



Who's Got the Power?
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Year B, Ordinary 14
Ezekiel 2: 1-5; Mark 6: 1-13
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Last week we heard of a Jesus who walked through crowds, packed and pressing on him. We heard of Jairus, father of a desperately sick daughter and of a hemorrhaging woman. They come to Jesus and through Jesus, grace that brought healing flowed.

Jesus didn't instigate the engagement but responded to those who came seeking, asking, opening to grace - both unwittingly and wittingly as it happened. The theological lens of hindsight discerns Jesus as divinity revealed. Such encounter suggests a God who responds as we turn and open ourselves to receive, not a God who does to and imposes.

This week Jesus appeared in his home town. They recognized him, they remembered him, who he'd been in his family and village context. Jesus was to them what he'd been. They saw through him. They could not, or did not seem him as the person he had grown into being. One aligned, oriented with God, stepping into divine grace such that it flowed through him. They didn't believe in him and no deeds of power could be done there. Grace isn't imposed or done to.

This 'returning home' scenario, does it sound familiar? We may not claim the aligned with God stuff, see ourselves as conduits of God's grace that draws people to us and brings healing wholeness to those in need. I'm thinking more those times you return home, perhaps

after a bit of an absence. You know how much you've grown and changed, only to find within very short time you're back at the age, stage, identity and place you were when you left. The one your family requires of you. They say you've about 15 minutes before you've taken your place and role necessary for the family drama.

To explore this Jesus 'hometown encounter' a bit further. Have you ever experienced a sense of powerless because people don't 'believe' in you? I'm not invoking any religious sense to the word believe here, I'm talking about being utterly discounted because you don't fit the image or expectation of people in a particular context. **You** know you have all the requisite knowledge, insight and capability to contribute, maybe even take a lead, but because the people in the situation don't believe in you, you can do nothing.

As a woman I'm familiar with being confronted by men who, refuse to 'see' me, because I'm female. Who refuse to acknowledge me for who I am. I am nothing more than a trigger for their misogyny that informs them what female is. They see through me as if I'm not there. And I'm privileged. I'm white and heterosexual. My experience doubtless pales in comparison to the experience of the many in our community whose ethnicity, economic status, mental or physical health, residency status, neurological or gender diversity, age, to presume to mention a few, makes them unseen, unheard, disbelieved, without place or power.

When I experience such prejudice I see, quite clearly, there's nothing I can do. What I'm meeting is a mindset, a mind set in its ways, entrenched. What I don't need to do is let that mindset tell me who I am, have power over me. I'm not powerless unless I decide to concede, to agree and validate that way of thinking and being.

The sense of feeling powerless I guess resonates with most of us as we consider our world: US presidential election, NZ's current political

direction, carbon industry magnates, warmongers on too many stages, poor getting poorer, rich getting richer, divisions between difference increasingly hostile and entrenched. Yeah, a few things ... to feel powerless before.

But can someone actually make us powerless, take our power? As we look around the world we might think so. It seems those with most resources can impose their preference and prejudice on others with temerity. Yet these characters who populate the landscape of leadership, influence, power - they're there because of the people who believe in them. Or, more truthfully, because of those who believe they're the people best positioned to give them what they want, create a scenario best suited to their ends. Does that **make us** powerless?

Jesus can do no deeds of power in that place, then what happens? At least, what is it Mark wants us to hear by bringing together these two stories we hear today? Jesus doesn't retreat in despair. Instead, Jesus turns to his community, to those who align with a way of living and being that runs counter to the way those who wield power and misuse it for their own end, live. Jesus turns to them then sends them out. With realistic instructions. If the people you meet along the way don't get it, are hostile, then walk away, don't become entangled. As if to say it's not their burden to shift and change the hearts and minds of those they meet. It's their task to bear, speak of what they know, of their experience of grace now. Not insisting or imposing, but aligning with the direction of God's grace – present, available when sought, turned to and opened before. It's the way they're to move amongst and within the communities they meet.

This isn't a task done alone. They need each other as they go out speaking this alternative story of hope, of justice, of inclusion, of economic equity, of delight in caring for creation, being freed when we live within the bounds of planetary capacity, within the

boundaries of the territory we name home. A story that calls out overstretched avarice and ego for what it is and refuses to uphold and participate in such ways.

Sound like a Pollyanna pipedream? It's not. And it's not unrealistic. Different choices with the same resources can make it real. When we go out, together, we tell of this equally valid way of living and being. One that's just as realistic, just as possible. As we seek and find those who resonate with this, whoever or however they are, the energy and impetus for change **will** arise.

Remember our task, our mahi, is to bring, speak of, enact an alternative. It's not ours to change the hearts of those we meet. Belief, funnily enough, trust, is an inherent part in this. We do our part, take our place faithfully, not forcefully. It's utterly counterintuitive to the ways of force and imposition implicit in our current halls of power.

Seems naff, seems soft and airy fairy, where are the teeth? Hmm, you might be right, but who uses words like this? It's easy for us to be colonized, cede our power, enact our powerlessness, speak into being disbelief that things could be other than the way those who assume power declare them to be. That's why we need each other to speak and act and hold and remind one other of a way that shares and celebrates life, that expects the flourishing of all. That we each are conduits of grace.