

**OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH**  
**HOMILY FOR THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (B)**  
**6<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009**

Through the prophets God tells preachers what to preach.

What does Isaiah tell me to preach about at this Mass?

He says: "Say to all faint hearts, Courage! Do not be afraid."

So I say to you: "Courage! Do not be afraid."

Father Philip told us how many times Jesus said "Do not be afraid"

Jesus said "Do not be afraid" more than anything else in the Gospels.

At this time of year there are many faint hearts.

There are children starting new schools, young adults moving on to College and University, and those who have finished education looking for their first job.

There are adults returning from holiday uncertain of the future. Will they lose their pension, their job, their home? It's back to reality. Will their marriage or their relationships survive?

Even in the Church there are faint hearts. How will we cope with change? Will the parish survive?

To all of these faint hearts God says: "Do not be afraid."

This is not just a command to be obeyed but a promise supported with reason.

We should take these words to heart because Isaiah goes on to say that God "is coming to save you".

In fact God has already come to save us. He has come in Jesus.

One reason why Jesus performed miracles was to make very clear that he is the one whom God promised us through the prophets.

That's why in today's gospel we hear in great detail how Jesus cured a man who was both deaf and had an "impediment" in his speech.

The Greek word for this "impediment" occurs only here in the New Testament and only in our reading from Isaiah in the Old Testament.

St. Mark clearly chose the miracle and the words carefully to show that Jesus was literally fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah. God would make the deaf hear and the dumb speak.

Jesus did exactly this. Jesus was and is God saving us.

Of course he wanted the man to be healed but Jesus also wanted make clear that he was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah.

The people who witnessed the miracle saw the connection.

They thought and said, “He has done all things well.” He has fulfilled God’s promise.

We really can believe that he will give us courage, that he will save us from all that causes our hearts to faint.

What really causes our hearts to faint?

In many cases it is fear, fear of the future, fear of failure, fear that nothing will ever get better.

This is where Jesus steps in.

When he says “Do not be afraid” he is telling us to have faith that whatever happens we will not fail.

Success and failure are measured by standards.

Students fail exams because they get marks below the standard mark.

People fail to get jobs because they do not meet the standards set by the employers.

People fail socially because they fail to meet the standards set by their peers.

People fail religiously because they fail to keep the commandments.

Jesus does not set this kind of standard.

As we heard last week having a sincere and faithful heart is more important than keeping rules.

As St. James tells us today there are no distinctions between classes of people.

We have no right to make such distinctions.

We have a right to respect and love. We also have a duty to show the same respect and love to everyone else.

Let’s be like the deaf man and bring our fears to Jesus.

Let’s listen to him in prayer telling us there is no need to fear.

Then we can believe that Isaiah was right because we will have experienced for ourselves that Jesus does all things well. There is no reason to be afraid of anything.

**Rev Geoff Carey**