

There was a man who was afraid that his wife was beginning to lose her hearing. He confided this to his doctor and his doctor told him,

“Well, we need to determine how bad the hearing loss is. When you go home tonight stand about twenty feet away from your wife and ask a question. If she doesn’t respond move to about ten feet away and ask her again. If she still doesn’t answer you then move up next to her and ask her again.”

So that is what the man did. He went home and found his wife in the kitchen. He stood about twenty feet away from her, this was a big kitchen, and asked,

“Honey, what’s for dinner?”

She didn’t answer him so he moved to about ten feet away and asked her again,

“Honey, what’s for dinner?”

She still didn’t answer. Now he’s really concerned about her so he moves up right next to her and asked again,

“Honey, what’s for dinner?”

At that his wife turned around and said to him,

“For the third time, chicken!”

How often do we blame others, including God, when the problem actually lies within ourselves?

Clearly that story shows a breakdown in communication. In today's Gospel there is a serious breakdown in communication between Jesus and the people of His own hometown. They hear His words and are astonished at His teaching. But they cannot accept that teaching. Why not? Because they know Him or at least they think they do.

They could not accept His teachings because of their amazing lack of faith in Him. They could not see Him as anything other than the carpenter's son, and as a result, Jesus could do no great deeds there. Think about that for a moment. When Jesus returned home, accounts of His miraculous deeds had preceded Him. But the people who knew Him best seemed to have adopted a "show me" attitude. "Show me, I'll believe it when I see it." And because of that amazing lack of faith, Jesus could do nothing, apart from a few healings. It wasn't that Jesus would not, He simply could not. Have you ever imagined there was anything that Jesus could not do? According to today's Gospel there is. God cannot perform miracles where there is no faith. He needs our faith to release His power. That is an incredible thought, we have the power to, in a sense, disable God. As all-powerful as He is, we can render Jesus powerless through our lack of faith.

And then the people of Capernaum were offended that Jesus could not perform miracles for them. Do we ever wonder why we do not see God's hand in our lives? When we blame God for doing nothing while we suffer, is it perhaps our unbelief that has made it impossible for Him to act?

Why did Jesus' own people not believe Him? He said it was because,

“A prophet is not without honor, except in his native place, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”

There is an old saying that “familiarity breeds contempt.” They knew Jesus; they knew Him as a little boy growing up in Capernaum. They knew His family, His cousins and His kinsmen. They knew His background and His education... and they were not impressed. They could not accept that one of their own, someone so familiar to them, had anything to teach them. They rejected a primary Truth, for secondary reasons.

But don't we do the same thing? How often do we ignore the prophets among us, because we think we know them? How often do we ignore the Church in its' role as prophet?

The word prophet is somewhat misunderstood by us today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We tend to think of a prophet as someone who predicts the future. But that is not what a prophet is at all. A prophet is one chosen by God and sent to spread His word among

the people. A prophet reminds the people of their relationship with God. He, or she, acts as a sort of conscience, pointing out to us where we have gone wrong and showing us the correct path. A prophet brings to us the Truth. When we ignore that Truth, when we ignore God and forget our covenant responsibility to Him, then the prophet also brings to us the Word of God's judgment.

When the Church conveys to us God's teaching, through scripture, through Tradition, and through the Magisterium, it is taking on the role of prophet. We must not fall into the danger of "familiarity breeding contempt." There is a tendency, particularly for those who have grown up in the faith, to adopt an attitude of "I've seen it all before."

We can be tempted to think we know everything there is to know about our faith. But this is the temptation of pride that leads poorly formed Catholics to hold to beliefs that are in direct contradiction to the faith, all while maintaining that they are good, faithful Catholics.

This complacency hinders us from experiencing the grace and mercy and power of God. We grow deaf to His Word because it is delivered by the same old pastor, the same old deacon or the same old sacraments.

And what could happen if we refuse to listen, if we refuse to accept the word of God because it is delivered to us in an all too familiar form?

Ezekiel was sent to the Israelites in exile to remind them of their relationship with God. He warned them that they were responsible for the troubles that had befallen them. But the people ignored him just as they had ignored all the prophets before him. And within 5 years the city of Jerusalem along with Solomon's temple, is destroyed by a foreign power and the majority of the people are sent into exile in Babylon.

You may think that is ancient history but consider this. In the year 2000, Pope Saint John Paul II called for a Jubilee Year, which included a forgiveness of debt owed by third world countries. That did not happen and in 2008 we were struck with a global financial crisis.

Around the same time it was estimated that 3000 lives were lost every day to abortion, 3000 innocent lives lost to an intrinsic evil. But we ignored our activists, our prophets, and in 2001, 3000 innocent lives were lost when the twin towers of the World Trade Center were destroyed by a foreign power.

And what is happening in our society today? For decades we have chipped away at the sacrament of matrimony, and now we are facing a gender ideology that threatens to destroy the nuclear family, one of the basic components upon which our society is built.

We are surrounded by a society that does not believe. And that society makes it so easy for us. For the most part we are allowed

to stay, and keep our faith and keep our churches, at least for now, but there is a constant pressure on us to change, to change our traditions, to redefine our sacraments. The challenge for us today is to say no, there are truths that are absolute, there are things that are black and white, right and wrong, good and evil. There is man and there is woman. And if we fail in this we run the risk of being exiled, not from our homes and families, not a physical displacement, but a spiritual one. We run the risk of being exiled from our heavenly Father to a state of being in which there is no longer room for God in our lives.

Our challenge is to go out everyday and make an effort to discover the new something that God is offering us through the same old channels. We must examine our own conscience and ask ourselves is it that God is not listening to me or is it I who have gone deaf through my own lack of faith?

Today's Gospel story was about a people who met Jesus and left Him without receiving a blessing. I pray that as we meet Jesus in the world and in the sacraments, we resolve not to leave without a blessing. May we recognize Him at work among us and demonstrate the faith that will allow Him to work miracles in the lives of each and every one of us.

God is good.