

Sermon: Pentecost 6

The Rev. Mike Wernick

July 5, 2015

Year B
Ezekiel 2:1-5
Psalm 123
2 Corinthians 12:2-10
Mark 6:1-13

Years ago... I had the opportunity to see a live... in person... David Copperfield magic show... it was astounding... I mean I knew it was magic... I knew it wasn't real... but what I saw defied explanation... things happened that shouldn't have been able to happen...

Copperfield made the impossible look easy... and it really left me... all of us I think... wondering... how did he do it... how did he do things that no one ought to be able to do... and even though my head knew that these things couldn't be real... my heart resonated with something else... with something that lay beyond the rational... however it was that he did it... in a way it didn't matter... seeing something that was impossible... opened me up to other seemingly impossible things...

And the people asked... *What deeds of power are being done by this man... Where did he get all this... What wisdom has been given to him... and they took offense at him...* the people in his home town took offense at him...

Let's remember... these people knew Jesus... as many of us know each other... they knew his family and his work... it seems as though he's overreaching himself... after all... he's one of them... an ordinary person who ought to be doing ordinary things... they seem to think that the ordinary can't include the extra-ordinary...

And Jesus is stunned... because if God can work through him... who is one of them... then God can also work through them... his words are a mirror for their own ability to enter into God's remaking of creation... how can they turn away from what is being

offered them... but maybe they were used to knowing everything... maybe they took offense because they couldn't explain it... and instead of letting their hearts be opened to Mystery... instead of being open to the real magic in what Jesus did... they saw their own doubts in the mirror he held up... they figured they had Jesus pegged... and turned familiarity into contempt...

John Shea writes that although we believe other people to be exactly as we perceive them... we believe ourselves to always be more than they think we are... the boxes we put others in are just the right size... but the boxes that other people put us in are always too small... but faith tells us we are ultimately a mystery... because we are inescapably related to Ultimate Mystery... the mistake we make... is thinking that God will not be found in those we dislike...

And it may be exactly because of that realization... that Jesus tells the disciples... if any place will not welcome you... if they refuse to hear you... leave... and as you leave... shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them...

I wonder how many of us hear these words too... as words of contempt... there seems to me... to be a certain aspect of righteous indignation in them... I mean... you were sent to evangelize... you've got a wonderful truth to share... how can the people NOT listen... how can they NOT see in it... what you've seen in it... well... maybe they can't... or won't... or don't want to...

But maybe Jesus is just saying... don't be mad... don't be angry... not everyone will be open to what you have to say... so don't waste your time... cut your losses... there will be others... like the hemorrhaging woman and Jairus... who are open to this truth... move on to greener pastures... it's just part of the free will we have... to say no...

Ezekiel and Jesus both know... that whether the people hear... or refuse to hear the words that God has given them to speak... they will know that a prophet has been

among them... they know that powerlessness is not primarily about them... but about those who hear them... about those of us who are unwilling to believe the great things God can do... that's why he could do no deed of power there... but we must be careful... we must also consider... are we the prophet into whose ear God is speaking... or are we the ones to whom Ezekiel has been sent...

When I was taking Education for Ministry... a four year program of lay theological education... it occurred to me if God is with us... if the divine spark burns within us... then one way God works through us... and one way that we're formed... is through a kind of Spiritual Anarchy...

I mean... no two of us will process... assign meaning to... and integrate the same experiences the same way... we know that... even children raised in a loving home by the same parents... sometimes become adults who are so different... you'd think they were raised apart... it seems hard to believe they're siblings...

I recently posted a quote from author Barbara Brown Taylor... who said: What if people were invited to come to church and tell what they already know about God... instead of what they're supposed to believe?

Telling what we already know of God affirms that Emmanuel is with us... affirms that God can work through those who we've put into small boxes... and that God can work through us too... but we must learn to trust our hearts more and more... I long for God's law to be written so deeply in our hearts... that the fleeting experience of intuition becomes as common as common sense...

Our two churches are engaged in meaningful community ministry... the messages of inclusion on our outdoor sign have brought quite a few people through the doors... though not everyone will be open to... or resonate with what they experience here... our

two churches are engaged in meaningful community ministry... but the days are gone when our pews will magically fill up...

And the only way to make sure we don't put people into the boxes we resist... is to be in conversation with them... to get to know them... the only way to make sure we don't project our own opinions... interpretations... or fears onto them... is to ask them about who they are... about their journey... about what they know or think they know about God... and not what we think they're supposed to believe...

In his homily at the Episcopal Church's General Convention which just ended... in his homily at the final Eucharist... PB Elect Michael Curry reminds us... that Jesus told us... *Go therefore!... and make disciples of all nations... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...*

Our two churches were represented at the gay and lesbian PRIDE festival this year... we went to tell as many people as we could that Two Churches welcomes all people... because far too many people have been told by the church for far too long... that they are not welcomed... but once we offer our smiles and our welcome... once the brochures have been handed out... once we have engaged them in the conversations we can... then we must let go and turn it over to God...

At the Synod conference I attended two weeks ago... Pastor Paul Hoffman asked us an interesting question... he asked whether we pray for God to send people to this font... do we think that's important enough to pray for...

The two stories in today's Gospel... both convey the same kind of truth... all we can do is come in love... and offer up what we know about God... the truth is... once those words leave our lips... we no longer have any control over them or how they're processed... understood... and integrated... the truth is... we're not responsible for the

response to our ministries... but only for our own faithfulness... and even that is yet unfinished...

Author Max Lucado said... God loves you just the way you are... but doesn't intend to leave you that way... Lord God... help us to be more faithful... Amen.

Mike+