our lives, **even when we are too afraid or too obstinate hear and recognize it**

---that God longs to heal us, even when we are too stubborn to know we are broken.

---[And] that God also continues to send messengers to us, even when we are too blind to see them clearly.

PAUSE

--→today as we hear ---the people of Nazareth were suffering from a particular form of blindness-----a blindness that sometimes affects us, as well.

→They didn't recognize the holiness of Jesus, because they had never really accepted their own holiness.

--They didn't honor his relationship with God because they had never fully explored their own relationship with the God.

---and they couldn't see Jesus as the Messiah standing right in front of them, because they never recognized the presence of the Lord in their own lives.

PAUSE

Isn't he one of us?, they muttered.

Don't we know him? They asked

How, then, could he be special?...they pondered

----They couldn't accept and recognize what was in front of their very own eyes because they failed to accept and recognize themselves as a gift from God...as good and worthy people.

->it's a message that is echoed in that great and wonderful movie...the Wizard of OZ at the very end of the movie...when Dorothy realizes [the timeless lesson] that all she ever wanted...and needed...and desired....was right there before her very own eyes...in her own back yard

-----.....our belief of the Gospel message depends, on this same type of recognition and acceptance in our very own lives

---i.o.w. until we see the light of God in each one of us and recognize the presence and the goodness and blessings of God in our own backyard...and in our own lives

----miracles will seem scarce, prophets and messengers who rise among us will struggle to be heard,

-----and the gospel message will go unheeded.

PAUSE

-----That day in Nazareth, Jesus stood in the synagogue to proclaim freedom for the captives and release of prisoners.

->His life, death, and resurrection testify to the power of that freedom....[the kind of freedom we celebrate this weekend]

→and His message continues to free us, not only from prisons built by others, but from the barriers we build ourselves in our own lives.

Don't we know him? Isn't he one of us? Where did he get all this?

→In the end, maybe asking these questions shows not so much a lack of faith--- but rather.....the beginnings of a great and abundant faith.