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St. John's Episcopal Church
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Pentecost VII, Proper 9B (Mark 6:1-13)

Today we've heard about the kid from Nazareth, who has, apparently, grown a bit too big for his britches. We don't know much about Jesus' childhood, but I think we can assume that he played with the neighborhood kids, stood by his dad to learn a trade, was probably polite to his mom (after all, she *was* the Blessed Virgin Mary!), probably got into trouble from time to time. In those days it really did take a village to raise a child — and so it is likely that all the neighbors knew him as “Joseph and Mary's boy, Yeshua.” And here comes Mister Smartypants Jesus, headed straight for the synagogue, where he wows the crowd. They said, “Where did this man get all this? Is not this the carpenter's son?” And they took offense at him.

It would be something like me going to Mississippi and telling the neighborhood that they really should do something to become more diversified — possibly build some low-income housing, or open a shelter or a food kitchen. Get rid of the vile Confederate part of the State flag. Mister Smartypants Wayne would not go over very well. But then, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” And trust me: We're not going to hang our stained glass Obama symbol in the front window.

Jesus' humanness was a stumbling block — and Jesus was amazed at their unbelief.

Well, if I had been there, I would have explained things to him. I would have said something like, “Don't be discouraged. They know you as the kid, the boy Jesus, the man. They haven't been around to see you casting out demons, healing the sick, and raising the dead. They haven't heard you preach very much. And they don't get it. They don't understand that you're not just Joseph and Mary's boy, but that you're God's anointed, the chosen one, the Messiah! Not to worry, it'll all work out.”

But it must have been a moment of painful discouragement to Jesus. Remember the remarkable stories we heard last week. Jesus raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus, a man of faith, a man of trust. In the second story, there was a woman bleeding to death. She couldn't approach Jesus because of the crowds, but at one moment she was able to touch his robes, saying, “If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well.” And immediately the bleeding stopped, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus turned to her and said, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed.”

Two powerful statements about faith. Two powerful witnesses to the power of Jesus to heal. Two short but profound stories which showed that Jesus, for all his humanity, had within him the power of the God of mercy.

So today's Gospel lesson is quite a contrast. Jesus had shown again and again his compassion for the hurting, his power to heal — and now, because his teaching in the synagogue was apparently so wise, the people took offense at him. Too uppity. Too Mister Wiseguy. He's just the kid from Nazareth, after all. Who does he think he is!?

Jesus tells us: he's a prophet. And of course, *we* know that he's more than a prophet — he is God's anointed, the Messiah, the Christ.

But the prophet has nowhere to lay his head...

As the month of July moves forward, I have, of course, often been thinking of my time with you, our time together. Now again, I am not comparing myself to Jesus, and I'm not claiming to be a prophet, but still... you have given me a place to lay my head, even when I've been pretty uppity. You have provided a generous, radical hospitality to me, to Harry, to our homeless guests, to musicians and students and queer groups and who am I forgetting? Let's just say to anyone who has walked through those doors, and to one another.

What a blessing.

Please, keep on doin' it.

In fact, do *more* of it!

We have been reminded that politics and religion don't mix. That there is separation of church and state.

Well, while that precept is in our Constitution, we also have to remember that the Founding Fathers and Mothers first of all, did not want a state religion – that was a huge reason for their having left their motherlands. But second of all, the early settlers weren't really very nice to one another if one's religion was different from another's – remember that the Puritans of Massachusetts drove out anyone who did not conform (and thus we got the colony of Rhode Island). Remember that Roman Catholics were despised and had to form their own small communities, many of them secret and hidden. Jews, of course, were excluded from most colonies. So much for freedom of religion.

We've evolved. Nevertheless, we still do not have a state church, and churches are not allowed to fundraise for partisan politics. My faith informs my politics – my sense of what is moral and just in our political landscape comes from my reading of the deep sense of Holy Scripture, from prayer, from participation in the life of the Church. But I try to be careful not to name names from the pulpit, we do not allow partisan yard signs on our grounds, we do not host political rallies.

But there are times...

There are times when I believe deeply that we must speak up and speak out. My faith directs me to be an active participant in the life of this community and the larger community. My faith directs me to shout for justice, to speak up for the poor and the oppressed, to use my white male privilege to demand that oppression and discrimination and abuse must end. Because we must do this if we follow the commands of our Lord and the vows of our Baptism.

And so I will continue to speak from this pulpit. I will continue to be uppity and perhaps confrontational and perhaps uncivil.

1. Climate change is real and we are participants. We must do more, not less, to care for our only planet, the creation of God, and we must resist deregulation when it encourages harm to our land and water, our fellow creatures, our fellow humans. *Our economy does not require the rape of our environment!*

2. We must fight racism. Those of us who are white have louder voices – we must use them in alliance with our black, Asian, First Nation, and Latinx brothers and sisters. Jesus blessed the Samaritan.
3. We must oppose homophobia: Our GLBTQ brother and sisters need us to protect them from fear, to offer safety, and to remind others that they, too, are children of God, whose dignity is worthy of our respect.
4. We must end family separations at our borders. There are still 2000 children in detention centers *because they were separated from their parents with no plan!* And we can't reunite those families because *we don't know where they are!*
5. We must work toward honest and fair voting practices. If we are truly a democracy, *we need to act like one!*
6. We must end the notion that men are superior to women. We must bring an end to abuse, we must call out discrimination and harassment whenever and wherever we see it. In large part, this is a guy thing. Because *we have the power. Share it!*
7. Healthcare and the education of our children are *moral* issues.

Jesus blessed the meek, the poor, those without power and voice. We must listen to their cries and we must respond. Those of us who have power and voice must not be silent, for in silence we are complicit.

Resist evil. Offer love. Resist injustice. Offer mercy. Resist power. *Be prophets! Speak up! Be uppity!*

And pray.

You all give me such hope; you keep me from despair. What will I do without you!?!?

Please: Be like Jesus.

Amen.