### “Who Does He Think He Is?” July 8, 2018

**Ezekiel 2:3–6**

Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. 4The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, “Thus says the Lord God.” 5Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them.

**Mark 6:1–6**

Many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! 3Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offence at him. 4Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house. . .” He went about the villages teaching.

Can you sense some of the emotions that Ezekiel feels? God is with him, but the people are not. He’s going to speak to a people who have been rebellious for *generations*. But even though they may not listen to him, they will know that a prophet has been among them, that God sent one of his watchmen to warn them. Ezekiel is not to fear them. He will speak with power and conviction, although he may feel surrounded by briers and thorns, or even scorpions. For the way of the prophet is a lonely one.

To some degree, Jesus faced a similar situation, but his personality was so appealing, his presence so kind, that he didn’t arouse much of that reaction, *except* from the religious authorities, who felt he was intruding on their *turf*. They shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him.

And whenever the authorities take such a position, there is always a large part of the population that will follow right behind, even when they know the authorities are lying to them! Because the mob doesn’t love truth. . . it loves *power*.

What we see in this story is the narrow-mindedness of the people of Jesus’ home town, Nazareth, who did not want to hear him out. They were too busy saying, “who does he think he is? We know him. We know his brothers and sisters. What’s so special about him? He wants to come back here after having made himself famous someplace else? Who made *him* the Messiah?”

This gives Jesus a chance to express that heartbreaking truth: “Prophets are not without honor, *except* in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house” (Mark 6:4).

Now, you or I can have a similar experience. Whenever we express something that people cannot accept, *we* become the black sheep. We become “without honor.”

This is an aspect of the spiritual life that *every* honest believer experiences at some point. Now, in reality, all that matters is your own deepest loyalty, not how the world receives you, but only your determination to always seek the will of God.

And you should know that you are not alone, because this is when you are closest to the God who helps you, understands you, and knows what you need. God responds to your deepest need. God empowers you to become insightful, to notice others’ needs, and to do good for them.

So even our social living is really powered by the heartfelt pledge that we make to God in our solitude. This experience is described well in the Old Testament book, Lamentations: “The Lord is good to those who wait for him. . . . It is good . . . to sit alone in silence . . . . He will have compassion . . . [and] he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone. ” (Lam 3:25–28, 32–33).

He does not willingly afflict anyone! I think that’s really important. God is *not* afflicting us, not testing us. We know, of course, that *life* will send afflictions. Life will send unfairness, or distress, or natural disasters, in the natural course of things. And so we often we have to be patient and strong while we wait and pray.

I am not advising passivity, but the asserting of *trust* and prayerful waiting. Invite God to go *with you* through all your experiences. And so you get the chance to actually *live* by hope, be centered by faith, be calmed by love. When you have to really *persist* and *practice* faith, then it really is *your* faith, which you have earned.

It is faith that can empower you . . . to become engaged, to seek fellowship, and look for ways to serve others. God helps you learn wisdom, so that you are not easily manipulated or misled. Jesus said “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matt 10:16 King James Version). Christians are not supposed to be helpless victims or easy targets. Be wise as serpents.

God is doing a good work in you, preparing you for heavenly citizenship, and empowering you right now on earth.

With God guiding you, how can you fail? Your faith will giveyou courage. With Jesus you can handle anything that life throws at you. So have faith, and have courage!

Now here’s a new idea: Jesus wants to become partners with you. Even in your small way, even as an ordinary person with no bolts of lightning coming out of your hands, you can be a partner of Jesus. He pays attention to ordinary people, fills us with power, and includes us in his family.

What could be better than being included in Jesus’ family?

Go forward in faith with Jesus, the Son of God, as your foundation. . . . and love one another!