

Notes for Next Sunday

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Ezekiel 2:1-5). The Babylonians attacked and sacked Jerusalem several times before the final destruction of the city in 587 BC. In one of these earlier attacks, probably around 597 BC, Ezekiel was among the thousands of inhabitants taken as prisoner to be resettled in the land of Babylon. God appeared to him there and gave him a prophetic mission that extended for more than twenty years, to both the exiles in Babylon and to those who remained in Judah. God's message through Ezekiel emphasized a call to repentance and faithfulness in the period before 587, a reminder of God's continuing grace and the hope it brings for the future in the period after 587.

Epistle (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). Like scarcely any other person before or since, Paul tasted the powers and bliss of heaven, but at the same time suffered bitterly under the curse of sin. "You are dust, and to dust you shall return," yet believers truly already sit in the heavenly places.

Gospel (Mark 6:1-13). The start of Mark 6 begins a major new section of Mark's gospel. In chapter 4 we read of the powerful teachings of Jesus; in chapter 5 the accent is on his powerful deeds (both his wisdom and his miracles are referred to in 6:2). But now a change seems to come; the power of God at work in Jesus is not accepted by everyone. Already we have read about a lack of support from his family (3:20–21, 3135). Here that skepticism becomes community-wide. No doubt this is more than painful for Jesus. This rejection in his hometown leads to the narrative in which Jesus calls and instructs his disciples (6:7–13). The work of God will go on even if God's agents are rejected or even killed. That theme of rejection continues through chapter 6, where the death of John the Baptizer, the forerunner, foreshadows Jesus' own death. The incident in Jesus' hometown is not the final rejection for him; Mark will focus on that in the passion narrative at the end of his gospel.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Ezekiel 2:1-5

He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." ² As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. ³ He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. ⁴ The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' ⁵ And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them.

2:2 the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet. The Spirit of God, who empowered the chariot wheels and the creatures, now entered Ezekiel—symbolizing the Lord's empowering of the prophet's entire ministry. (CSB)

2:3 send you. It means to appoint someone to a task that involves movement on the part of the person being sent.

2:3 rebellious nation. A keynote of Ezekiel's preaching: The entire nation throughout its history had been rebellious against God. (CSB)

2:4 stubborn. Means "strong of heart." Here, however, the strength is not positive. Rather, it equates to the pejorative "strong willed." They demand to do, and then indeed do that which they desire, not what God wills. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

2:5 *they will know that a prophet has been among them.* Variant of Ezekiel's recognition formula, "Then you will know that I am the LORD." They may have to learn the hard way, but learn they will! A prophet (or pastor) who preaches only what his audience wants to hear is rebellious and unfaithful. A prophet or pastor is not called to be successful by earthly standards, but to be faithful. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 2 Corinthian 12:1-10

I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. ⁵I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. ⁶Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say. ⁷To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

12:1 must go on boasting. Paul is continuing with his boasting, this time about visions and revelations, in particular a special vision the Lord had granted him at an earlier point in his ministry. It was an experience which up to this time he had almost certainly not disclosed to the Corinthians since he realized there was nothing to be gained by doing so. Paul knew that ministers of the gospel do not help their people by boasting about their own personal religious experiences. Faith is engendered and faith grows by proclaiming the word, not by parading experiences. (PBC)

12:2 fourteen years ago. This vision would have occurred prior to Paul's first missionary journey, during the time he was in Tarsus waiting for further direction from the Lord (cf. Galatians 1:21). (PBC)

12:2 caught up to the third heaven ... caught up to paradise. Paul is absolutely passive; the Lord alone is doing and giving. (TLSB)

12:5 except about my weaknesses. He wants the Corinthians to see only the greatness of God. God's greatness is seen most clearly as he carries out his work through weak human beings. Paul, therefore, will not hesitate to boast about his weaknesses (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:30). (PBC)

12:7 keep me from becoming conceited. So overwhelming was this anticipation of the world to come that the Lord saw fit to bring Paul back to earth with a thump. (TLSB)

12:7 thorn in my flesh. Probably a chronic health problem, but we are not told. (TLSB)

12:7 messenger of Satan. Evils of body and soul—permitted by God to work a greater good—occur through demonic agency. (TLSB)

12:8 three times I pleaded. Probably a literal number but also a way of getting across a serious and prolonged prayer concern. (TLSB)

12:9 My grace is sufficient for you. A better solution than to remove Paul's thorn. Human weakness provides the ideal opportunity for the display of divine power. (CSB)

12:10 when I am weak, then I am strong. For now Paul realized that when he is weak, when he can no longer depend on himself – then he is truly strong, for then he depends entirely upon God. And God is completely dependable. (LL)

GOSPEL – Mark 6:1-13

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! ³ Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.” ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. ⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil ^a spirits. ⁸ These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. ¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.” ¹² They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

6:2 teach in the synagogue. Wherever Jesus went He always went to the synagogue on the Sabbath because it presented a forum for Him to preach the Gospel. (Buls)

6:3 carpenter. † Matthew reports that Jesus was called “the carpenter’s son” only in Mark is Jesus himself referred to as a carpenter. The Greek word can apply also to a mason or smith, but it seems to have its usual meaning (“carpenter”) here. The question is derogatory, meaning, “Is he not a common worker with his hands like the rest of us?” (CSB)

6:3 brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon. Though none of these four brothers of Jesus believed in Him as Savior during His earthly ministry, James and Jude did so after His resurrection. James saw the resurrected Jesus and became a leader in the Jerusalem Church. He wrote the short Epistle that bears his name. Judas wrote the short Epistle called Jude. Sisters, unfortunately, go unnamed and unnumbered. Consequently, nothing else is known of them. (TLSB)

6:5 He could not do any miracles there. Jesus was fully capable of performing miracles in Nazareth, had He wanted to. Yet, He chose not to give any signs of His divinity to those who scoffingly dismissed Him. Jesus’ miracles were gifts He freely gave, not proofs demanded of Him. (TLSB)

6:7 two by two. The purpose of going in pairs may have been to bolster credibility by having the testimony of more than one witness (cf. Dt 17:6), as well as to provide mutual support during their training period. (CSB)

6:8-9 The apostles were to depend wholly upon the kindness of others and the provisions of God. Given the shabby treatment Jesus just received in Nazareth (vv. 1-5), this command must have sounded quite perilous. (TLSB)

6:11 shake the dust off your feet. A symbolic act practiced by the Pharisees when they left an “unclean” Gentile area. Here it represented an act of solemn warning to those who rejected God’s message. (CSB)

6:12-13 preached ... drove out many demons. This mission marks the beginning of the disciples’ own ministry in Jesus’ name (see 3:14–15), and their message was precisely the same as his (1:15). (CSB)