

14th Sunday of the Year

Almighty God remains ever constant in his desire and will for our good. The story of our salvation has at its heart God's faithfulness, and the amazing truth that he never gives up on us human beings. In his dealings with the ancient people of Israel, his own chosen people, God often met with indifference and rejection. Yet this did not deflect him in his determination to speak and reveal his saving will to them, as we hear in the passage from the prophet Ezekiel in our first reading today. If God's offer of grace is not accepted, it will not be for want of effort on his part! Those to whom Ezekiel was sent failed to recognise God at work, speaking his word through the prophet. Are we as alert and attentive as we should be when the word of God is proclaimed to us in the readings at Mass?

This drama of rejection of the messengers of God reaches a highpoint, sadly, when Jesus returned to Nazareth, his own home town, and only meets with gossip and petty-mindedness on the part of his townsfolk. In their arrogance and self-assurance they were convinced that they knew all about Jesus Christ, his origin and his background. After all, was he not one of them? St. Mark tells us that Jesus was amazed at the total lack of faith on the part of the people of Nazareth, and as a result he could work no miracles there. A recurring theme in the gospels is the willingness of Jesus to heal and perform miracles for those who have expressed faith in him. The people of Nazareth failed to rise above their own prejudices and blinkered outlook and so the grace of God passed them by. It seems likely that Jesus never returned again to Nazareth.

Our faith in Jesus as the Son of God needs to colour our lives. He is always passing by, waiting to come to us, nourish us and strengthen us in faith, hope and love. But he needs to find the open door of faith on our part, a willingness to acknowledge our dependence upon him as our Saviour. The Lord Jesus meets us in many ways throughout the course of our lives, and especially when we gather as a community to celebrate his memory in the holy Eucharist. He continues to be present in his Church, in his people, as he promised he would be. What we as individuals, and the Church as a whole, are asked to do is to believe in him.

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