

14<sup>th</sup> Sun OT 2021

Mark 6:1-6

***Prophet Is Not Without Honor Except In His Native Place***

For the first time, since he had left to go to John the Baptist, Jesus returns to Nazareth. His disciples were following him. There is a tension here: how will he be received? What part will the disciples play? He taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath. He won no admiration for his teaching as in Capernaum. His audience were curious: where did he get his wisdom and power from? They had heard of his wisdom which expressed itself in his teaching and his parables and of his acts of power. They had heard of Simon's mother-in-law and of Jairus' daughter. They knew him too well. He was their carpenter and his family still lived in their town. Repentance and belief in the gospel, the object of his mission, had no chance. In the explanation of the parable of the Sower, some were scandalized because of persecution or affliction. The people of Nazareth were scandalized by overfamiliarity. The result was a sort of paralysis of Jesus' powers. Mark reports bluntly that he could do no miracle there, a statement too strong for Matthew who modified the *could not* to a *did not*. ***This time it was the turn of Jesus to be amazed.***

*It's hard to resist the temptation to be wowed by royalty and celebrity, might and majesty. Some of us will seek the signature of admired athletes or become tongue-tied in the presence of a person we deem to be a personal hero. If we're impressed by specialness, we're just as likely to overlook the familiar and homespun. If you grew up in a rural area, what's so great about a cow? If you were raised in a city, who cares about tall buildings? When I was in the seminary in Toronto, the rector asked me to show around a visitor. I pointed out the beautiful buildings of Toronto and the modern architecture. He looked bored and finally told me that in Rome our buildings are over 2000 years old, older than this county.*

*Woe to the neighbor who puts on airs or forgets where she came from. The unspoken rule is that nobody gets to be better than anyone else—when they're from your 'hood.' Yet that celebrated other may turn out to be just another phony. And that neighbor of yours? Could be bound for greatness.*

In his 'Joshua' series, author Joseph Girzone wrote "A Portrait of Jesus." In the first few pages he tells about his home town of Nazareth and how even after 30 years

Jesus did not stand out from all the others. He was just like everyone else. “Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

We can use a lot of time and unpack these two sentences, like carpenter, son of Mary, his brothers, and sisters, but I will save that for another time, since it is more a matter of semantics and how words are used and their meaning.

I would rather we ask ourselves what does it mean to be Holy, like Jesus? Does it mean that we walk around all the time looking ‘holy’, like staring at the ground with our hands folded. That is fine in church, but it would be something that would have stood out if Jesus did that in Nazareth. “Oh, yes, Jesus,” they would have said, “Isn’t he the one who always walked around looking holy with his hands folded?” None of that was mentioned in the gospel. We do know that Jesus hung out with the outcasts more than he hung out with the priests and religious leaders. They even pointed it out to him, but not directly. “Why does your master eat and drink with sinners and outcasts?”

Actually, we all have our definition of what is holy and rarely does that match what Jesus actually said and did. It almost seems that Jesus’ sense of ‘holy’ is more often spelt with a ‘w’ in front of it. Saint Irenaeus wrote, “Man fully alive is the glory of God.” Jesus certainly was a human fully alive and not just because he ate and drank with us and associated with anyone and everyone. Being also the Son of God, Jesus is the best example of a Human Fully Alive, the Glory of God.

If the town-folks of Nazareth saw Jesus as someone no better than themselves, than he must not have stood out from them either by what he said or did, until he began his ministry. Unfortunately, that was their stumbling block, they only knew the before and that is how they judged him. The challenge to us is how do we become extra-ordinary because of our relationship with God through our Baptism, yet remain ordinary on the outside? As our relationship with God grows, we should also strive to become more ordinary so that everyone is our brother and sister, like Saint Francis, where even the sun and moon became his brother and sister!