**Notes for Next Sunday**

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

**The Point of this Week’s Readings**

Both the Old Testament and the Gospel deal with being called to serve the Lord in His kingdom.

Psalm (Psalm 123). This psalm is a prayer of God’s people for Him to show mercy and so foil the contempt of the proud. During the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, refugees returning to Jerusalem were especially mocked for their hope in the Lord and His plans. In this psalm the psalmist’s eye rises from Jerusalem to the Lord who is enthroned in heaven. Notice the rising pattern in the words “eyes” and “mercy.”

Old Testament (Ezekiel 2:1-5). The Babylonians attacked and sacked Jerusalem several times before the final destruction of the city in 587 BC. In one of these earlier attacks, probably around 597 BC, Ezekiel was among the thousands of inhabitants taken as prisoner to be resettled in the land of Babylon. God appeared to Ezekiel there and gave him a prophetic mission that extended for more than twenty years. This mission was to both the exiles in Babylon and to those who remained in Judah. God’s message through Ezekiel emphasized a call to repentance and faithfulness in the period before 587. This was a reminder of God’s continuing grace and the hope it brings for the future in the period after 587.

Epistle (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). Paul’s adversaries falsely claimed to have received their teaching directly from God through visions and revelations, Paul could claim that it was truly so in his case. But he mentions it here to show that the supreme height to which he was raised through these ecstatic experiences was counterbalanced by the humbling depth of a particular affliction he was given to bear (see v. 7), so that he should continue to glory not in self but only in the “God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10).

Gospel (Mark 6:1-13). In the first section of this lesson Jesus points out how a prophet is without honor in his hometown among his relatives. Jesus could do very little in His hometown. Even His brothers did not believe in Him.

Even though Jesus is rejected in his hometown, He calls His disciples and sends them out in mission. Jesus instructs them to depend entirely on Him and on those who hear and believe. They are to preach the message of repentance, but the results are always in God’s hands.

*For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.*

**Psalm 123**

1﻿ **I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven. ﻿2﻿ As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he shows us his mercy. ﻿3﻿ Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt. ﻿4﻿ We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*123:1* *whose throne is in heaven.* OT believers recognized that the hills were not their security and that Jerusalem itself was not their greatest joy. They looked to the Lord as their source of joy and as their fortress. (PBC)

*123:2* *slaves … maid.* Servants watch their master’s hand both for the good that comes and for the direction that puts them into action. (TLSB)

*123:3 have endured much contempt.* The Jew’s religious practices, which set them apart from the Gentile world, did not win them much favor in the ancient world. On the contrary, pagans heaped ridicule upon them. Today things are no different for Christian who takes God at his word. (PBC)

*123:4 the proud … the arrogant.* Those who live by their own wits and strength pour contempt on those who humbly rely on God, especially when those who rely on God suffer or do not prosper. (CSB)

**Old Testament – Ezekiel 2:1-5**

**He said to me, “Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.” ﻿2﻿ As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. ﻿3﻿ He said: “Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. ﻿4﻿ The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says.’ ﻿5﻿ And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*2:1 Son of man.* A term used 93 times in Ezekiel, emphasizing the prophet’s humanity as he was addressed by the transcendent God. Da 7:13 and 8:17 are the only other places where the phrase is used as a title in the OT. Jesus’ frequent use of the phrase in referring to himself showed that he was the heavenly figure spoken of in Da 7:13. (CSB)

*2:2* *the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet.* The Spirit works through the Word, and so enters Ezekiel’s spirit and raises him, as it were, from the dead. Cf. Rm 8:11. (TLSB)

*2:3* *send you*. This is an official assignment. The word “apostle” is derived from the Greek equivalent. (TLSB)

*2:3 rebellious nation.* A keynote of Ezekiel’s preaching: The entire nation throughout its history had been rebellious against God. (CSB)

*2:4* Ezekiel’s primary mission was to his present generation. They were born rebels, but they could not evade personal responsibility by blaming their ancestors. (TLSB)

*2:4 impudent.* It literally translates as “hard of face(s)” or colloquially, “hard-headed.”

*2:4 stubborn.* This means “strong of heart.” Here, however, the strength is not positive. Rather, it equates to the negative “strong willed.” They demand to do, and then indeed do that which they desire, not what God wills.

*2:5 they will know that a prophet has been among them*. Variant of Ezekiel’s recognition formula, “Then you will know that I am the Lord.” They may have to learn the hard way, but learn they will! (TLSB)

**Epistle – 2 Corinthians 12:1-10**

**I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ﻿2﻿ I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ﻿3﻿ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— ﻿4﻿ was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. ﻿5﻿ I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. ﻿6﻿ Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say. ﻿7﻿ To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ﻿8﻿ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ﻿9﻿ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ﻿10﻿ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*12:1 go on boasting.* In these particular circumstances, however, Paul feels compelled to do a little boasting about his religious experiences. Although we are not specially told so, the “super-apostles” apparently were using some supposed visions and revelations to back up their claim to spiritual authority. Paul therefore, asserts that he too can speak of visions and revelations form the Lord. (PBC)

*12:2 fourteen years ago.* This vision would have occurred prior to Paul’s first missionary journey, during the time he was in Tarsus waiting for further direction from the Lord (cf. Galatians 1:21). (PBC)

*12:2* *caught up to the third heaven … caught up to paradise.* The third heaven designates a place beyond the immediate heaven of the earth’s atmosphere and beyond the further heaven of outer space and its constellations into the presence of God himself. The nature of the inexpressible things that Paul heard remains unknown to us because this is something Paul was not permitted to tell. (CSB)

*12:6 but I refrain.* He has come to the end of such boasting and is getting back to more comfortable ground: boasting about his weaknesses and God’s power. Paul wants people to accept him and his message, not because of such phenomena as miraculous visions, but because of the power of the message alone. (PBC)

*12:7 keep me from becoming conceited.* So overwhelming was this anticipation of the world to come that the Lord saw fit to bring Paul back to earth with a thump. (TLSB)

*12:7* *thorn in my flesh.* Probably a chronic health problem, but we are not told. (TLSB)

*12:8 three times I pleaded.* Probably a literal number but also a way of getting across a serious and prolonged prayer concern. (TLSB)

*12:9* *My grace is sufficient for you.* A better solution than to remove Paul’s thorn. Human weakness provides the ideal opportunity for the display of divine power. (CSB)

*12:10 I delight in weakness; in insults; in hardships.* With these words Paul is turning the table on his opponents. They had pointed to his weaknesses as evidence that he could hardly be a genuine apostle. This is another way of saying what Paul had already stated in this letter: “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (4:7) (PBC)

*12:10 When I am weak, then I am strong.* We are dealing with a paradox here. The world says, “Only when I am strong, only when I have status, power, influence, wealth, only then I am strong.” The Christian says, “Only when I am weak, only when I realize that the world’s symbols of strength mean nothing even if I have them all, only then am I strong.” Those who find their strength in Christ can then, with Paul, be strong for Christ. (PBC)

**Gospel – Mark 6:1-13**

**Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ﻿2﻿ When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! ﻿3﻿ Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. ﻿4﻿ Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.” ﻿5﻿ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ﻿6﻿ And he was amazed at their lack of faith.**

The start of Mark 6 begins a major new section of Mark’s gospel. In chapter 4 we read of the powerful teachings of Jesus; in chapter 5 the accent is on his powerful deeds (both his wisdom and his miracles are referred to in 6:2). But now a change seems to come; the power of God at work in Jesus is not accepted by everyone. Already we have read about a lack of support from his family (3:20–21,31,35). Here that skepticism becomes community-wide. No doubt this is more than painful for Jesus. This rejection in his hometown leads to the narrative in which Jesus calls and instructs his disciples (6:7–13). The work of God will go on even if God’s agents are rejected or even killed. That theme of rejection continues through chapter 6, where the death of John the Baptizer, the forerunner, foreshadows Jesus’ own death. The incident in Jesus’ hometown is not the final rejection for him; Mark will focus on that in the passion narrative at the end of his gospel.

**Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. ﻿7﻿ Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil﻿a﻿ spirits. 8﻿ These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ﻿9﻿ Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. ﻿10﻿ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ﻿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.” ﻿12﻿ They went out and preached that people should repent. ﻿13﻿ They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.**

Now Jesus calls the Twelve to Himself and gives them these same powers so that through their preaching of the Word and miracles, people would believe in him as the one who could both heal and forgive sins. Notice how Christ prepares them—he teaches them, shows them his example, and sends them out two by two for mutual support. Regarding their physical needs, Jesus instructs them to depend entirely on him and on those who hear and believe. They are to preach the message of repentance, but the results are always in God’s hands.

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*6:9* *not an extra tunic.* At night an extra tunic was helpful as a covering to protect from the cold night air, and the implication here is that the disciples were to trust in God to provide lodging each night. (CSB)

*6:11 shake the dust off your feet.* A symbolic act practiced by the Pharisees when they left an “unclean” Gentile area. Here it represented an act of solemn warning to those who rejected God’s message.

*6:13* *anointed many sick people with oil.* In the ancient world olive oil was widely used as a medicine. (CSB)