

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Trinity 5

Ezekiel 2:1-5 Psalm 123 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Mark 6:1-13

In speaking and listening, writing and reading, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Last week's gospel gave us the interwoven stories of the healing of the woman suffering from haemorrhages who just sought to touch Jesus' cloak, and the raising of the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue who had sought out Jesus' help. I highlighted how the action of God in their lives touched so many others too: how their lives revealed God's story, the good news of God's love that Jesus puts into action.

In contrast today we have two stories that give us a reality check: recognition that we can impede God's action by being closed to its possibilities.

The first is of Jesus' homecoming after his journeying through other villages throughout Galilee. He goes to the synagogue and teaches there – and by all accounts his manner and message causes surprise. The locals have heard about all that he has been doing – the deeds of power. They seem to recognise that he has something wise to say. Yet something very human and all too familiar gets in the way: isn't he just the carpenter, the son of Mary, we know the family, what makes him so special now: in other words "who does he think he is"?

They have categorised him as a certain type of person, and their prejudice blinds them to what is of God in his words and actions and very being. Being the Son of God does not exempt him from prejudice and closed minds. In fact rather than receiving the love of God he brings, they take offense at him and this gets in the way of his work: he could do far less transformative Kingdom advancing works here than throughout his earlier journeying.

Perhaps this experience (which we are told amazed him) shaped his guidance to those he commissions to share in the ministry – the twelve sent out two by two to take the gospel message and action into the wider region. First he demands of them total confidence in the provision of God. They are not to take anything needed on a journey except the staff that will help them move swiftly and easily over all sorts of terrain. For everything else they will depend on receiving a welcome. Second, the quality of their reception will determine where they minister: they will stay to call people back into knowing the fullness of God's love and to offer deeds of power where they are welcomed but where they are not welcomed, they will not stay, but will leave decisively, shaking off the dust of the place from their feet.

God's action in the world is revealed where it can be received.

And that starts with each one of us.

I wonder, where do we expect to see God at work?

Do we have a wholehearted expectation that God is at work?

I wonder where each of us might place ourselves on a spectrum from at one end, the twelve, inspired by the time living so closely with Jesus that they have seen through him, God's love transforming lives and can courageously trust that God will supply what they need when their focus is sharing that love with those who willingly welcome them, to the other end those whose narrowed outlook prevents them even recognising God at work in Jesus?

The message Jesus gives the disciples to take out, is the message of "repentance" with which he begins the gospel, the message of turning towards God away from all in our lives that obstructs our connection with God. Perhaps one way of deepening our repentance is by asking for God's grace to help us live with the expectation that we are going to see God at work each day of our lives, with the expectation that events and people in daily life will point towards the love of God for us. That does not mean that we are expecting everything in life to be easy, but that what we experience can draw us and those around us more into the

fullness of life God wills for us. It means living with the curiosity always to ask:

“Where is God in this?”

And being willing to receive sometimes surprising answers.

The people in the synagogue did not allow their surprise and amazement to develop into recognition and faith. It is my experience that there is little as renewing of my faith, than discovering the presence of God in an unexpected source.

Being willing to be surprised by who and what can speak to us of God is both a gift to us that can deepen our appreciation of the mystery of who God is, and also a gift that enables us to share our faith more freely without worrying about getting it “right”.

One of my spiritual guides, St Ignatius gives as a starting point for spiritual conversation that every Christian should receive the views of another Christian about God in the most generous way, assuming that they have a truth about God to share. (When you think about the fact he was righting at the height of the Reformation confrontations and was regularly examined by the Inquisition himself it’s a very gracious principle)

If you believe that the world is created by God, and that Jesus has renewed the image of God in the human condition, and that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world, then it seem to me that we can take this gracious principle further and seek to receive the experiences of our daily life, conversations with all kinds of people, and all kinds of activity as openings to the work of God in our lives.

As we begin to notice this in our own lives we can grow in confidence to be able to respond to those who share the question “where is God” with observation rather than argument, with joy rather than anxiety, with openness and expectation and a desire to share a world where the signs of the kingdom break through when we look for them.

Ever-loving God, we ask for your grace of the expectancy that you work for good in our lives and in the world around us. Show us your presence each day in the people and place in which we find ourselves, that we may be heralds of your presence too.
Amen