

No Respect at Home

By Patricia J. Heavren

**“No prophet is
without honor,
except in his own country
and among his own kin
and in his own house.” Mark 6: 1-6**

I received a text from my dearest friend today that said, “Never keep an old friend around too long, because they start knowing you too well.” It instantly reminded me of the above scriptural verse, which points to the fact that the prophet is not taken seriously in those places where his human faults and failings are readily visible. Like the prophet, if I fear my own humanity and hold it in condemnation apart from my connection to the divine, I surely get no respect at home.

In my own life I can see where this phenomenon has driven me to become a prophet in some other town, some other circumstance where I might cleverly hide my humanity from myself and others. In many places, I am perceived as a sort of miracle worker by trade. I wonder if this desire is what drove Jesus to public life as teacher and healer? Was his itch for the divine so strong that he knew it could never be scratched in the carpenter’s shop working in the family business with his earthly father Joseph? How did he feel about his own humanity? After all, he was the wildly wise and precocious kid who went missing for three days in the

temple while mom and dad frantically searched for him. Chances are, honor and respect were in short supply when they finally found him.

The text message came from my friend David who undoubtedly sent it in response to my having stepped out of our usual rhythm of communication. I was mad at him and he knew it. David and I are both masters at surfacing the wisdom of life choices and at bringing loving-kindness to those places where judgment eclipses clear seeing, and we give these gifts to others in our professions. David and I also support each other in this way when our individual search for wisdom comes up dry. Often we hit the mark, and other times we miss completely.

David has a way of hanging my humanity (lovingly, of course) from the gallows. While talking with him about a recent trip to see two of my honored teachers, he interrupted the story to point out, with great disdain, that I was treating them “as if they were gods.” This was an almost funny condemnation from the man who is my partner in seeking the divine in all things. Had he not touched a place in me that was sore from self-flagellation, I would have laughed. But for me, the statement immediately landed as a confirmation of my error-prone humanity and of my teachers’ unattainable divinity. .

I quickly turned David the friend and the listener into David the judge and executioner. I cemented my perception of his failing (i.e., not meeting *my* expectations) with a quick exit from the phone and a two-day silence.

This to assure that there would be two bodies dangling in the public square to even the score of injustice. The seeming never-to-end loop appears to me as a noose that tightens around my ability to procure true partnership with David or with others, or at least the true partnership that I *think* eludes me.

I know that if I bring the story deeper, I am all those characters that appear in this story and the scriptural story. I am the prophet, the other country, and the hometown citizens that dishonor and disrespect. In the story of David and Pat I hold the gavel of the judge and wear the hood of the executioner. And I am the witness who watches it all. I am the one who deports the prophet, or seer, beyond the gates of my own country to move beyond the confines of limiting beliefs. I am the prophet who announces the coming of “the one” rather than announcing myself as divine, wholly intermingled with the human. So what is the wisdom of the one who persists in keeping the prophet, the God-seer, the God herself, apart from the human?

Perhaps the answer is in the wisdom of David’s text message: “Never keep an old friend around too long, because they start knowing you too well.” Maybe when we know ourselves “too” well, we compensate by projecting what is inside of us outside so we can see it and discover it newly. Perhaps when our friends know us “too” well, we cast them off because we flee not their trapping observations, but our own. When we let them go, for however brief a time, we get the chance to remember them

again differently, to bring the approach of a beginners mind when we greet them again.

As humans I think we genuflect before new discoveries like pioneers before the open road. One fork of that road leads to our birth country, our own kin—our familiar way of seeing things; the other road leads us to other countries where we are free from others and our own trapping ways of seeing ourselves.

Maybe Jesus knew it was the destiny of all beings to wake up and recognize that honor and respect *can* live in the hometown of the prophet, if the prophet himself is willing to be light and playful with his own judgments and giggle, unhooked, by the judgments of those around him. *Judge not lest ye be judged.* Maybe he knew that all it would take would be a miracle, that the everyday prophet or seer who was willing to bring fresh eyes to every moment—even the familiar ones—and who stepped out of the familiarity of the past to name what was possible now *was* a miracle worker. And in that seeing, he, and we, could make it so.

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