



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

**14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
July 07, 2024**

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**Theme: "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country..."**

## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** O God, who in the abasement of your Son have raised up a fallen world, fill your faithful with holy joy, for on those you have rescued from slavery to sin you bestow eternal gladness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: Mark 6:1-6**

<sup>1</sup> He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him. <sup>2</sup> And on the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands! <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." <sup>5</sup> And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6</sup> And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.

### **Gospel Focus**

The whirlwind pace of Mark's Gospel includes lots of admiring crowds pressing around Jesus; it often seems he cannot get away from those who want to be near him and have access to his healing and preaching. In this gospel, though, he is met with skepticism. He returns to his hometown—a place where many of us hope to be embraced and have our accomplishments celebrated. However, those who knew him as a child cannot accept whom he has grown into. Their presuppositions prevent them from encountering what others have found in him. We, too, can make assumptions about what we think we know. It is all too easy to miss God's work, which often breaks into the mundane in surprising way.

### **Gospel Reflection**

Have you ever done something you never thought you could do, but could because someone else had believed in you and urged you forward? On the contrary, have you found yourself hampered by others' preconceived notions and lack of confidence in you? In a certain sense,

these are the experiences of Paul in the second reading and of Jesus in today's gospel.

Paul has had extraordinary revelations and has accomplished incredible things in his apostolic ministry. Yet he has a sense of true humility concerning these unusual gifts. They are not due to any power or qualifications of his own. Rather, he knows that they are pure grace.

He writes of "a thorn in the flesh" given to him. Biblical scholars have long puzzled over the nature of this "thorn." An ancient interpretation understands it as "the thorn in the flesh," that is, physical desires, or concupiscence, that plague Paul. Others have thought it to be a physical malady or a kind of suffering that is related to his ministry. When we look at the context of this passage, the latter is a real likelihood.

The phrase comes within the "fool's speech" that begins in 11:1 and goes through 12:10. Paul is refuting the charges of his opponents who accuse him of being weak (10:1-2), having no credentials (3:1-3), and being unimpressive in words, deeds, and physical presence (10:1-12). Paul counters with a surprising twist: instead of defending himself by taking a position of strength, he turns the tables and argues that his weaknesses are the very mark of his authenticity as an apostle. His own powerlessness makes evident that it is God's grace and power that work through him.

That the "superapostles" (11:5; 12:11) who oppose Paul are the "thorns" in his flesh sent by Satan is likely when we see that in 11:12-15 he compares them to Satan. Unlike these false prophets, Paul boasts of weakness that allows God's power to work through him.

Paul, with the grace of God, was enabled to do far more than he ever thought possible by his own abilities. Jesus, by contrast, was prevented from doing any mighty deeds in his hometown because of the limited expectations of his own people. Thinking they knew Jesus inside and out, they hindered his ability to let God's power work through him for their benefit. Group dynamics often prevent anyone from rising above the rest. "Who do they think they are?" others will say about an emergent local leader. If an "expert" had come from outside the community and taught the same things as their native son, they would have been far more disposed to accept such teaching.

In both readings, there is a recognition that the perceptions of others can strongly influence the exercise of prophetic and apostolic gifts within a faith community. Opposition and close-mindedness can squelch the flow of the Spirit, while expressed belief in the untapped abilities of another can cause him or her to flourish in extraordinary ways with the power of God.

## **Old/New Testament and CCC links**

### **First Reading — Ezekiel 2:2-5**

<sup>2</sup> And when he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. <sup>3</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. <sup>4</sup> The people also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them; and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' <sup>5</sup> And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that there has been a prophet among them.

### **Responsorial Psalm — Ps 123:1-2, 2, 3-4**

***R: Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.***

To you I lift up my eyes who are enthroned in heaven—as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters. **(R)**

As the eyes of a maid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes on the Lord, our God, till he have pity on us. **(R)**

Have pity on us, O Lord, have pity on us, for we are more than sated with contempt; our souls are more than sated with the mockery of the arrogant, with the contempt of the proud. **(R)**

## **Second Reading — 2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

...<sup>7</sup> and to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. <sup>8</sup> Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; <sup>9</sup> but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> 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.

## **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**500.** Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus.(Cf. Mk 3:31-35; 6:3; I Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19) The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, "brothers of Jesus", are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls "the other Mary".(Mt 13:55; 28:1; cf. Mt 27:56) They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.(Cf. Gen 13:8; 14:16; 29:15; etc)

**699.** *The hand.* Jesus heals the sick and blesses little children by laying hands on them.(Cf. Mk 6:5; 8:23; 10:16) In his name the apostles will do the same.(Cf. Mk 16:18; Acts 5:12; 14:3) Even more pointedly, it is by the Apostles' imposition of hands that the Holy Spirit is given.(Cf. Acts 8:17-19; 13:3; 19:6) The Letter to the Hebrews lists the imposition of hands among the "fundamental elements" of its teaching.(Cf. Heb 6:2) The Church has kept this sign of the all-powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit in its sacramental epicleses.

**2610.** Just as Jesus prays to the Father and gives thanks before receiving his gifts, so he teaches us *filial boldness*: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will."(Mk 11:24) Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt: "all things are possible to him who believes."(Mk 9:23; cf. Mt 21:22) Jesus is as saddened by the "lack of faith" of his own neighbors and the "little faith" of his own disciples(Cf. Mk 6:6; Mt 8:26) as he is struck with admiration at the great faith of the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman.(Cf. Mt 8:10; 15:28)

## **Sharing and Discussion**

1. "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." Why was Jesus rejected and met with disbelief by his fellowmen? Have you had similar encounters?

**2.** In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, 2 Corinthian 12:10 states, "...for when I am weak then I am strong" What did St Paul mean? How can one be strong when he is weak? Do you share the same sentiments?

### **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Merciful Creator, you sent your son into the world to embody divine love in the world. Receive our prayers that we too may be agents of your love to people and communities everywhere. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen