

**Today we look at prophets**

**They were a big deal back in O T times**

**Many of the people we read about in SS were prophets**

**Isaiah, Elisha, Elijah Samuel, Jeremiah, Daniel**

**Miriam and Deborah**

**These and so many more were sent by God**

**They were God's messengers**

**To those of their own generation**

**To future generations**

**They were not fortune tellers**

**They would speak of the past, the present and the future**

**But always with one purpose**

**Calling His people back to God**

**To repentance**

**Warning them**

**Often at great personal danger**

**Sometimes the danger came from those they were sent to**

**Many were attacked or killed**

**At other times, the prophets paid the price with the people of God**

**And they were imprisoned or sent into exile with them**

**All because they were speaking the truth**

**Then there were false prophets**

Telling the kings and the people what they wanted to hear  
Telling them God was pleased with their lives  
Telling them God would bless their decisions  
Doing these things for money or power  
And the people would believe them  
There was a clear difference between a real and a false prophet  
If what they claimed was God's word came to pass  
They were a true prophet  
But by the time it came to pass  
The consequences were already in place  
The time for conversion  
The time to return to walking in God's ways were over  
And the people had to live with their choices

Ezekiel was one of the major prophets

Son of man

This term means *human being*

In Hebrew, this is not the same term used in reference to Jesus

*I am sending you to the Israelites*

Ezekiel did not choose this role

He has been given a mission

*Rebels who have rebelled*

*Hard of face*

*Obstinate of heart*

Not a group most would volunteer to speak with

*You shall say to them...*

We are not told what he was to tell them

Only that when it came to pass

They would know a prophet had been among them

And there is no guarantee the people will listen

In fact it is inferred they will not

But Ezekiel is not called to be successful in the eyes of the world

His calling is to be faithful to God

Then we come to Paul

He has been given special revelations

But not for his own glory

But so he can bring the Word of God to the Gentiles

And to keep him from becoming too self-important

He is given a thorn in the side

Whether this thorn was a physical ailment

Or a rebellious group of people

We are not sure

But in either case, it keeps him from becoming too exalted

**And Paul did not just accept this**

**He called out 3 times for relief**

**The relief he got was not what he expected**

***Power is made perfect in weakness***

**God did not want Paul to rely on his own strength**

**He did not want Paul to rely on his own abilities**

**Humbled by his affliction**

**Humbled by his ineffectiveness on his own**

**Paul turns to God for help**

**He turns to God for strength**

**In the mystery of Christ**

**When in his passion and death he was weakest**

**This was his greatest moment of strength**

**Now for Paul**

**In his weakness, bearing insults, persecutions and constraints**

**He is strong in the power of Christ**

**This is one of the many contradictions in the mystery of our faith**

**Then in our Gospel**

**We have Jesus returning home**

**He goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath to teach**

**Something quite normal in those days**

**The people were astonished at his teaching**

**But their astonishment was not in awe of his works**

**It was opposite**

**They resented his teaching**

**Who does he think he is?**

**Isn't this Mary's son?**

**The carpenter?**

**Didn't he grow up here?**

**We know his family, where did he get all this?**

**Those who knew him best understood him least**

**They lacked faith to allow God to work in their midst**

**They rejected him**

**And this lack of faith amazed Jesus**

**I see one common theme in our readings today**

**Those to whom the prophets were sent**

**All rejected them**

**Ezekiel was rejected**

**Paul was rejected**

**Jesus was rejected**

**So if we are rejected when we speak the truth**

**At least we are in good company**

**That doesn't make it easy**

**But Jesus tells us**

***The slave is not greater than the master***

***If they reject me***

***They will reject you***

**So why is it so difficult for us to listen?**

**Why is it so difficult for us to see and hear the truth?**

**I believe it is because the truth calls us out of ourselves**

**It calls us out of our comfort zone**

**It challenges us**

**It calls us to conversion**

**Often in areas we are very comfortable**

**Or in places in the heart we do not desire to go**

**Perhaps we are republican**

**And any republican is good enough for us**

**Or we are 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> generation democrat**

**And any democrat will do**

**Even when the person running is opposed to our core values**

**Do we know our faith?**

**Can we give a defense for our beliefs?**

**Or are we Catholic because our parents and grandparents were?**

**Does being a Catholic mean anything?**

**Is being a Christian only a surface value in my life?**

**Are we seeking to be successful or faithful?**

**Are we willing to change?**

**Are we willing to enter into a conversion of heart?**

**Do we want to be guided by our faith or by our culture?**

**These are challenging, demanding times**

**Spiritually, politically and culturally**

**To prepare our hearts for these challenges**

**Our Holy Father has called for a Year of Faith**

**Beginning this October there will be a special focus on our faith lives**

**Opportunities for us to grow in our understanding**

**Opening the seed that was planted at our baptism**

**Centering our faith lives on the Eucharist**

**And bringing this new understanding**

**This new relationship with Christ into the world**

**There are so many people a priest or bishop can never touch**

**With whom we will never speak**

**But you can**

**We need to discover or rediscover the beautiful truths of our faith**

**And bring them into the world**

**We need to learn to be prophets**

**Not so we can be successful**

**But so we can be faithful**