

Notes for Next Sunday

Seventh 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). In the first half of the reading Paul speaks of an out-of-body experience he had concerning his ministry. He is very excited about it. The last half is about the incurable ailment he was plagued with. He prayed fervently that God would remove it. God informs Paul that it is not going away and that God's grace would do for now.

Gospel (Mark 6:1-13). Jesus goes about his ministry in his home town preaching and doing many miracles. Unfortunately, they simply see him and one of them and are not excited about his words or actions. Jesus goes on to instruct his disciples what they need and don't need as he sends them out two-by-two.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Ezekiel 2:1-5

And he said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.” 2 And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. 4 The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ 5 And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them.

2:1 *He.* God Himself, but under His revealed form as the “glory.” (TLSB)

Son of man. A term used 93 times in Ezekiel, emphasizing the prophet's humanity as he was addressed by the transcendent God. Da 7:13 and 8:17 are the only other places where the phrase is used as a title in the OT. Jesus' frequent use of the phrase in referring to himself showed that he was the eschatological figure spoken of in Da 7:13 (see, e.g., Mk 8:31 and note). (CSB)

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stand - To raise up and take a firm stance which might suggest that you are going to stay at least until what is to take place has been accomplished. Ezekiel had been knocked to the ground by the glory of

God (Ezekiel 1:28) This type of action also happens in the following verses: (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

2:3 *send you*. An official assignment. The word “apostle” is derived from the Gk equivalent. (TLSB)

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

2:4 Ezekiel’s primary mission was to his present generation. They were born rebels, but they could not evade personal responsibility by blaming their ancestors. (TLSB)

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)

Lord God – Lord Yahweh is a common Hebrew construct. The Jews refused to use the name of God, substituting Adonai. Thus we are left with Adonia Adonai (Lord Lord). The difficulty is minor, except that it contributes to a Reformed misunderstanding of God, following the Calvinist model of viewing Him according to His sovereignty. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

2:5 *hear*. In the sense of “listen” or “obey.” (TLSB)

rebellious house. Instead of “house of Israel. (TLSB)

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 Corinthians 12:1-10

I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. 3 And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— 4 and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. 5 On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses — 6 though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. 7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But 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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

12:1 *most 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)

visions and revelations. † If his adversaries falsely claimed to have received their teaching directly from God through visions and revelations, Paul could claim that it was truly so in his case. But he mentions it here to show that the supreme height to which he was raised through these ecstatic experiences was counterbalanced by the humbling depth of a particular affliction he was given to bear (see v. 7), so that he should continue to glory not in self but only in the “God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10). (CSB)

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)

third heaven – Paul is possibly using terminology used by the Jews of his day. Some of them spoke of a three, others of a five – and others of a seven-layered heaven. At any rate, Paul defines what he means by the third heaven when he says that he was caught up to paradise. (PBC)

12:4 *things that cannot be told.* It was impossible to put into words and not something people needed to know. (TLSB)

Not only had Paul seen an amazing sight, he had also heard some amazing sounds. So amazing were they, in fact, Paul says they were inexpressible. Besides that, says Paul, they were things that man is not permitted to tell. What Paul heard while he was given a revelation of paradise was impossible for him to repeat, and even if he could have done so, he had been instructed not to. (PBC)

12:6 *but I refrain* – He has come to the end of such boasting and is getting back to more comfortable ground: boasting about his weaknesses and God’s power. Paul wants people to accept him and his message, not because of such phenomena as miraculous visions, but because of the power of the message alone. (PBC)

12:7 *keep me from becoming conceited* – *aupeiraomai* – To exalt one’s self and become haughty. This can easily happen when we experience success like Paul had in much of his ministry.

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)

thorn...in my flesh. The precise nature of this severe affliction remains unknown. (CSB)

Probably a chronic health problem, but we are not told. (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)

GOSPEL – Mark 6:1-13

He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. 4 And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among

his relatives and in his own household.” 5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching. 7 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— 9 but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. 10 And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. 11 And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” 12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick 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” (Mt 13:55); 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)

6:5 *He could no mighty work there.* It was not that Jesus did not have power to perform miracles at Nazareth, but that he chose not to in such a climate of unbelief (v. 6). (CSB)

6:7 *send them – apostellein,* “began to send.” Christ “began” to send out the disciples as ambassadors or apostles to preach the Gospel to the Jews. Cf. Matt 10:5–6 which was a preparation for sending them into the world (Matt 18:19–20, Mark 16:16, Luke 24:47). Although their main purpose was to preach, he gave the disciples “authority” to perform various miracles to confirm their preaching, especially over devils who worked against their preaching. With this power they could expel devils from the hearts and lives of men (Mark 6:13 a, Matt 10:1).

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 *no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.* They were to depend entirely on the hospitality of those to whom they testified (see v. 10). (CSB)

not an extra tunic. At night an extra tunic was helpful as a covering to protect from the cold night air, and the implication here is that the disciples were to trust in God to provide lodging each night. (CSB)

6:11 *will not receive you –* Verse 10 spoke of the house which “would” receive them. Verse 11 speaks of the house which “would not” receive them. The second verb explains the first: “not hear” explains “does not receive.” (Buls)

Hendriksen: What Jesus is here saying, therefore, is that any place whatever, be it a house, village, city, hamlet, that refuses to accept the Gospel must be considered unclean, as if it were pagan soil. Therefore such a center of unbelief must be treated similarly. Paul and Barnabas did exactly that when a persecution was organized against them in the Jewish district of Antioch of Pisidia, Acts 13:50-51. (Buls)