

## 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B

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### Sources:

SCB: ([St Charles](#))

SH: ([Scott Hahn](#))

Ben XVI: ([Benedict](#) – 6/15/05)

RC: ([Cantalamessa](#))

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading - Ezekiel 2:2-5** - As the LORD spoke to me, the spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard the one who was speaking say to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day. Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you. But you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD! And whether they heed or resist--for they are a rebellious house--they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

### SCB:

- The Book of Ezekiel is one of four books of the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel); the three greatest being Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.
- “Jeremiah is all doom; Ezekiel begins with doom but ends with consolation; while Isaiah is all consolation.”
- Chapters 1 through 24 are oracles of judgment against Israel; and chapters 25 through 28 propose a variety of words of support and hope.
- Ezekiel (the name means “may God strengthen”) claims to have started his ministry in 593 B.C. and his last dated prophecy is in 571 B.C. What was going on during this time? In 598 B.C. the Babylonian army sacked Jerusalem and took King Jehochin prisoner. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, appointed Zedekiah (Jehochin’s uncle) as king-regent. King Jehochin, the wealthy, and the craftsmen (along with Ezekiel) were deported to Babylon. Zedekiah planned a rebellion; this act broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. This time, the Babylonian siege lasted from 589 to 586 B.C. and wiped out all of Judah’s cities before taking Jerusalem itself (2 Kings 25; Jeremiah 37-45, 52).
- The bulk of Ezekiel’s ministry took place between 593 and 586 B.C., during the reign of King Zedekiah and the period of devastation that followed the fall of Jerusalem. Our reading for today takes place early in Ezekiel’s ministry (about 593 B.C.).

- God's spirit (*ruah*) enters into Ezekiel, strengthening him to be attentive to the message of God.
- Ezekiel is conscious of being moved by the Spirit in his prophetic task.
- "Son of Man" is used 93 times in Ezekiel. Man, mortal flesh, is contrasted to God, immortal Spirit. They are different in substance, alike in form.
- God charges Ezekiel with the mission to speak the word of God to a people so hardened in disobedience that they will not listen; rather, they will oppose him as a deadly enemy. But, as charged both in the call of Moses and Jeremiah, the prophet is to speak despite all opposition.
- The people may ignore the prophet's words even though they originate from God, but Ezekiel's presence speaks harsh realities that cannot be ignored.

**Psalm 123:1-2, 2, 3-4** - To you I lift up my eyes who are enthroned in heaven -- As the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters.

As the eyes of a maid are on the hands of her mistress, So are our eyes on the LORD, our God, till he have pity on us.

Have pity on us, O LORD, have pity on us, for we are more than sated with contempt; our souls are more than sated with the mockery of the arrogant, with the contempt of the proud.

Ben XVI:

- Jesus very vigorously affirms in the Gospel that the eyes are an expressive symbol of the innermost self, a mirror of the soul (cf. Mt 6: 22-23). Well, Psalm 123[122], which has just been proclaimed, is the focal point of an exchange of glances: the faithful person lifts his eyes to the Lord, awaiting a divine reaction, ready to glimpse a gesture of love or a look of kindness. We too, as it were, raise our eyes and await a gesture of benevolence from the Lord.
- The gaze of the Most High who "looks down on the sons of men to see if any are wise, if any seek God" (Ps 14[13]: 2), is often mentioned in the Psalter. The Psalmist, as we have heard, uses an image, that of the servant and slave who look to their master, waiting for him to make a decision that will set them free.
- Psalm 123[122] is an entreaty in which the voice of one of the faithful joins that of the whole community: indeed, the Psalm passes from the first person singular, "I lifted up my eyes", to the first person plural, "our eyes" and "show us his mercy" (cf. vv. 1-3). The Psalmist expresses the hope that the Lord will open his hands to lavish his gifts of justice and freedom upon us. The just person waits for God's gaze to reveal itself in all its tenderness and goodness, as one reads in the ancient priestly blessing from the Book of Numbers: "The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace!" (Nm 6: 25-26).

- The great importance of God's loving gaze is revealed in the second part of the Psalm which features the invocation: "Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy" (Ps 123[122]: 3), that comes in continuity with the finale of the first part in which trusting expectation is reaffirmed, "till [the Lord our God] show us his mercy" (cf. v. 2).
- The faithful are in need of God's intervention because they are in a painful plight, suffering the contempt and disdain of overbearing people. The image the Psalmist uses here is that of satiety: "We are filled with contempt. Indeed, all too full is our soul with the scorn of the rich, with the proud man's disdain" (vv. 3-4).
- The traditional biblical fullness of food and years, considered a sign of divine blessing, is now countered by an intolerable satiety composed of an excessive load of humiliations. And we know today that many nations, many individuals, are truly burdened with derision, with the contempt of the rich and the disdain of the proud. Let us pray for them and let us help these humiliated brethren of ours.
- To conclude, let us make room for the voice of St Ambrose, the great Archbishop of Milan who, in the Psalmist's spirit, gives poetical rhythm to the work of God that reaches us through Jesus the Saviour: "Christ is everything for us. If you wish to cure a wound, he is doctor; if you burn with fever, he is fountain; if you are oppressed by iniquity, he is justice; if you are in need of help, he is strength; if you fear death, he is life; if you desire heaven, he is the way; if you flee from darkness, he is light; if you seek food, he is nourishment"

**2nd Reading - 2 Corinthians 12:7-10** - That I, Paul, might not become too elated, because of the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

SCB:

- This is the fourth letter which Saint Paul has written to the Corinthians. The first is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9 but has been lost. The second is what we call 1 Corinthians and was written in the spring of A.D. 57. The third letter is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:4 and is also lost. What we know as 2 Corinthians is the fourth letter and is thought to have been written in the autumn of 57.
- This rebuttal also acts as a preparation for his next, his third, visit to Corinth in early 58.
- "Thorn" in the Old Testament means enemies (his persecutors have caused him great pain because it has caused hostility within the community).

- The number three is indicative of completion in Hebrew numerology, it should have been sufficient.
- (begged) past tense – now he accepts.
- Grace is defined here as power in relation to weakness.
- He has accepted weakness as a means of gaining grace.

**Gospel - Mark 6:1-6a** - Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! 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. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house." So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

SCB:

- What we hear today is the story of Jesus' rejection by His own people. Parallel gospel accounts are Matthew 13:53-58; John 4:44; 6:42; 7:13, 15.
- Reminiscent of the finding in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52) and teaching in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-28).
- Jewish lineage is through the father. This is a round-about way of calling Him illegitimate.
- "Jesus came as the son of a carpenter (Matthew 13:55). He was not physically attractive, just as the prophets had predicted of Him (Isaiah 53:2). He was merely a carpenter, making plows and yokes, and instructing us by such symbols of righteousness to avoid an inactive life.
- "Brother" does not necessarily mean son of the same parents. Hebrew and Aramaic have no word for cousin or nephew, or other close male relative, other than "brother." For example in Genesis 13:8 and 14:14, 16, Lot is called the brother of Abraham but Genesis 11:26-27 tells us that Lot's father was Haran who had the same father, Terah, as Abram (Abraham). This would make Abraham Lot's uncle.
- (James and Joses) The sons of Mary, the wife of Clopas (John 19:25).
- (Judas) Son of James (Luke 6:16).
- (Simon) A Canaanite (Matthew 10:4).
- When He was dying on the altar of the cross, Jesus entrusted his mother, Mary, to Saint John. If Mary had had other children, Hebrew tradition would have demanded that she be placed under their care.
- (sisters) They aren't named but the same word is used for all female close relatives in Hebrew and Aramaic.

- Not necessarily that He was unable to, but as punishment for unbelief. Remember, He had just come from three miracles (stilling the water, healing the sick, casting out demons) where He had been highly acclaimed.
- "Two things must coincide for the reception of healing: the faith of those who need healing, and the power of him who will heal. If either of these are wanting, the blessing of a cure will not readily be attained."

RC:

- When Jesus was already popular and famous because of his miracles and teaching, he returned one day to his place of origin, Nazareth, and as usual, he began to teach in the synagogue. However, this time there was no enthusiasm, no Hosanna!
- "And they took offense at him," that is, they had a problem in believing him because they knew him well.
- Our Italy, and Europe in general, are, for Christianity, what Nazareth was for Jesus: "the place where he was raised" (Christianity was born in Asia, but grew up in Europe, a bit like Jesus who was born in Bethlehem but was raised in Nazareth!) Today they run the same risk as the Nazarenes: not to recognize Jesus. The Constitutional Charter of the new united Europe is not the only place from which he is "expelled" at present.
- The episode of the Gospel teaches us something important. Jesus leaves us free; he proposes his gifts, he does not impose them. That day, in face of the rejection of his fellow countrymen, Jesus did not give way to threats and invectives. He simply went to another place.
- Once he was not received in a certain village. The indignant disciples suggested that fire be brought down from heaven, but Jesus turned and rebuked them (Luke 9:54).
- "God is timid." He has far more respect for our freedom than we ourselves have for one another's. This creates a great responsibility. St. Augustine said: "I am afraid of Jesus passing." He might, in fact, pass without my realizing it, pass without my being ready to receive him.
- His passing is always a passing of grace. Mark says succinctly that, having arrived in Nazareth on the Sabbath, Jesus "began to teach in the synagogue." However, the Gospel of Luke specifies also what he taught and said that Sabbath. He said he had come "to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

SH:

- As we've walked with the apostles in the Gospels in recent weeks, we've witnessed Jesus command the wind and sea, and order a little girl to arise from the dead.

- But He seems to meet His match in His hometown of Nazareth. Today's Gospel is blunt: "He was not able to perform any mighty deed there."
- Why not? Because of the people's lack of faith. They acknowledged the wisdom of His words, the power of His works. But they refused to recognize Him as a prophet come among them, a messenger sent by God.
- All they could see was how much "this man" was like them - a carpenter, the son of their neighbor, Mary, with brothers and sisters.
- Of course, Mary was ever-virgin, and had no other children. The Gospel refers to Jesus' brothers as Paul refers to all Israelites as his brothers, the children of Abraham (see Romans 9:3, 7)
- He found His own brothers and sisters obstinate of heart
- Isn't it often hardest to live our faith among those in our own families, those who think they really know us, who define us by the people we used to be - before we chose to walk with Jesus?
- Insults and hardships are God's way of teaching us to rely solely on His grace.
- Jesus will work no mighty deeds in our lives unless we abandon ourselves to Him in faith.