Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

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January 31, 2023
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“He was amazed at their lack of faith” (Mark 6:6).

Heb 12:4-7, 11-15; *Mk 6:1-6*

After a spectacular start to his ministry in Capernaum, Jesus returns to his hometown with his disciples. What should have been a warm welcome to a native son turns into a painful confrontation. The people who have known Jesus all his life

and watched him grow up, think of him only as the local “carpenter, the son of Mary,” one person among a family of brothers and sisters known to everyone.

Their familiarity with Jesus as a local fixture leads to skepticism about his sudden rise to fame as a miracle worker and preacher. Their lack of faith, Mark says, hinders Jesus’ ability to work many miracles. For Mark, faith is an essential part of every miracle. Whatever gift Jesus has, receptivity and trust on the part of the person in need must be there for anything to happen. Every miracle Mark records up to this point is evidence of this mutuality.

The crowd in Nazareth wanted a show of Jesus’ supposed miracles before they would accept him. Their lack of faith drained the moment of the one element necessary for any miracle. Where Jesus does find faith, there is no limit to the signs that occur, as we saw yesterday in the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage and the raising of the daughter of Jairus.

It may seem strange to think of Jesus being “unable” to work a miracle, but Mark’s Gospel puts us on notice that even God’s grace is not automatic or independent of our participation. We may have long lists of prayers we say faithfully and then wait for God to answer them. What if the answer we are not hearing is God’s call to us to act in each circumstance we are concerned about, trusting that God is partnering with us to resolve the problem. Our share of the effort may be small compared with God’s, but we must offer it to set the prayer in motion.

Passivity, like caution and fear, is the great enemy of faith. We just never get moving, or we get overwhelmed and stop trying. Jesus is saying to us, “Come with me as we make you holy and more loving and more open to the Beloved Community.” Our own small prayers are part of a much larger prayer, and he is inviting us to let God’s will for us happen within this larger blessing.