

**SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
PROPHETS ARE NOT WELCOME IN THEIR OWN HOMETOWN**

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**MARK 6:1-13**

In the beginning of our Gospel reading today Jesus travels to His own hometown of Nazareth and as we all know He is rejected by His own. They were amazed at first but then they started thinking about it, they took offense to Him and what He was doing. They couldn't understand how He could be doing any miracles when He is only the son of Mary and a carpenter. They all rejected Him and Christ was amazed at their lack of faith. Jesus said, "A prophet is not without honor except in His own town, among His relatives and in His own home."

I can't imagine how upset Jesus' may have been by the rejection of His hometown. I am originally from Pennsylvania and I have had a few friends that said they couldn't be around me since I was ordained because they felt like they were not good enough to be friends anymore. I made them feel uncomfortable because they wanted me to be the person they remembered.

We rely on things and people staying the same because then we can feel secure and not see them for who they really are, we see only what we want to see. That is what happened to Jesus' in His hometown, they didn't want to see Him for who He was.

We can't stay who we were, who people remember us to be, and the person our friends want us to stay as so they feel comfortable around us. God wants to call us to a life in Him. Just as Jesus sends the disciples out two by two in our Gospel reading today, He also wants us to go out into the world for Him, to share the Gospel, to spread the Good News, we are to be His prophet in today's communities.

When we are sent out by Christ we will not be alone, there are others out there already being Prophetic and we can learn from, we will not be alone. An Episcopal priest was getting ready for a Confirmation service and told the Confirmands that when the Bishop asks for their name to only give him their first name. He said that this is because God doesn't call us to be His people because we are the son or daughter of so and so or because we can claim a great family tree, but because we are His own, marked as His own even, at Baptism. In other words God calls us by our given name, and we all have one last name, which is Christian.<sup>1</sup> I would say that is Prophetic, we should take time and think what that really means to each of us, that God called us by our name not someone else's but our name. We need to learn to be the person God had in mind when we were named as His.

Most of us like to go down to the Oceanfront, we enjoy walking on the boardwalk or walking down on Atlantic Avenue just to people watch while others like to go all the way down

to the water, to stand at the edge and let the waves wash over their feet. But while there we can have a Prophetic experience, it may be while we watch others and think that they are just down at the beach like we are but then something special happens.

There had been a storm the night before, there was seaweed, litter, and shells thrown all over by the waves but mixed up in all of them are starfish, starfish everywhere. When we see starfish in the shell shops they are usually white, some are brown but what you may not know is that when they are alive on the ocean floor they are a beautiful blue, green, and yellow, they try to blend in to their surroundings to protect themselves from their predators.

But on this day the predators of the starfish were the people walking the beach that could step on them and the very hot sun baking them in the sand. The starfish were all dying and no one was there to save them and how could they all be saved there were so many, they were up and down the entire beach but then in the distance he came. A little boy was walking down toward the beach with his family, was he the prophet on the beach that day? He came closer to the beach, closer to the starfish that were baking in the sand, he said, "Mommy we have to do something they are dying, we can't let them suffer and die." She looked down at him and just smiled, she knew they couldn't save them all, there were way too many. The little boy started running around picking up one starfish at a time and putting them back in the water.

Standing a little way off, but within earshot, were others that watched what the little boy was doing, making comments to each about how silly he was because he couldn't save them all. When we take the time to look at that group they can show us how easy it is to become overwhelmed with something that seems too big for us to handle and we make excuses.

But on that beach there was a prophet, a little boy, as he was picking up the starfish he told the bystanders that just because I can't save all the starfish I can save some of them and to them it means life not death. Soon there was one, then two, then three people helping put the starfish back into the water. The little boy showed them what it means to be acting out in love, and showed those bystanders that they also can do what is needed when someone shows them the way.

When we think about how the priest and little boy showed us what a prophet looks like in the world I think about the time Kevin, Mark and I spend over at Kings Grant Assisted Living and Memory Unit. Sharing time with the residents can be very profound; we never know what conversation we may get involved in. In the memory unit the Alzheimer's residents get confused sometimes on where they are and it moves me too tears some days when I am over there. One day a woman said she felt like she lost herself and wanted to know if anyone could help her find herself again. Even in her state of mind she realized something was wrong but we unfortunately don't always see it in ourselves, we can also lose ourselves in the busyness of our days and we don't even notice, how sad is that?

Prophets can come into our lives and we don't even realize it, we can miss them altogether because we think we know who they are and what they're about. We can encourage others to ignore these prophets too, making fun of them if they seem to see something that we don't. But then we can open ourselves up to become aware that there are prophets everywhere

no matter who they are or where we encounter them. The great danger is not that we won't recognize Christ coming into our lives because He is a stranger but because He is a friend.<sup>1</sup>

Amen

1: Searching the Heart of God (Norfolk: Greene Tree Publications, 2003), 144-147