

Taste and See that the Lord is Good

¹Homily for July 8th 2018

Did you know that one of our favorite summer delights is called an emulsion? This most popular of hot weather foods is a combination of two liquids that don't normally mix together – the definition of emulsion. One of the liquids is dispersed throughout the other. Fat globules are spread throughout a mixture of water, sugar and ice, along with air bubbles. This doesn't sound very appetizing does it? Who would want to eat fat globules? Of course we know there is much more to ice cream than this chemical, unappetizing description. Why else would we know the lyrics to an old 1927 song:

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream!²

In today's Gospel reading the people of Nazareth looked at Jesus in such a way that they were turned off. Much like you would be if I asked would you like fat globules mixed with sugar, water and ice for dessert. You would say no thank you!

When he went home to Nazareth Mark tells us that they said no thank you Jesus. We don't want what you are serving! Well Mark didn't put it quite like that. He tells us:

*And they took offense at him.*³

Now the Greek word here for "take offense" is skandalizō. We get the word scandalize in English from this, or scandal. A skandalon in Greek is a stumbling stone or stumbling block, it's something people trip over. And so the central meaning, the central focus of this passage from Mark's gospel is what I would call the scandal of Jesus' humanity.

Our Gospel reading for today speaks of two ways in which we are challenged by the scandal of Jesus' humanity.

1. There is the particularity of his humanity.
2. There is the family of his humanity

The Particularity of his humanity:

One the of the greatest stumbling blocks related to Jesus is the particularity of his humanity. From that day in Nazareth down through 2000 plus years, this particular man has been a scandal. Mark records the Nazreen reaction to Jesus this way:

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² Taken from Page 4 of "The Word Among Us" July/August 2018

³ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Mk 6:3). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

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! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?³

The people cannot reconcile that Jesus, who as a common labourer, now claims to have an authority indicating he is far more than a carpenter. It is the particularity of Jesus that is anticipated in our Old Testament reading from Ezekiel. Our appointed passage comes from the 2nd chapter of this great prophetic book. Immediately preceding today's passage are these words describing the heavenly glory:

SLIDE 1

28 Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.⁴

Here is a depiction of what is called the beatific vision and concludes the opening chapter that has described the Shekinah Glory of God in detail. Ezekiel then tells us his reaction to this glory when he says:

When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.⁵

Who was the someone speaking? The Lord Jesus Christ depicted in his eternal splendor says to Ezekiel:

Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them.⁶

There is something in the human spirit that wants to rebel against God speaking to us so directly. But when we can capture the association between the glorious Jesus enthroned in heavenly beauty we can then kneel before him in thanksgiving for how he comes to us in such humility. As a Nazarene Carpenter; or even more remarkably in the humble host and wine of the Eucharist Elements

There is the family of his humanity

The particularity of our Lord's humanity is tied directly to the second stumbling block, the family of his humanity. The Catholic Church for 2000 years has taught Mary was ever virgin and had only one child, here only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. But how does this reconcile with the verse from today's reading?

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Eze 1:26–28). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Eze 1:28). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Eze 2:3–5). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

Is 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?⁷

Now in Greek the word “adelphos”, translated in English by “brother”, can mean both brother and cousin. That cousin is the more accurate translation of adelphos in Mark 6 is supported by what Jesus says in Mark 6:4:

Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.⁸

The word translated as kin is the Greek word: “*syngenēs*” It literally means relative but it can also be translated as cousin. For example, the King James version of the Bible and the Douay-Rheims use this word to refer to Elizabeth. When Gabriel appears to Mary he says Elizabeth your syngenēs, your cousin, is now with child.

Now let’s think about this word “syngenes” as describing Jesus association with his cousins James and Joses and Judas and Simon with some other biblical evidence.

Look at these parallel verses: In Matthew 27:56 where we are told that at the Cross were:

SLIDE 2

Mary Magdalen, and Mary the Mother of James and Joseph (Joses is a variant of Joseph) and the mother of the son’s of Zebedee.

Mark in his passage describing the same scene at 15:40 states:

SLIDE 3

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.⁹

Now who was Salome? This is the name of James and John’s Mother, the one Matthew refers to as the mother of the son’s of Zebedee.

Then in John we have these additional details:

SLIDE 4

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Mk 6:3). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁸ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Mk 6:4). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Mk 15:40). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.¹⁰

Now who was Clopas? St Jerome, who died in 420 and translated the Scriptures into Latin, in what is known as the Vulgate, answers this for us:

SLIDE 5

“Clopas was the brother of Saint Joseph the husband of the Blessed Virgin, the father of Saints James the less, and Saint Jude, and the grandfather of Saint James the greater and Saint John, who were the sons of Salome the daughter of Clopas.”

So as you can see the biblical evidence supports the claim that those named in Mark 6 were not Jesus' blood brothers but his cousins. This is very important because the family of Jesus' humanity is one where in relation to our blessed mother we are all her children. Something the Catechism states when in paragraphs 499 and 500 the Church states:

The Church celebrates Mary as the “Ever-virgin.” Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus. The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, “brothers of Jesus,” are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls “the other Mary.” [Mt 13:55; 28:1; cf. Mt 27:56]

At the end of today's Gospel Mark tells us:

And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their unbelief.¹¹

It has always been the case that there are those who in the words of Ezekiel will “refuse to hear” the good news of the particularity of Jesus' humanity and the family of his humanity. However, for those who to take to heart and believe these Gospel truths, then the words of today's Collect ring true in their hearts as we pray:

*O God,
who in the abasement of your Son
have raised up a fallen world,
fill your faithful with holy joy,
for on those you have rescued from slavery to sin
you bestow eternal gladness.*

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#). (1993). (Jn 19:25). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#). (1993). (Mk 6:5–6). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

Such Holy Joy is better than the most delectable ice cream, for when we see Jesus for who he is we discover eternal gladness is anticipated in simple pleasures like a cone on a hot summer's eve. But this can never equal the far greater delight known by those who in the Eucharist declare:

Taste and see that the Lord is good and happy indeed are those who trust in him. (Psalm 34.8)