

## The Target Experience

Over the Fourth of July some of us may have traveled to be closer to family and friends as we celebrated our nation's independence. Unless we violated some Southern rule of propriety, we were probably welcomed and embraced by those around us. The experience of "going home" or even being with those who know us well can have unexpected outcomes.

The gospel lesson for this Sunday (Mark 6:1-13) is about Jesus coming to his hometown. When the Sabbath comes, Jesus, who by this time is a well-known rabbi, stands up to preach. Mark doesn't tell us the content of his teaching but it obviously makes people unhappy. They have his resume right in front of them: Hometown - Nazareth. Comes from a large family. Previous work: Carpenter. Current skills: teacher; deeds of power. I suspect they had heard the rumors and whispers that Jesus was the Messiah. But could this be the Messiah? He had been a carpenter! Wasn't the Messiah supposed to be a warrior; someone like King David, handsome and at least able to use a slingshot well?

When I read this story, I think about how my own expectations about everything from food to furniture have gotten way out of whack. I have been spoiled by Amazon and Target and Walmart, because they have literally everything from food to furniture! They meet my expectations right and left...and if I don't find the thing I need at Target, I always find some other little treasure to buy that takes the edge off of not finding what I needed!

The problem with this sensory overload of met expectations is that we can overload one another with our expectations to have our needs met. The perfect Messiah would be from the house of David (yes); of a miraculous birth (yes); able to work miracles (yes); godly (yes); Jewish (yes); a warrior who would end Roman oppression (oops...) and would act kingly (double oops..).

What does our checklist look like for the perfect spouse? Or the perfect parent, brother, sister or friend? Oh that we could find all that we need in that one perfect person! Then we could have that Target experience! I've had my own checklists for those around me in my life. And I have been like the folks at Nazareth - astounded that the folks around me did not fulfill my checklist for them. They didn't see the things I needed, or they had interests and gifts that did not fit with my expectations.

Sometimes at weddings, I caution against holding on to those pictures we have in our hearts of "the perfect spouse" or "the perfect marriage". We can either tear up those pictures, with their impossible expectations, or hold on to those pictures and tear up our spouse or our marriage when they do not meet our expectations or when life begins to change us.

The people of Nazareth were good Jews who had a dynamic relationship with God. They were astounded at Jesus because he did not fit their picture of the Messiah; and yet, he also did not fit the picture of Mary's son who was a carpenter. Jesus got caught in this web of expectations. He talked about the way God wanted us to participate in the Kingdom of God by loving one another the way God loves each of us. His teaching was so radical; why couldn't he just act like a Messiah and meet our need for freedom from Rome?

It's always a good time to check on the expectations we have of those around us. Are we expecting a Target or Amazon experience from them; or holding on too tightly to that perfect picture of what we want?

Gracious God, in whom we live and move and have our being: Grant us this day, the grace to accept that you have shaped us to be a wondrously varied people who are called to live in a dynamic and changing world. Help us to live lightly and with love for others, in your unchanging and fierce love for us. Amen.

Rev. Martha Honaker