

2 Samuel 5: 1-5, 9-10 (Psalm 48); 2 Corinthians 12 : 2-10; Mark 6: 1-13

Jesus comes home to minister and teach and perform miracles, and isn't well-received. Sometimes a prophet simply isn't welcome in their hometown. Maybe because people wouldn't expect so much of this person, because they know them, and believe they know what they're capable of. Many of them may have known Jesus for years, and had already formed opinions about him and his abilities. Maybe this is also a sign of their jealousy about Jesus gaining importance and popularity. In many ways, when someone makes it big, although many are proud, some are jealous. Sometimes people see it as more of a competition, assuming that there's only so much success to go around, and because this person succeeded, others can't, and therefore will be looked down upon, so they feel jealous of the person who succeeded. But one person's success doesn't mean another can't succeed too. If we look at life this way, constantly comparing ourselves to others, we may not like what we see if we don't believe we "measure up", and we may find ourselves dismissing others' success rather than rejoicing in it. The people of Jesus' hometown dismiss him and we're told that Jesus "could do no deed of power there", and that he was amazed at their unbelief. And not in a good way.

Many people in this day and age, when talking about the best or easiest ways of making change, encourage that people start in a local context. And there's certainly nothing wrong with that. There's so much suffering and need in the world that finding a starting point is often really the only way to go. In fact, in many ways, we may be able to make more of a difference, on a local level, because we have connections with people. Building connections and relationships is one of the first steps in truly being able to help. And yet, sometimes maybe we're too close. Perhaps that's what happened here, in the case of Jesus and his hometown.

Prophets often tend to not be too well-received anyway, often because they're speaking out against the culture as it is at the time, and the ways in which they do things, while encouraging people to change their ways. And people sure don't like to change. I can only imagine that when a prophet comes from within the group they're speaking to, and speaks out against their ways of doing things, it would sting all the more. Yet, who better to do it, since someone who knows the inner workings of the group would be best-suited to discuss the ways in which it needs to change? Maybe there's no real winning, when it comes to being a prophet.

It seems that, although Jesus was amazed at how strongly they did not believe, and how much they were offended, this becomes a lesson about moving on when it's clear people are not open to something. Jesus also reemphasizes this point when he talks about those who may not be willing to receive the disciples on their

journeys, as they venture forth, and that if they're not welcomed and heard, they should "shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them". Which is a pretty strong statement, if you ask me, but I think it's more about recognizing when something isn't working, and not spending all your time and energy trying to connect with those who have no interest in connecting. Try again, somewhere else, and you may have better luck.

One of the parts of this reading that stands out most to me is the idea of sending people out in pairs – never alone – to do their ministry. We're not called to work alone, we're called to serve God together, and to use and share our gifts together. It's too big of a job for any one person – even the apostles! – to do on their own. What seems more daunting to me, however, is that Jesus doesn't send them out with much of anything at all! He doesn't do tonnes of prep work with them – although I suppose you could argue that their entire time with Jesus was pretty good prep work – and doesn't even really send them out with anything more than the clothes on their back and a staff. I can't help but wonder if the disciples felt prepared for what they were about to do, or if maybe they felt overwhelmed by it all! I mean, to ordain someone as a priest in our tradition, they have to go to school for three years to get their Masters, and spend time in parishes practicing ministry on their own, before being released into a congregation. Even then, I still felt pretty overwhelmed when starting my ministry here. It's one of those things that definitely gets easier with practice and time, and sometimes the best way to learn is through hands-on practice. But there are still surprises – a global pandemic comes to mind – for which we cannot be prepared, no matter how hard we try.

We really do spend so much of our time trying to anticipate what comes next. We teach children in Scouts to "always be prepared". I know I have a lot of items in my purse "just in case", and so that I can be ready for things when they happen. And yet, we simply can't be prepared for every single possible outcome, at any given time. In my experience, the things that I'm prepared for aren't necessarily the things that happen. Sometimes some creative thinking – and creative uses of things – can solve problems that arise, when our normal choices aren't an option. A ribbon or string can be used as a shoelace; I've – temporarily – used a pencil as a knitting needle, to hold stitches in place; a bit of Kleenex, with some tape wrapped around it, can serve as a makeshift bandaid; and I'm sure many of you have used an envelope as scrap paper, to quickly jot down a phone number or important information. As they say, necessity is the mother of invention. Sometimes it isn't about being the most prepared person out there, but being able to go with the flow and embrace creativity when need be. If we tried to be prepared for every outcome every time we went anywhere, we'd hardly be able to move for all the things we have to carry with us!

In many ways, this gospel reading seems to drive home the idea that my Dad – when he’s wearing his teacher’s hat – says: when they don't get it one way, try another, and another ,and another, and when you've tried all that you have, let that go and get on to something else. There will be another day. In this passage Jesus is being the realistic rabbi, the practical teacher, and to those with the love of God in their hearts and the burning desire to share that love it must have been hard to hear. In today’s terms it was like saying, cut your losses and move on. Hard to hear, but a reaction to the times when people can be just so darn human in their reactions. We encounter those unwilling or not in the mind set to listen, or those so full of negativity and opposition that they have shut down and raising voices or repeating what we just said won’t help and might, in fact, make it worse. Pray for them, show them God's love, and move on, but before you move on, make sure you leave it behind you, shake it off, for your own sake. When our service to God in what ever form it takes is not working or is not welcome, recognize that a new approach might be necessary, or maybe a new day not just a new way. And remember what Jesus said... leave it behind...no extra baggage for this trip!!

Amen.