



Sermon - Pastor Anthony Estes
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
July 4, 2021

Readings: Ezekiel 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10
Psalm 123
Gospel: Mark 6:1-13

Being a Christian is *hard* work.

In the midst of *all* of our responsibilities — our jobs, our friends, our families (you might hear my sleeping child in the background, by the way) — on top of all of that, we *struggle* with how to live out our Christian values, our Christian truth claim...as the Collect for today reminds us: "*To love the Lord with all our heart, to love our neighbors as ourselves, to obey...the commandments of God.*"

It's a *lot*.
It's a *lot* of work.

And we come to church Sunday after Sunday...and hear *more* about what we're *supposed* to be doing.

[And I just want to break in...and remind you...remind myself...that what the Gospel *asks* of us...is nothing *less* than what Jesus *himself* has done.]

In our Gospel reading, Jesus is in his hometown and he is preaching, as was his custom.

And as people hear him, they both *marvel*...and *wonder*...at what he is saying.

And they also...*ridicule* him.

They say, "*Isn't that Mary's boy? Isn't that the carpenter's son?*"
They reduce him to where he's from and to who his parents are.

And Jesus doesn't do very many miracles there. He moves on to another town.

And then the very next story in our Gospel lesson, Jesus sends the Twelve out...to preach repentance, to do the very *thing* that he *himself* had done (that's how Mark puts Jesus' ministry at its beginning. He preaches repentance).

And Jesus warns them that they may, in fact, *experience*...the *same* ridicule and rejection that he himself experienced.

We do have a call...everyone of us.

And it may not be to stand up in the front of the church.

But *all* of us have a calling...to *preach* — primarily with our *lives* — that the Kingdom of God has come near.

That's a lot of work.

And you might be feeling:

"Okay. I'm hearing you with the trying to love God and of neighbor and of family and my job and my friends and all of that. Where does this preaching and prophesying stuff come from? I'm not worthy to do that!"

Sisters and Brothers, you are *worthy* for this work, because...*God called* you to do it.

When God speaks to the Prophet Ezekiel and says, "*Mortal one, Son of man, stand and prophesy,*" that phrase "Son of man" is a tacit acknowledgement of Ezekiel's humanness and, ostensibly, his limitations

And yet God is *content* to use him...to *speak* through him...to *speak* a word to a people who have rejected God (and will ultimately end up rejecting Ezekiel).

But...*go* he must.
Prophesy he must.

Paul said it like this:

*"Look. There are other people who are much greater than I am...
Who have had greater exploits than I...
Who've had greater experiences than I have.
I couldn't possibly be worthy of this calling that has fallen upon me.
If anything, I have greater weaknesses...
So much so that I have asked the Lord to remove this thorn in my flesh.*

(We don't know what that was. It could have been physical. It could have been social.)

"But remove this thorn in my flesh," Paul says. He asked three times.

And ultimately God's response was: *"My grace is sufficient...even for you."*

So, the fact of the matter is...God calls *us*...to live *prophetically* in this world...to live the life that *honors* God and *honors* one another, because that is what it means to live and preach with our lives prophetically in this day and age.

To *make* decisions...to *support* others...*because* we love God. And because we love God's people. Not because...it just so happens to be the politically exigent thing to do at the time.

So...

If you're feeling *unworthy*...

If you're feeling a little *tired*...

Hear those words from Paul again:

"God's grace is sufficient for you."

So, be *renewed*....in your service.

Be *renewed*... in your compassion.

Be *renewed*...in your sense of call.

That whatever it is that you are doing:

Whether it is teaching in a classroom,

Working in a hospital,

Putting in sweat equity in a local garden,

Remember...that *you* are being *called*...to model and practice *love* and *repentance*.

You are called to *practice* this piety that puts God in a *high* place...and puts your fellow human beings in a *high* place.

And *know* that if you are...a little weary...remember that God's grace is sufficient...*even* for you.

So if *ridicule* comes — even if that comes from *within* —*know* that if Jesus could do it...if Jesus could *bear* it...so can you.

AMEN

-