

Now admit it. Don't you secretly love it when the person who can do no wrong messes up really bad? People are glued to the TV when a politician is caught in some illegal activity. Kids snicker when the goodie-two-shoes gets in trouble. We all love it when the know-it-all is proven wrong. When others fail, especially others who we perceive to be better than us, it makes us feel better about ourselves. It's not right but it surely is.

So, today, we should all be thrilled because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lord Almighty, fell flat on his face. "And he could do no mighty work there..." But somehow, it doesn't make me feel better. There are some people who are NEVER supposed to fail. The people who watch over us and care for us are NEVER supposed to fail. Jesus is supposed to be the one person I can always count on. He's supposed to be the only one about whom I never have to worry about failing. And he could do no mighty work there. Surrounded by unbelievers, he could do no mighty work except lay hands on a few sick people and heal them.

It would be frightening to see Jesus fail if we did not know the whole story. St. Paul helps us there. He was one of the smart kids who was never wrong and by the time he wrote his second letter to the church in Corinth, he had figured some stuff out. God is made powerful in our weakness. It is exactly when we can do nothing that God will take care of everything.

The people who surrounded Jesus did not perceive that they were in need. What can this carpenter offer us? He's just my big brother who always did

everything right and never got in trouble, but I live in the real world. What can he offer me? Besides, he travels all over the countryside and is never home anyway. What does he have that we need? Come on Jesus prove it! Prove to us that you are worthy of us, worthy of our admiration! Prove that you are not just another religious huckster trying to get our money.

And Jesus walked away. He walked away not because they were right, although surely some of them probably thought that. He walked away because the people were not seeking from him what he offered. They were not asking for strength but demanding a show. They thought that they had their own strength within them. Jesus came to earth for people who are weak and need strength.

One thing I have learned in my ministry is to avoid answering questions that no one is asking and avoid offering what no one wants. Human beings cannot be forced into taking what they need if they do not seek it. That is what free will is. God gave us the ability to be as stupid as we like.

So, if you are self-sufficient and have no need for help, then you are not ready for Jesus. If you have all the answers you need and are the master of your destiny, you are not ready for Jesus. It is only when you know that you are weak. It is only when we sit in the midst of failure and uncertainty that we become ready for Jesus. It is then that Jesus comes into our lives and works miracles.

Jesus pronounced his verdict, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." Then he moved on and let those who felt they did not need him go on with their lives

until they came to a place where they did need him. He did not seem concerned about that day coming. Likewise, we always preserve the relationship. When we run into the people who have no need of Jesus right now, we don't curse them. We don't proclaim judgement upon them and send them away into the darkness. We smile, shrug and move on to someone who does need Jesus. And we know, that the day comes for everyone when our own abilities fail and our own wisdom runs dry and if we have preserved the relationship, we have a shot at offering them Jesus later when they seek him.

So Jesus sent his disciples out to proclaim the Gospel. They were to go out as ones in need not as amazing success stories. When Martin Luther died, it is said that he had a little scrap of paper with him on which the words were written, "Beggars all are we." Just as people who believe they have no need, will not receive Jesus, so too will people not receive Jesus from people who they perceive are above them and have it all together. The disciples were to physically demonstrate their dependence on God. "He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics." They were to be people who depended on God not themselves. And Jesus warned them that some people would not listen. "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them."

Jesus modeled failure for them and for us so that we would know that so called "failure" is part of the deal. The miracles of God are dependent on

people desiring him to work in their lives. People often refuse to turn to God until all of their worldly ideas run dry.

“Faith is just a crutch for weak people.”

“Religion is fine for people who feel they need it.”

“Science is factual so I’ll believe in what I can see and test.”

That’s fine. God will still be here when all of their earthly notions have failed them. We just have to be ready to deliver Jesus when the time is right. Where they have it all already figured out, they don’t need God. Only people who are worldly failures like us are in need of Jesus.