

Year B Proper 9
5th after Pentecost
July 5, 2009

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2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10
Ps 48
2 Corinthians 12:2-10
Mark 6:1-13

What a rich buffet of lessons! – almost too much to choose from:

- Kingship and political expediency and choosing what is best for all the people
- Mystical experiences... and the reminder not to get a fat head about them
- And this passage about being sent forth, traveling light
- But as often as I read these lessons this week, my mind kept coming back to one question:
- *I wonder what they knew.....these residents of Nazareth who are dismissing Jesus?*

Oh I know, the gospel has them saying *Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James.....*

- But that sounds like code language to me
- You know – the kind of language you and I use when we want to sound nice but are really being nasty
- We're at a party and someone mentions a person and we say *Oh.....didn't he grow up in ...?* our tone of voice implying horrid things about people from that town
- Or *Didn't his sister used to date that serial killer?.....* clearly implying that her short-term questionable choice implies something deeply serious about her family

What did they know?

- That Mary cooked with a lot of garlic?
- That Jesus and Joseph were such finicky carpenters that it took them longer than others to finish a job?
- We don't know
- All we know is that these people, with Jesus, the Christ of God in their midst, reject him because they know him

- What they know of his humanity blocks out any possible opening in their minds that he comes with a divine message

Now that's pretty funny, I think -- because it is just the opposite of what we usually do:

- We get so caught up in Jesus' divinity -- *God from God, Light from Light, Only begotten of the Father,*, and all that -- that we get upset when we encounter his humanity
- When we read that his first miracle was making 180 gallons of wine to round out a party..... That he wept when Lazarus died.....that he got angry with the money changers.... That he was afraid in the Garden of Gethsemane
- Like his long-ago neighbors, we reject his totality because of the little we know of him

And when his neighbors reject him, something odd happens: Mark tells us: *Jesus could do no miracles there*

- That may strike us strange: *what? Jesus not able to do a miracle? If he's all this God from God and Light from Light business, why not?*
- *Can't God's power trump human will?*
- Well.....yes..... and no
- Remember what we read in the Book of Genesis: that God invites Adam and Eve to cooperate with God's own plan, giving them freedom to not cooperate
- God, the loving parent, weeping perhaps when the children make a wrong choice, but never, ever forcing the right choice on them
- So Jesus, the Christ, fully human being and fully God from God and Light from Light has his hands tied by human rejection of his holy message
- He can do no miracles in their midst
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- Nor can he in our midst if we will not name him

So often when we have this passage or one similar to it, the preacher may ask *What would we do if Jesus walked into our church today?*

- Now, I can't recall if I've ever done that -- but if I have I apologize to you for doing so
- It is a question that sets you up, and that's not fair
- It assumes that most of us will think of the Jesus of stained glass windows, or of pious bookmarks: long hair, brushed beard (with no bits of breakfast in it), long white robe, sandal clad feet that are amazingly clean despite having walked miles to get here, and a voice that brings forth choruses of angels when he speaks
- And then the preacher gets to ask *But what if he looked different?*
- Not fair!

And... it is a question I no longer think would ever be appropriate to ask

- Because Christ is already here
- Not in his fullness, not completely visible, but here, in our midst, today
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- If we truly believe all that we claim when we talk about Baptism:
- That in it we are brought into Christ's death so that we may share his resurrection
- That we are made parts of Christ's body in the world
- As Beau quoted from St. Theresa last week: Christ has no hands but yours, no feet but yours, no voice but yours.....
- Then as we gathered here today, Christ gathered here.

And the challenge to us is the same as the challenge to those residents of Nazareth so long ago:

- Will we recognize him? Name him? Acknowledge him?

- Not in the human being Jesus, but in each other? And in ourselves?

I believe that God and the world listen to hear if the voice of Christ will be spoken here today:

- In how we talk to each other..... and talk of each other
- Not just with or about the people we like or have affinity with, but with and about those who annoy the dickens out of us as well

And I believe that God and the world watch to see if Christ will act here today

- In how we behave towards each other, and towards those not present -- our friends, neighbors, and those in need

And it's not just today that God and the world listen and watch us:

- We make big claims by coming here -- that we are sinners redeemed by his blood
- People dead to true life made alive again in him
- Alive to serve the world in Christ's name
- And so God and the world listen and watch us not just this morning, but this afternoon.... and tomorrow..... and every day of our lives
- Asking "Can it be true?" is this really the Anointed of God?
- All we see is people -- very, very human people
- Who cook with too much garlic..... and cry.... And get angry.... And are afraid
- Is Christ really at home in them? Is that what I see?

The people of Nazareth had an opportunity that day: could they see the Christ in their midst? Or no?

- We have the same opportunity
- How will we respond?

Amen.

