

Homily for August 13, 2020  
Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time

### *Life's Narrative Shape*

Today we have readings that use story to speak God's word to us. Narrative has a way of getting our attention that can be lost on us with a more abstract form of speech. Narrative language is sometimes known as *real speech* – speaking to the heart – as opposed to *notional speech* – that speaks to the mind. Real language can move us to action in a way that more abstract thought leaves us indifferent.

The Biblical masters of real, or narrative speech, were Ezekiel and Jesus. Jesus told parables – stories that get behind our defenses so we can hear the voice of God speaking to our hearts. Ezekiel repeatedly enacted stories by playing out the story in ways that the people around him were left asking the question: “Ezekiel, what are you doing”? as we heard asked in today's reading.

So, what was Ezekiel doing? Ezekiel is the third of the three great Jewish prophets, the other two were Isaiah and Jeremiah. In the year 598 Ezekiel had been deported to Babylon in the first exilic migration that saw Jewish intellectuals, military and religious leaders displaced from their homeland. From Babylon Ezekiel is instructed by the Lord – five years later – in 593 – to enact what will happen in Jerusalem six years later, in 587 BC, when Jerusalem will be ruined by the Babylonians and the last king of Judah taken into exile. Ezekiel explains to those who are with him in exile, that his oracle is about King Zedekiah of whom we read in 2 Kings 25:3-7, these words:

***<sup>4</sup> Then a breach was made in the city; the king with all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah ( an dry and desolate area near the Dead Sea) <sup>5</sup> But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. <sup>6</sup> Then they captured the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah (500 km north of Jerusalem) , who passed sentence upon him. <sup>7</sup> They slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters, and took him to Babylon. <sup>1</sup>***

To you remember in our reading how Ezekiel was to enact his parable “in their sight”. Seven times this phrase was used in their sight”, as Ezekiel prophetically declares what would befall their last king - whose sight would be violently take from him.

In our Gospel we have one of the Lord's most vivid parables that also speaks of someone whose sight is taken from him, not because he is violently disfigured but because of the hardness that exists in his own heart. Having been forgiven an inestimable debt, he cannot forgive the debt of

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible\*](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, 2 Ki 25:3–7). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

one who could with time pay him back and loses sight of his on indebtedness and his master's mercy.

What is the significance of these narrative teachings for us? Well like, Ezekiel and Jesus, our lives take a narrative shape each day. How we choose to live our lives will draw us either closer to the Lord or farther away from him. As well, we do not live out our stories in isolation from the larger narrative that is represented by the times in which we live and the other people with whom our lives intersect.

But here is the most important point, that in the midst of all that our lives contain, there is another who is the true author of every story, and is, in the words of St. Catherine of Sienna, "writing straight with crooked lines". Master story tellers like Ezekiel and Jesus understood this and we are invited to see in the words of today's Collect that "God governs all things, both in heaven and on earth". When we can trust in the one directing the narrative of our lives, we can know peace even when challenged by situations bigger than we are and beyond our control.