

14th Sunday In Ordinary Time, Year B, July 8th, 2018

Ezekiel 2:2-5

The Book of Ezekiel is one of four books of the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel). Ezekiel begins with doom and ends with 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.¹⁰ Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, laid siege to Jerusalem and overwhelmed it in the year 597 B.C. Jehoiachin, an unfortunate youth of eighteen years, ruled as monarch of Judah for three months when Nebuchadnezzar carried him off captive to Babylonia along with some 8,000 persons who were the cream of the population and among whom was Ezekiel. The Hebrews held onto the desperate hope that the exile would be of short duration. It was against this futile hope that Ezekiel spoke. God was working judgment, he insisted, on his rebellious people.¹

2As the Lord spoke to me, the spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, To bridge the gap between God and man, God's spirit enters into the Prophet, strengthening him to be attentive to the message of God.³ The spirit is an inner energy that transforms the prophet and helps him to hear and see things that he could not if left on his own.² It makes him attentive to the Lord's presence and the meaning of his words.³ **and I heard the one who was speaking say to me:**

3Son of man, The term is used over 90 times in this book and has no messianic connotation here. Man, that is mortal flesh, is contrasted with God who is immortal spirit.³ **I am sending you to the Israelites, rebels who have rebelled against me;** Their rebelliousness involves arrogance towards God, rejection of his commandments, and refusal to listen to what he says. It makes them stubborn.² **they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day.** Ezekiel is to announce God's judgment to the people and then stand firm, not wavering even in the face of an almost certain unfavorable reaction.¹

4Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you. 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 the prophet is to speak despite all opposition.¹⁰ **But you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord God!**

5And whether they heed or resist Those who listen to the prophet's message will profit greatly from it and those who refuse to listen will condemn themselves by their own blindness. But in either case, all will know that a prophet has been in their midst. For some it will have been an opportunity for grace; for others a tragic loss.⁴ **--for they are a rebellious house—they shall know that a prophet has been among them.** At a time when there was no king (for he was the prisoner of Nebuchadnezzar) and no temple (for it had been profaned and destroyed) and no social or religious institutions among the Jews, prophets acquired increased status. The prophet was God's only representative among the people; he was the only one with authority to demand that they listen to his message.²

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Paul has been called upon by the Corinthians to present evidence of his authority. He is criticized for not comparing favorably with other preachers who had taught what Paul recognized as false doctrine. They also claimed to have had "extraordinary revelations" of one kind or another, which led the Corinthians to see them as superior to Paul. In his response to those who doubt his credentials, Paul has a two-pronged reply. "No, I can claim no extraordinary revelations," he says, "and thus I have been kept from becoming inflated with conceit about them." The implication, of course, is that those who are claiming such special gifts have obviously been deceiving

*themselves through vanity and a kind of competition quite foreign to genuine ministry. Today's reading is the second part of his reply.*⁴

Brothers and sisters:

7That I, Paul, might not become too elated, because of the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh This was probably some kind of physical malady that plagued Paul and kept him humble and realistic.⁴ **was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me,** This is how Paul describes the humiliating "thorn". This suggests that the disability could have been seen as an obstacle to his work of evangelization—which the devil, logically, would have been keen to frustrate.⁶ **to keep me from being too elated.**

8Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, The number three is indicative of completion in Hebrew numerology, it should have been sufficient. This is in the past tense which suggests that now he accepts.¹⁰

9but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." Paul's petition for relief was denied, indicating that his suffering was serving a higher purpose in the plan of God. Grace was given him to endure these trials and make him rely upon the Lord. His experience shows that God gives us what we NEED and not always what we want.⁵ **I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me.** In our weakness we are compelled to rely on the one who can make us strong. It is our perceived strengths, NOT our weaknesses, that most threaten our relationship with Jesus.⁴

10Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and constraints, His prayer to be rid of the malady has been transformed into gratitude for it. Through suffering he has learned the lesson of the cross: In weakness we are made strong. It was at the moment of Jesus' greatest helplessness (on the cross) that he achieved the redemption of the world.⁴ **for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.** The person who realizes his own weakness and yet sees results from his efforts, knows that these are accomplished not by himself alone, but by God's power working through him.³

Mark 6:1-6

*This account takes place early in Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. Today we hear the story of Jesus' rejection by his own people.*¹⁰

1Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, This refers to Nazareth, the Galilean village where Jesus was raised. Following an earlier incident recorded in Luke (4:16) this episode marks the second rejection of Jesus by his kinsfolk.⁷ **accompanied by his disciples.**

2When 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! This is reminiscent of the finding in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52).¹⁰

3Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, Jesus is here described by his occupation and by the fact that he is the son of Mary. Does this indicate that St. Joseph is dead already? We do not know, but it is likely.⁸ If Joseph has in fact died (highly plausible since unlike Mary he makes no appearance in any of the gospels after Jesus' baptism), then "son of Mary" refers simply to the living parent well known in the village.¹¹ **and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?"** These are either Jesus' cousins or more distant relatives but they are not

siblings from the same Virgin Mother.⁷ There are a number of references in the scriptures that say “brother” but refer to other degrees of relationships. This confusion is due to the poverty of Hebrew and Aramaic language, for in the absence of distinct terms, the same word, brother, is used to designate different degrees of relationship. From other Gospel passages we know that James and Josés were sons of Mary of Clophas and it seems that Judas and Simon are the apostles Simon the Cananaean and Judas the son of James. In any event, although James, Josés, Simon and Judas are referred to as brothers of Jesus, it is nowhere said that they were “sons of Mary”. When Jesus was dying he entrusted his mother to St. John, which shows that Mary had no other children. To this is added the constant belief of the Church, which regards Mary as the ever-virgin “a perfect virgin before, while, and forever after she gave birth.”⁸ **And they took offense at him.**

4Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house.” The obstacle to faith in the Nazareth community, then, simply is the scandal of Jesus’ ordinariness, It is not unlike the tendency today to think the only speaker worth listening to is one brought from elsewhere by jet. There is a universal tendency to think that the great works of God always occur elsewhere.¹¹

5So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. Jesus didn’t work his mighty deeds here not because he was unable to do so, but as punishment for the unbelief of the townspeople. God wants man to use the graces offered him so that he becomes disposed to receive further graces.⁸ 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.¹⁰

6He was amazed at their lack of faith. In chapter 1 Jesus made his first appearance in the synagogue and was met with enthusiasm for his teaching and miracles but here enthusiasm yields first to skepticism (v. 3a), then to opposition (v. 3b) and finally to disbelief here in verse 6.³

Some of the information for this commentary was taken from: (1) “The Book Of Ezekiel” by James C. Turro, (2) “The Navarre Bible: Major Prophets,” (3) “The Jerome Biblical Commentary,” (4) “Workbook for lectors and gospel readers:2003” by Aelred R. Rosser, (5) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians” With Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (6) “The Navarre Bible: Corinthians,” (7) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark,” With Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (8) “The Navarre Bible: St. Mark,” (9) “The Bread Of Life Catholic Bible Study” by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (10) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online Founded By Dr. Scott Hahn, and (11) “Mark” by George T. Montague, S.M.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.