

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Gospel, Year B

LOVE LEAVES AN IMPRESSION

Mark 6:1-13

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Lori A. Cornell

1He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! 3Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." 5And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. 6And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. 7He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." 12So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

DIAGNOSIS: Poor Showing

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Impress Me

In our hyper-technological world we expect to get everything on demand. We can push a button on the keyboard and order groceries or buy stocks, custom-order our living room furniture, or design our own motorcycle. And the more things we can get on demand, the less we are impressed, and the more we want. We are like the folks in Jesus' hometown, who disrespect him for not being as good as they expected him to be. What a disappointment—the guy can only perform a few meagre healings. Jeesh.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Not Impressed

I guess familiarity must breed contempt. Jesus is performing miracles, but all the people can see is that he's a hometown kid, who they never thought would amount to much. And so, he seems to live up to their ungrateful expectations. Was it that he couldn't do deeds of power, or that people were too blinded by their ennui and insatiable appetites to be able to see it?

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): God Shakes the Dust Off

As Jesus prepares the disciples for their first solo tour, he instructs them that if they aren't received well, they should dust off their sandals and leave. So what makes us think that when we reject Jesus, God won't dust off his proverbial feet and move on too?

PROGNOSIS: Love Showing

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): God Repents

When Jesus breathes his last breath, God is finished. Which means two things: that, in the cross, God has had it with humanity—the only thing we deserve is to be cut off from the breath of God. God is justified in dusting off his feet and walking away. But the cross also means that Jesus completes (is

finished with) his self-giving in his death. How do we know? Because God comes back to town, so to speak, in the resurrection. God chooses to dust it up again with us heathen, and bring us the good news: We don't have to look for the dead among the dead, because Jesus is actually alive. Jesus brings us the good news of life with God.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): God Leaves an Impression

Such a turn around by God leaves a strong impression. God is so determined to have a life with us that Jesus dedicates himself body and soul to the cause. And that leaves an impression! An impression that makes us much less concerned about expecting God to give us a show, than we are with God showing us such great love.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Showing Love

In fact, this cruciform love leaves such an impression on us, that we can't wait to release it into the world. So, Jesus, who has left his loving impression on us (think of that cross marked on your forehead at baptism, or on your heart as you go up to communion) that you want that love to show up in other people's homes, and towns, and lives. Then maybe, instead of looking to be impressed, they might be impressed with Christ's love too.