

July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Ezekiel 2: 1-5; psalm 123; 2 Corinthians 12: 2-10; Mark 6: 1-13

After Pentecost, 5, b

After studying the gospel, I noticed something. Rejection, rejection of Jesus and the gospel. In the first part of the gospel lesson, we hear the famous statement of Jesus that has even become secularized, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” Often it is shortened to “A prophet is without honor or not welcomed in his own hometown.”

That rather famous quote comes from what we read today in our gospel when Jesus was teaching in the synagogue and the people “took offense at him”. When people “took offense” at Jesus, that is what prompted him to say that prophets are not welcomed in their own hometown.

When the gospel says that “people took offense at him”, that simply means they found Jesus offensive. For my own understanding as what it meant that people found Jesus offensive, I looked at other translations of this same gospel lesson. This is from the Common English Bible published by Guideposts. “On the Sabbath, Jesus began to teach in the synagogue. Many who heard him were surprised. ‘Where

did this man get all this? What's this wisdom he's been given? What about the powerful acts accomplished through him? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't he Mary's son and the brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us? They were *repulsed* by him.' Jesus said, 'Prophets are honored everywhere except in their own hometowns, among their relatives, and in their own households.'

N.T Wright, a prominent theologian, translates this gospel this way, "On the sabbath, Jesus began to teach in the synagogue. When they heard him, lots of people were astonished. Where does he get it all from?' they said. 'What's this wisdom he's been given? How does he get this power in his hands? Isn't he the *handyman*, *Mary's son*? Isn't he the *brother* of James, Joses, Jude and Simon? And aren't his sisters here with us?' They took offence at him. 'Prophets have honor everywhere', said Jesus, 'except in their own country, their own family, and their own home.'

Finally, this translation is from The Message, which is a translation by Eugene Peterson, another well-known theologian. This translation is the most colorful. "On the Sabbath, Jesus gave a lecture in the meeting place. He made a real hit, impressing everyone. 'We had no idea he was this good!', they said. 'How did he get so wise all of a sudden, get such ability?' But in the *next breath* they were cutting him down: 'He's

just a carpenter –Mary’s boy. We’ve known him since he was a kid. We know his brothers, James, Justus, Jude, and Simon and his sisters. Who does he think he is?... Jesus told them, ‘A prophet has little honor in his hometown, among his relatives, and on the streets, he played in as a child’.

Is the “offense” that *as* a carpenter’s son, one of four brothers who had sisters, he has been given wisdom and the ability to perform powerful acts and none of the rest of his family or his friends have? “What made *him* so special”, people began to ask, “he’s no different than the rest of us.”

And then in the later part of our gospel reading, we hear Jesus say to the apostles as he sent them out to share His gospel. “If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, --as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.”

The Message translation says it this way, “If you’re not welcomed, not listened to --quietly withdraw. Don’t make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and be on your way.”

Looks like the rejection Jesus received in Nazareth, taught him to expect it elsewhere and warned his followers to expect it as well.

Yet, for me the question is, “What was so repulsive? What was so offensive?” His teaching? His healing? His power? His influence? His

charisma? What was so offensive? The fact he was once just one of the guys and all of a sudden, he now has all this miraculous power? Do those that ran around with Jesus feel like now they are just the same old, same old, while Jesus --and the apostles, now are super stars?

Perhaps an even more pointed question is, why weren't those people who knew Jesus and the twelve, those who were the closest to them, ---their family, their childhood friends, their families' friends, -- why weren't they thrilled and grateful and thankful that Jesus and his apostles had this miraculous gift of healing and prophetic teaching? Instead, His family and closest friends seemingly were jealous or perhaps even threatened?

“Well, I don't know what makes Jesus so special. We grew up together. He was no different then, than the rest of us. Jesus is one of us. He's Mary's boy. This must just be a phase”, they likely said.

So yes, Jesus was right, “a prophet is not honored in his own hometown”, because he is seen as the hometown boy that everyone knows and the hometown boy that everybody grew up with.

So, we may wonder, where do we go with this. Why do we even have this as our gospel today? Why is this story even in the Bible? -- What is it telling us?

First it is telling us that Jesus was not accepted by his family, by those he knew the best and by those closest to him.

Second, this story is telling us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, look what happened anyway.

Amen,

Pastor Scales