

## Fourteen Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's scripture readings seem to have a consistent theme. For me that theme is **perseverance**. The OT prophet Ezekiel conveys his messages from Yahweh despite their lack of effect on the people of Israel. These people are “hard of face and obstinate of heart” not exactly a receptive audience for Ezekiel. But he continues, he **perseveres** with God's help.

St Paul explains his constant need for the power of Christ to help him **persevere**. He has been given a thorn in the flesh (he doesn't tell us what it is) but whatever it may be it keeps him humble and reliant on God. And the Lord tells him that His *grace is sufficient* to deal with the problem. The lord is saying—don't worry about how weak you are, I'm here to help. So Paul knows that “power is made perfect in weakness.” HE understands that he can **persevere** when he constantly relies on the Spirit. His discipleship is a willing partnership with God.

In today's Gospel we have the story of Jesus being rejected by the members of his hometown. Jesus ministry, to this point has been—well---overwhelming. He's causing quite a stir, crowds are following him, people are calling him the

Messiah—then we are given what seems to be a story of a failure. It used to puzzle me why this event is included at all in the story of Jesus.

And it's remarkable the way in which the Gospel so frankly records Jesus' helplessness to do any deeds of power for his townsfolk because of their lack of faith. Faith or the lack of it *conditioned* his power to help. If you look at it the other way round and more positively; it is faith that allows God's power to be effective in our world.

The episode shows that the greatest enemy to faith can simply be “familiarity”: a refusal to believe that God's presence and God's power could come to us in so familiar a form as the person next door. The Nazarenes had their own fixed ideas as to when and where and how the Messiah should come to Israel—and the one they knew as the local carpenter simply didn't fit the bill. So the only place..... that really missed out on Jesus' miracles and works of power was his own hometown. But does this experience diminish the ministry of Jesus. Does he become discouraged? Of course not, he continues, unfazed, he **perseveres**, and merely

quotes and old saying to them about how a prophet is without honor in his hometown.

Progress in the spiritual life—growth in the Spirit—almost always shows itself in our ability to recognize God in the ordinary, in everyday events. This is why the great saints never stopped being filled with wonder at the mysterious presence of God they constantly sensed all round them. The full meaning of the Incarnation is not only that the Son of God became a human being but that he took human form in a town as ordinary and insignificant and out of the way as Nazareth.

Perhaps we should all try a little spiritual exercise and attempt to identify and name “the Nazareth” in our own selves. What is inhibiting or blocking our faith? And when we can do that, something releases in the heart, something shakes loose, we can discarded it and we are better able to **persevere** in our journey through this life, because we are closer to the Spirit.

The insight for everyone and the reason this story is included in the Gospel, is; that , in our individual walks with the Lord, His power to help us, in whatever way we need, and the effectiveness of that help is increased by our ability to believe in it.

Jesus walked this earth, healing the sick, consoling the broken hearted, working miracles and delivering people from afflictions of all sorts. He is still doing this. Two Thousand years later he is still our help and our salvation when we ask with a heart of Faith.