



Last Sunday we met Jesus in the home of a foreigner, taking the hand of a sick little girl as he spoke to her, “*Little girl get up;*” and

then to the many around her, “*Give her something to eat.*” In other words “take care of her.” The deed and words of a prophet.

The Gospel today is haunting: “*A prophet is not without honor, except in his native place, and among his own kin and in his own house.*” He was not able to perform any mighty deed there.... He was so amazed by their lack of faith.”

They wondered who he thought he was as he challenged their attitudes and deeds. “*We know this man.*” “*He grew up with us;*” “*Where does he get all this?*” “*We know his family!*” Or to put it another way. “Who does he think he is? What right does he have to challenge our thinking, our ways, our beliefs?”

The ridicule, weeping, wailing, and laughing from last Sunday’s Gospel echo still today: They took offense at Jesus, the Gospel tells us, because he led them beyond their expectations.

He was one of them, he knew their story, and the stories of the many around them. He spoke to them of God and of God’s presence in their life, home, and family; *and* of God’s presence in the life of others, not of their home, town, nation, culture or way of life. He challenged them to love their enemies and do good to those who persecute them; to love their

neighbor, every neighbor as if the neighbor were themselves. Challenging words then and now which invite ridicule, laughing and even some boisterous wailing: Who believes those words? Where did he get all this? Who does he think he is?

Jesus would not accept a reliance on their weakness for a lack of vision; nor a reliance on their strength for self-satisfaction and contentment. He would not accept their excuses for mediocrity, security, selfishness or self-righteousness. When Jesus spoke, they found him “too much for them.” “Leave us alone--we like things the way they are!” Many of them walked away. Jesus frightened them because he challenged them to think and act outside “the box,” beyond the presumptions of the day; he called them to be accountable for the FAITH they claimed. Things are not fine the way they are, he told them. Too many people suffer, in too many places for too many reasons, too many sisters and brothers are judged, unwelcomed and “sent outside the city gates.”

His love for them was too great to “leave them alone,” or to let them isolate themselves from the others, from “the many,” from those they perceived to be different.

Despite their resistance, and their fear of his vision—a fear that they might have to do more, give more, be present more, attend to needs beyond their own circle or community, and change their own ways and heart; despite those fears they felt and knew that a prophet of God was among them. That, perhaps is what frightened them most.

And so the Gospel tells us, in the face of mediocrity, Jesus could work no mighty deed there. No mighty deed without vision beyond

self, beyond their own community, culture and nation. And “he was amazed” we are told, by their lack of faith, real trusting faith!

There is only one other time in the Gospel we hear that Jesus was “amazed.” The other time is at Capernaum when the Roman centurion, a foreigner of a different faith and culture, asks him to heal his sick servant.

When Jesus offers to go to his house, the soldier says the words we say every Sunday before coming to communion: *“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof...”* Jesus is amazed because he had not found such faith in anyone else, especially among his own people, among those who shared his faith! This man gladly boasts of his weakness-- *“Lord, I am not worthy...”* It is his “unworthiness” that inspires Jesus to go with him! This man trusts the word of Jesus, trusts and hopes, despite sickness, fear of the other, weakness and doubt.

Today, Jesus is still amazed because of the lack of faith, the lack of trust he discovers among his own people, those who claim to believe. They are content with a sterile belief. Content with their perceived sense of *“being chosen,”* or of being “exceptional.” Happy to leave those in need to “care for themselves” outside the city gates. They are afraid of the vision Jesus the prophet, offers. Certainly they could never boast of their weakness; nor of the weakness of their community values; nor could they ever recognize their goodness, nor the goodness of others beyond themselves. Even today they take *“offense at him.”*

Sometimes the “they,” is “us.”

Jesus, the prophet is here today. The Good News he brings is news which empowers us to “go on mission” to serve others; seeing all as the neighbor we must love. To be the people we remembered last Sunday whom “those on the other side” boldly want to touch to find hope, healing and acceptance.

We are the ones, we are the Church, the sometimes unwelcome prophet, who in the midst of all the commotion of weeping, wailing, ridiculing, controversy, laughing, and “who does he think he is?” still demand that the hand of every child be held and the words Jesus spoke last Sunday be heard in every part of our nation and world, *“little girl get up,” let us take you home and give you something to eat.”* Such words of hope, compassion and mercy, such words of hospitality and love of neighbor still astonish some, while others take offense.

Prophet that we must be, we cannot be silent as so many long to be a family again, while others still journey this very day enduring fear, uncertainty, separation and humiliation, longing only for a place of safety and hope.

We cannot be silent, our faith leaves us no other choice. We cannot be silent, because we are *astonished* even as *“Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy!”*

AS FOR JESUS: HE IS STILL AMAZED....



1475 Eaton Street ~ Missoula, MT 59801