

Homily notes from Canon Philip Dyson

Sunday 4th July 2021 - 14th Sunday in ordinary time

Readings (Year B): 1st: Ezekiel 2:2-5. Psalm: 122. 2nd: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Gospel: Mark 6:1-6.

Going back home we know can have its difficult side. For years now many of our young people have had to leave home, for either further education, or to find work. Here in Cornwall we know many who have moved away and just long to come back, and do, perhaps in retirement, and it works well. Others, who probably grew up not in such a beautiful place, never want to return.

In today's gospel, we see how Jesus makes a less than happy return to his family's village of Nazareth. Jesus is hurt by the dismissive and scornful way the villagers react to him. His reputation must have travelled before him; yet knowing all he has done and said elsewhere, they still only refer to him as "the carpenter" as if to say, "Who does he think he is?" More pointedly, they call him "the son of Mary."

While experts debate the exact meaning of this last expression, some do not exclude the possibility that the words "son of Mary" may have been intended to remind Jesus that there were still doubts about the circumstances of his birth, and that some considered him to have been an "illegitimate" child. Perhaps they wanted to make him aware that they disapproved of him, because his questionable parentage upset the norms of their society. That is still the case in some strict places in the world today.

Another reason could be, that carried more weight in their traditional society, and perhaps they felt they couldn't forgive him was this: Jesus had left his mother Mary (who probably was a widow by then) to take care of herself. He had set a bad example. To the villagers, it seems that Jesus shows not even the slightest respect for traditional values and obligations, which they felt gave them all a bad name. Remember Nathaniel, who came from Cana, just over the hill "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?"

Even the way the villagers express their admiration for him sounds sarcastic "Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom and these

miracles? Instead of being glad they are scandalised and don't believe in him. Which draws from Jesus; "A prophet is only despised in his own country, among his own relations, and in his own house."

Does that bring it home to us?

The prophet Ezekiel, in our 1st reading is facing rebels who have turned against God in exile in Babylon (Iraq) He is sent to say whether they listen or not they will know there is a prophet among them. Ezekiel is to consider two things, vital for anyone called by God: we all are from our baptism. Expect hardship and do not be afraid: not disappointed by apparent failure, for even if the message falls on deaf ears, God's word in some mysterious way will achieve its purpose.

The Psalm is a lament, written out of distress, but not despair; for God's mercy, though delayed, will eventually be manifested.

In the 2nd reading St Paul his opposition comes from within himself, some unspecified disease to remind him that a sense of one own superiority in any respect is a denial of god's grace and so a disqualification for doing God's work.

All today's readings are about the problems and opposition encountered in the service of God. The key to this mystery comes in the gospel, 'lack of faith.' Or put another way: faith is the answer.

The previous two weeks gospels were about faith in Jesus "who is this: even the wind and sea obey him." It was Jairus, and the woman who had faith. Jesus says 'Do not be afraid, only have faith.'

St Thomas feast day: Jesus says to the doubter: "You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Lord increase and strengthen our Faith.

Canon Philip Dyson

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