



14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
John Eaton

Lectionary 101:

Ezek 2:2-5

Ps 123:1-2, 2, 3-4

2 Cor 12:7-10

Mark 6: 1-6

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/070421.cfm>

Possible preaching theme 1 linked to the gospel:

- **The practice of social leveling:** various cultures and societies employ a wide range of strategies to maintain social coherence. Sometimes those strategies include “cutting down the tall poppy,” or becoming a target of criticism or even sabotage for standing out. Such practices can be harmful, especially to the young, and may suppress important voices.

Possible scientific resources on this theme:

- “Tall poppies, deservingness and schadenfreude” by Norman T. Feather
<https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/tall-poppies-deservingness-and-schadenfreude>
- “Tall Poppy Syndrome: When You Get Cut Down for Standing Out” Newport Institute
<https://www.newportinstitute.com/resources/mental-health/tall-poppy-syndrome/>
- A short video featuring Dr. Rumeet Billan explaining why so many women are penalized because of their work achievements <https://www.breakfasttelevision.ca/videos/what-tall-poppy-syndrome-is-and-why-successful-women-are-experiencing-it/>
- “What Is Janteloven?” by Rebecca Thandi Norman
<https://www.scandinaviastandard.com/what-is-janteloven-the-law-of-jante/>

Possible preaching theme 2, linked to the Gospel:

- **When crowds become mobs:** While this phenomenon goes by many names – e.g., pack mentality, groupthink or crowd psychology – they all boil down to the same idea: individuals can be influenced (for good or for ill) by a larger group.

Possible scientific resources on this theme:

- “What Keeps a Crowd from Becoming a Mob?” by Séamus A. Power, Thomas A. Morton
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-keeps-a-crowd-from-becoming-a-mob/>
- “What Is Mob Mentality?” by WebMD Editorial Contributors
<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/what-is-a-mob-mentality>
- *Fundamentals of Social Psychology*, “Chapter 22: Crowds and Mobs” by Emory S. Bogardus https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Bogardus/1924/1924_22.html



- “What is Groupthink?? By Kendra Cherry. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-groupthink-2795213>

Homily outline on theme 1:

In the 2020 Walt Disney film “[Mulan](#),” the protagonist is a teenage girl blessed with the energy, talents, and reflexes normally found only in a male warrior.

- Her father urges her to suppress and domesticate her talents and to bring honor to the family through marriage rather than physical prowess.
- The village matchmaker instructs her that to be an ideal wife she must be composed, graceful, polite, silent, and invisible.
- When Mulan objects to her father’s enlisting in the emperor’s army, he scolds her: “I am the father, you are the daughter. Learn your place.”

The admonition to know one’s place has an enduring presence in United States culture.

- One place this culture norm surfaces is in popular music, e.g.,
 - Flatt and Scruggs 1951 bluegrass classic “[Don’t Get Above Your Raisin’](#)”
 - Jean Knight’s 1971 hit “[Mr. Big Stuff](#)”
 - And the Gibson Brothers 2016 release “[Remember Who You Are.](#)”
- In the African American community, precocious young people might be warned to “remember where you came from”; and if they got “big-headed” or “high and mighty,” they might be shunned as being “[sadiddy](#)”
- Preachers undoubtedly have other examples from their own experience.

This is obviously not an issue only for folk in the United States.

- The Danish author [Aksel Sandemose](#) wrote about a fictional town called Jante, in his 1933 novel *En flykting korsar sitt spår* (*A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks*).
- In Jante, the unmitigated repression of the individual was practiced
- These practices were summarized in the [10 rules of Jante](#)
 - Don’t think you are anything special.
 - Don’t think you are as good as we are.
 - Don’t think you are smarter than we are.
 - Don’t convince yourself that you are better than we are.
 - Don’t think you know more than we do.
 - Don’t think you are more important than we are.
 - Don’t think you are good at anything.
 - Don’t laugh at us.
 - Don’t think anyone cares about you.
 - Don’t think you can teach us anything.

Scientists sometimes refer to this cultural way of thinking as the “[tall poppy syndrome](#).”



- The term, which seems to have originated in Australia, was based on the natural inclination of gardeners to cut down the taller flowers in order to make the garden more visually appealing by keeping the heights uniform
- This cultural instinct can be useful for establishing social uniformity, and even for making sure that everyone is recognized as a “tall poppy” in their own right.
- However, this practice can also have [far-ranging and destructive effects](#), including
 - A general loss of confidence
 - Anxiety
 - Symptoms of PTSD
 - Depression
 - And even contribute to substance abuse.
- Recent studies illustrate that a [surprising majority of women](#) – maybe up to 90% - experience this at work.
- In the words of Taylor Swift, “[people throw rocks at the things that shine.](#)”

In today’s gospel, Jesus stands up to teach in his hometown synagogue

- At first, his listeners are mesmerized until he is recognized as a hometown product
 - Mark Twain is reputed to have said that an [expert is “an ordinary fellow from another town”](#)
- The congregation becomes indignant that Jesus, a local, should presume to teach them
 - “We know your family!”
 - “We remember you when you were just a kid!”
 - “Who do you think you are that you can tell us what to do?”
- Jesus did not give up his ministry to fit in.
- Though eventually “cut down” on the cross, his resurrection not only overcame death but announced the dignity of every other suppressed voice in the service of human dignity.

God chooses representatives and prophets who do not always fit our expectations.

- Moses had a speech impediment ([Exodus 4:10](#))
- Gideon was called to lead the army though his family was poor and he considered himself the least important of the family ([Judges 6:15](#))
- Jeremiah considered himself to be too young to serve as a prophet ([Jeremiah 1: 6-7](#))
- Paul was concerned that Timothy’s youth would tempt fellow Christians not to listen ([1 Timothy 4:12](#))

May God continue to raise up parents and grandparents, teachers and catechists, pastors and preachers, who boldly speak God’s holy Word to others.

- May we in turn look beyond appearances
- Resisting the temptation to think or say “Who do you think you are? Sit down and shut up”
- And, instead, embrace each prophetic voice, no matter from where it arises.



Tags: God's Word, prophets, psychology, women