



Fourteenth Sunday Ordinary Time. 2006.
Ezekiel 2: 2-5 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10 Mark 6: 1-6

We are now on plain rations til the end of the church's year. But we all know plain can still be hearty and so the readings of today give us plenty to chew on.

The prophet Ezekiel (*God strengthens him*) begins his book with an account of his call to the service of God. If you want the special effects you need to begin with Chapter One. Ezekiel, in fear, falls to the ground. He is told to stand up. For the Jewish people, to stand is the correct posture for prayer. To pray on your feet indicates that you are ready to move. Prayer is about readiness for service.

Ezekiel is sent to his own people who have rebelled against God. "Hard of face and obstinate of heart" they will be a challenge to his ministry but he is told not to fear them or their words. His words are to be the Word of God and in demonstration of this he is told to eat a portion of the scroll. This wonderful Eucharistic image reflects *viaticum*, food for the journey.

Paul is another Ezekiel, a man so in tune with the Word of God that he seems to have lived on the scriptures. He has laboured long in the service of God and he has been good at the work.

He has an embarrassing problem, what it is we don't know, but Paul sees it as a kind of reminder that he's not perfect. He knows that it would be easy to slip from preaching the Word of God into preaching the word of Paul. So he comes to terms with his problem, and carries it as a message from God that the grace of God is what sustains him not his own strength.

Jesus is also part of the prophetic line. In this reading we have a kind of, "successful missionary returns home". Jesus has been involved in a successful tour of the area preaching and healing. He goes to the synagogue, for the Sabbath, and begins to teach. The people start to ask themselves questions, not about the teaching but about the teacher.

Three questions are aimed at his right to minister and two are rhetorical suggesting that his family background and job are not a suitable foundation for being taken seriously. Instead of rejoicing in his apparent wisdom they criticise and refuse to believe.

We sense a return of the hard face and closed mind attitude. The labouring classes are not supposed to produce great thinkers. Snobbery is not a recent invention. Jesus' use of a proverb indicates that his situation is not new. It also points to the waste of human resources that occurs because we look outside the community for solutions to problems.

The outcome of the attack is interesting. Jesus is powerless. The attack and the underlying lack of faith distress him.

Jesus' loss of ability to respond to signs on demand, points to the nature of his ministry. His healings are not magic events; his work is not a travelling side show winning listeners through a display of miracles. There are plenty of others into such self-glorification.

Jesus' healings are not separate from the faith of the recipient. They are like sacramental signs, which point to the inner working of the grace of God. Words of wisdom and great deeds don't produce faith. The transformations in people are public reminders of the healing presence of God in all.

Ezekiel, Jesus, Paul, and of course all of us in our daily response to the call of God to mediate the love of God to the world, are like farmers sowing seed.

We are only a part of the process.

We are channels of the love of God. The seedbed is also crucial.

Our task is to work in harmony with the Spirit to be fit proclaimers of the reign of God.

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