

This is such a fascinating passenger of scripture I am excited to share it today, and not just because I'm a Bible geek.

These events, Jesus being scorned in his own hometown and sending out the disciples is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John does not mention this proverb of Jesus. Most of the time Jesus quotes Scripture, but these times he appears to be quoting a popular proverb of the day.

To us, with two thousand years of reflection, it may seem impossible to imagine that the Nazarenes could scorn the Lord, but remember, these people didn't have the benefit of time and theologians.

Imagine you lived in Nazareth and you know Jesus as a craftsman, respected except of that questionable business with his mother, which may or may not have been common knowledge. You've seen him go from a babe to an adult. You heard him lisp. You saw him fall down and scrape his knees. You saw him eat, have dirty diapers, mess up his clothes, so on. Remember, Jesus was fully human and fully divine. He ate, Mary probably burped him, probably got spat up on, peed on, and worse. Maybe you've gone to him for some of the goods Joseph and Jesus made. You know he hasn't been trained as a rabbi, and yet here he is, this whippersnapper telling you to repent. Can you imagine the talk?

Who does he think he is? He was just a poor craftsman and now he claims he's God. And you may be wondering why I keep saying craftsman instead of carpenter. That is because the word translated carpenter actually means just a craftsmen, so it is possible he worked in stone or some other medium, though considering his death on the wooden cross, carpentry would be the most poetic of options.

But how does Jesus handle rejection? It says here that he could do little in the town in the way of miracles. Some people have taken this to mean that miracles are dependent on their faith, and this is a terrifying prospect. Does my healing depend on my faith? I want to reassure you that's not what's happening here. Jesus could not do many miracles in Nazareth because no one asked him to. They didn't accept his role as prophet, priest or God, and so there were no crowds crying out for healing, no women seeking the edge of his garment, no mothers begging for scraps from God's bounty. It was not that they didn't have enough faith and that limited God's power, their lack of faith limited themselves.

But Jesus takes this in stride and carries on. He moves from village to village, healing who he can. Here he also sends out the disciples to begin their ministry. How he prepares them for ministry has a lot to teach us. First, they are to rely on God. They aren't to ask or take more than they need. Second, just as important as the first, they aren't to take rejection personally.

The disciples are to take no more than what they need for the day, making them fully reliant on God and whatever God might direct people to give to them. Even if the generosity of people were to create a surplus, it seems they were to take no more than needed.

This sounds very noble but I doubt very much any of us would be willing to do this, at least without a heap of anxiety and the constant temptation to hoard. Which is why I want to introduce you to George Müller. Muller was an evangelist who decided that he would take no salary but speak only to God for his needs. He and his wife felt the call to open orphanages during a time when orphanages were not at all nice places. There are so many examples of God providing for him that it becomes overwhelming. I encourage you to read a book about his life because it is truly

amazing, but some of the notable examples are that he never went into debt or asked for money, but yet God provided him multiple properties to build houses for the orphaned, totally about 100,000 pounds in the 1800s. On more than one occasion, the food stores ran out. Muller gathers the staff and children together and prays to give thanks to God for food God will provide. There is no food left in the home. All of a sudden, there's a knock at the door and the baker turns up all distressed saying God told him to bake fresh bread and bring it. Sounds unbelievable, right? Well what if I told you a second knock was heard and a milk cart had broken down in front of the place, there no refrigeration back then, so the milkman offers the milk to the orphanage. So a complete meal was provided for the children. And Muller lived his whole life this way, and never wanted for his basic needs. In fact, I'd say he lived in comfort, though probably not luxury.

The church doesn't operate in quite that way, but I know for a fact that multiple times we've had a need, either for the church or for one of our families, and unexpected aide or solutions has appeared. As we enter into our downhill meeting after service today I would ask you to consider how God might be calling you to bake bread, or might be showing you a different solutions to Trinity's needs.

Certainly, what can be learned from this passage might be summed up in the expression if God called you to it, God will get you through it. God called the disciples to ministry, and cared for their needs. Rely on a God who is faithful to provide for us, and will never call us to a ministry and not provide the resources we need. We must pray and ask for what we need, and then trust that what we need, not necessarily what we want, will be provided. We might want a mansion in tahiti. We might get an apartment in Ohio. Sometimes, we might even be the one to provide.

But it was not to be all roses and miracles. Sometimes people weren't ready. Sometimes they rejected the good news. The disciples were not to keep badgering those people, they were not to beg or bribe, cry or scream. They were not to ask for more resources to keep lobbying those who rejected. They were to peacefully move on. They trusted God would deal with the rejectors appropriately. Maybe someone else would go and they would be receptive, maybe time was needed, maybe, God forbid, those people would never be saved. But they weren't to take it personally, they were to move on in grace and peace, and greet the next town where there were more people who needed them. Everyone this planet needs Jesus, but we'll only meet a tiny portion of them. Not every conversation, not every mission program or ministry will be winsome and effective. That's okay. Shake the dust from your feet and move on. The field is ripe and many harvesters are needed. Maybe that rejection was just a stepping stone, just a lesson, so that your true calling or purpose might be revealed. Trust that God never makes mistakes.

Friends, may we learn to trust God's with our needs, and not see rejection or failure as the end, but only a plot twist, a lesson, a challenge on the way to work that awaits us.

Rev. Kate Mauch

July 14, 2024