

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

These people have known Jesus since he was a child, from the time he was born, until now. They are astounded as he begins to teach them. "Where did this man get all this?" What is this wisdom, where did he get this power? After all, he is the carpenter. Note that he is not the son of a carpenter or the son of Joseph, instead he is "the carpenter and the son of Mary." Both were putdowns, and no doubt meant to be. Jesus' background is an offense to the people in his hometown. There was nothing romantic about being a carpenter, working with one's hands and he is the son of Mary, he is commonplace and common-born, no way can he be the Son of God, much less a prophet!

Now we know that it was not just the people of Nazareth who took offense at Jesus, even one of his own disciples, Nathaniel had asked if anything good could come out of Nazareth. The teachers of the law and the rest of the authority figures know full well, or think they do, that no prophet much less a savior will come from Galilee, much less Nazareth. And of course we also know that not only did the people take offense at Jesus, they would yell "crucify him" and as a result, Jesus would be put to death on the cross.

But not all is as it seems. In our first lesson God sends the prophet Ezekiel to a "rebellious house," to an "impudent and stubborn" people, telling Ezekiel that "they shall know that there has been a prophet among them." In our second lesson, the apostle Paul boasts only of his weaknesses, noting the thorn in the flesh that has been given him, appealing to God three separate times, but hearing in response "my grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." Note that Ezekiel precedes and Paul follows Jesus the carpenter, the son of Mary. There is a trend here.

Ask yourself now, what would be the response if Ezekiel, Paul, and Jesus were all to make a physical, here and now appearance today. If the people were rebellious in Ezekiel's day, are they not just as rebellious today? With sound bites, perfectly coifed hair, and the appearance of strength that our politicians and power brokers present today, would the apostle Paul even have a chance to make an impression? How would his letters come across if he had to tweet them on twitter or present them on you tube? How would Jesus do, especially if asked for his bona fides? A carpenter without advanced degrees from a blue chip university, not even a law or seminary degree, a savior who dies for his people? Wouldn't fly!

They would probably be all considered crackpots! Come to think of it, how do you and I come across when we try to present our faith in the way we talk and live our lives? Are we crackpots too? Probably to at least some, especially since we are not spewing venom, with sarcasm and snide remarks meant to be taken out of context dripping from our lips. Crackpots all!

Then again, I'm okay with being a crackpot in the eyes of the world, because the

truth of the matter is, I am a sinner, born a sinner, still a sinner. But I am a sinner who has been saved, delivered by the Good News, by our Lord Jesus, the carpenter, the son of Mary, the Son of God. Yeah, I might be a crackpot all right, but I am also a cracked pot with divine light shining through. Not my light, but the light of the Savior in whom I boast, in whom I preach, Christ crucified!

Jesus' miracles, his teaching, do not automatically produce faith, Jesus does not seek honor, he sows the seeds of the Kingdom of God, not to reap accolades but to reap brothers and sisters. And so you and I are sent to go and do likewise, to sow the seeds of the kingdom of God. To go and not stop, we who are weak and foolish by the standards of the world prepare with study and prayer. Prayer, lots and lots of prayer. Prayer that the power of God will be made manifest in our weakness, that we may boast in him and in him only. Prayer that we may do our best to live to our calling to live out our sending. Prayer because we are desperate and recognize our brokenness, prayer that the light of God will shine through us, cracked pots that we are. We pray that we may trust our entire well-being, all of us, in Jesus' healing hands.

AMEN