

ST PAUL'S CHURCH (RONDEBOSCH)
SERMON (SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)
SUNDAY: 4 JULY 2021
READINGS: 2 SAMUEL 5:1-5, 9-10 PSALM 48//
2 CORINTHIANS 12:2-10 //MARK 6:1-13

*Open the heavens Holy Spirit
For us to see Jesus interceding for us
May we be strengthened to share his mission
And ready to serve him forever. AMEN*

In Mark 6 v 4 we read "*Only in his hometown among his relatives and in his own house is a Prophet without honour.*"

The Gospel reading for today Mark 6:1-13 consists of two parts. The first part of the reading describes Jesus' visit to his hometown, Nazareth, followed by the story of Jesus sending his disciples out two by two into the countryside of Galilee to spread the good news of the coming of God's Kingdom.

As Jesus travelled from Capernaum up into the hill country above the Sea of Galilee, he was heading home. He had just made a significant impact down at the lakeshore, healing a woman who snuck up behind him in a crowd, and bringing Jarius daughter to life. Jesus gave them new life because of their trust and faith in God in spite of their hopeless circumstances.

By the time Jesus returned to his home town of Nazareth, the stories of his healings and miracles had spread far and wide. Even the people in his home town had heard of his popularity, so you would expect that he would have been accepted by the hometown crowd and welcomed with open arms. Unfortunately that was not the case after an initially warm reception; he is disrespected by those who know him best: "Isn't this Mary's son, the carpenter?" By identifying him as Mary's son, rather than Joseph's, they are once again raising the question that many in his home town had whispered about for thirty years: was he really Joseph's, or what? And that has implications for whether or not they would respect him, not only because of the question of whether he was illegitimate, but because the Davidic line, which would be necessary to establish him as one who might be the Messiah, came through Joseph, not Mary. So it's a

double insult. And he's just a carpenter, not a scholar, not a rabbi, just a craftsman, working with wood. Just an ordinary person from the working class.

Maybe they were jealous that it wasn't their son who was doing this teaching...whatever the reason, they reject him, and Jesus feels it bitterly, quoting a very familiar saying from the Greco-Roman world of that time: in v 4 "***Only in his hometown among his relatives and in his own house is a Prophet without honour.***" And he was so distracted by their disbelief that no more teaching, no more healings were done by him there.

How do we compare with the people of Jesus' hometown? Are we not sometimes guilty of judging and rejecting people based on our own opinions of them, our own prejudices? Don't we sometimes look down on others because they are not as affluent and educated as we are? When we meet somebody from a different colour or creed or culture, are we open to them, or have we already dismissed anything they might have to say?

Or maybe we ourselves have experienced rejection in one way or another, and sometimes from people that matter to us, that are nearest to us, those from whom we desire acceptance. And for sure, that hurts. *Pause for a second and think of such a situation (when you were rejected by a loved one, a close friend, a colleague or even a fellow parishioner at Church)*

What do we do in these situations? Do we sulk or pull back in disappointment? Do we stop doing what we are doing? Do we stop being who we are? Do we retreat from showing our love to our neighbour?

However the rejection at Jesus' hometown synagogue did not hinder the mission. In fact, it may have given impetus to the commissioning of the twelve for their first assignment and tells them to prepare for rejection themselves.

And in Mark 6 v 6b- 8 we read ***Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.***

Jesus sent the twelve out in pairs? He knew a partner provides strength, protection and companionship and person is less likely to give in to temptation and despondency when accompanied by a partner. What Jesus is saying we need to support, encourage and work together in spreading the Good news about the Kingdom of God.

Furthermore he gave them the following instructions:

V 8 take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house stay there until you leave that town

Jesus sent them out with only the barest of essentials—one cloak and a staff. He wanted them to trust and depend on God to provide for their needs. They were to concentrate on their mission.

So too Jesus wants us as the Church not to depend on our own strength but to trust and pray to God to help us in our ministry and to spread the Good news especially during the time of hopelessness.

V 11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave as a testimony against them

Stay until you've done what you've come to do. If they don't listen, don't worry – just move on. What Jesus is saying you will be rejected but we must not give up we must move on and continue our ministry.

What was the result of their mission?

In 12 we read ***“They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them”***

So the disciples were successful in their first attempts as they went out and do the work Jesus commanded them to do, but they were not always completely successful. As their work continued they struggled, they made mistakes. They face rejection in its many forms—persecutions, insults, hostility, contempt, and scorn.

They even argued amongst each other and loosed focused and courage at times but they still continued because when Jesus sent the twelve disciples out he prepared them to handle failure.

My dear friends Jesus needs us now more than ever to spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God during the challenging time of the COVID 19 pandemic.

As Christ sends out the disciples he commissions them to preach the Good News to heal the sick, drive out demons so too we are called to be actively involved in ministry here at St Paul's. God is calling and sending us out now in a time when Church doors are closed for in person service to encourage people not to lose hope.

And maybe you may ask but how Reeva, we can't go visit the sick or housebound or vulnerable in our parish.

My dear friends our people are hopeless and despondent some have not visited or received a visit from anyone for more than a year. But you know a phone call a whatsapp message will uplift and brighten someone's day or circumstances.

What is most important in this time as at any time is bringing the kingdom of heaven to the hearts of all people. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of God's love, peace and joy and people need this now.

CONCLUSION

My dear friends we will experience rejection and failure from our friends, family, colleagues and even from our fellow parishioners when trying to do our ministry, when trying to encourage people.

Jesus did not stop being himself when the people close to him rejected him. He did not stop his ministry. Instead, he moved forward to another town where he would be accepted. He continued to do his work, sending his disciples to the world.

Let us not retreat to our little corners, but let us continue our ministry, let us continue to reach out to people in need. Like Jesus and his disciples, rejection should drive us to continue ministering to the world and to show God's love to everyone and everything that God created even in a challenging time like this of the Corona Virus Pandemic.