

July 5, 2009 Ezekiel 2:1-5; Psalm 123; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10 and Mark 6:1-13

Joke: I have a friend who while in high school was kicked out of his neighborhood drug store for causing the owner some grief more than a few times. Twelve years later, while visiting home after his ordination, his mother sent him to the same store. When he walked in the owner looked up and said, "I told you out!"

Sometimes it's hard to go home. Our reputations are waiting for us.

Reputations – especially in small towns – may not allow for/expect change

Also opposite -- Small towns exaggerate/celebrate success of stories of "local guy/gal done good" (especially when brings positive publicity!) -- Suddenly, street names are changed to honor them. Buildings are built in their name and when you read the paper, you hear about another gift of money given, in their name. These are not necessarily bad things.

What about when "local guy does good" isn't celebrated? What went wrong for Jesus?

Maybe the town was waiting – maybe they had heard that a prophet was coming to teach in the synagogue and they were excited . . . until they saw who it was.

Jesus? Him? *He's* the prophet? *He's* the Messiah? But we know him! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son? Who does he think he is anyway?"

Maybe not quite the reaction you would expect. Wouldn't they be excited that "local guy does good / local guy is the Messiah"? And, he's come back to his hometown to share the good news! But no, instead, they don't quite trust this local boy. Why?

1. Unable or unwilling to see Jesus as the Savior. Maybe Mary's reputation, what happened to her had not yet been forgotten. You know how small towns are – their memories are like an elephant! It's hard to get away from

your family history – which could either be good or bad. Maybe they were unwilling to look past the gossip of his birth to see him for who he was.

2. They knew Jesus too well. Maybe they lost a sense of wonder for what he brings and about who he is, so their hearts and minds were closed to the wonderment of the good news that he brought. They were simply expecting ordinariness and couldn't fathom something greater from Mary's son, the carpenter.

Part of faith is being able to see God at work and naming it.
(workingpreacher.org)

Whatever the reason was, Jesus could not do any miracles there, except to heal a few sick people, because of their lack of faith – their unbelief! What would be the point? The hearts appeared to be hardened to his message and they did not have the ability of faith to see God at work – they couldn't even name Jesus for who he really was – the Son of God!

I wonder if that's the reason that we read the story of Jesus sending out the twelve with the story of Jesus returning to his hometown? Maybe Jesus, as the messenger in his hometown, got in the way of the message that needed to be told? Maybe now, the twelve needed to tell the message – to be new faces in new places so that the people they met might possibly be open to hear what they had to say – what they had to share?

The disciples receive a call with very interesting instructions. They are told not to take very much with them. Then again, they are not packing for a vacation, they are being sent by the Savior himself! Maybe Jesus doesn't want them to substitute provisions for the journey for their faith. It's easy to do that when we are unsure of our role – when we are nervous that we are “good enough” for the task given to us. But if we rely too much on the things we bring, we lose sight of the importance of the words that we have to share/to give. When our message is

rejected, we turn it into something personal, that we are being rejected and then may forget about why we were sent in the first place!

In this passage in Mark in his instructions for the disciples, he doesn't dwell on the rejection that they will receive – the same way he didn't dwell on how he was not welcomed in his hometown. After Jesus' rejection, he moves on to a new village to teach. For the disciples, if *their message* is rejected, they are also supposed to leave and go to another place to preach repentance, cast out demons and heal.

We, too, are sent by Jesus to many places and many faces. We may think that we are “not good enough” or are too broken to be used by Jesus to share the good news of his love. But it's not about us! The message that we share is that of Jesus. There will be times that it is rejected because faith is not yet there.

“Do not let rejection or yourself get in the way of the good news.” (Peter W Marty) We can continue to hope and pray that Jesus' love is recognized as we continue to tell the story again and again.

It is in our very weakness that the power of God works through us in telling the story of Jesus. Most of us will not be celebrated in our hometowns like celebrities. Some of us may even experience the way Jesus was treated! Yet, all of us are a part of a community of faith that goes out, even in our weaknesses, to share God's love.

One little boy at Vacation Bible School asked his teacher, “How do you know this Jesus thing is for real?” As his teacher, Jenny N., told him that part of faith is trusting in something that you can't see, little voices around her were joining in – “Jesus is our Savior!” “Jesus loves you!”

That, my friends, is seeing God at work and naming it! Thanks be to God!