



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

Fr. David Rosenberg
Institute for Spiritual Direction

"Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown." (Luke 4:24)

The beginning two verses of the Gospel according to Luke (4:21-30) sets the scene. Jesus returns after his baptism and the time he spent in the desert communing with God the Father. He now fully understands that he is the beloved Son of God. But his home town only knows him as a Jew, the son of Joseph the carpenter. This dichotomy creates the tension that is about to unfold. They are reluctant to acknowledge that his is fully human and fully divine.

Jesus' statement that *"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"* shocked the ears of his listeners. Unequivocally, he proclaims that he is the one of whom Isaiah foretold. At first, the people of his home town spoke well of him. News of his miracles filtered in from the countryside and had already reached his listeners. They wanted him to bring these divine gifts to his home town. This was their first reaction, but then some begin to raise doubts with the second part of the message he was about to deliver. Accepting this carpenter's son as God's chosen one was too much for them to handle.

The tide turns against him when he reminds the Nazarenes of the Torah's command to the Chosen People. They were not chosen to enjoy what we call in today's Church a "life of maintenance," living, as it were, off the fat of the land. Instead, they were a people commissioned to bring blessings of abundance of the One God to all people. This reminder touched the emotional energy of racial hatred against the Samaritans. *(See the Parable of the Good Samaritan -- Luke 10:25-37)* They exploded in rage and attempted to drive him off the edge of a cliff and murder him.

The examples of Elijah and Elisha working miracles for foreigners simply emphasize the point that God's love was not limited to the Jews. The crowd's reaction foreshadows Christ's passion and death, as he escapes to continue his mission unto death and his eventual resurrection and ascension. Luke's account continues in Acts of the Apostles with the spread of God's Word through his holy Apostolic Church.

Are Christians caught in the same struggle as the Jews of Jesus' time? When we were accepted by culture we were viewed as fully human, but a privileged people. We were brought up to believe the clergy and religious were commissioned to spread the Faith. Once the tide turned against the Christian culture, the laity was ill equipped, both emotionally and mentally, to accept that through our divine baptism we are God's chosen ones, called to lead a life of mission to bring the abundant riches of the Church to all people.

As you reflect on this text, pay close attention to the shifts of mood that mark the story, from amazement to doubt to confrontation to anger. Let those shifts guide you and carry you along with the flow of the story.

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A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit,
came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.
He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath, as was his custom,
and read from the prophet Isaiah.
The eyes of all were fixed on him.
Then he began to say to them,
"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

All spoke well of him
and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.
They said, *"Is not this Joseph's son?"*

Jesus said to them,
*"Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb,
'Doctor, cure yourself!'
And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown
the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'"*

And he said,
*"Truly I tell you,
no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown.
But the truth is,
there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah,
when the heaven was shut up three years and six months,
and there was a severe famine over all the land;
yet Elijah was sent to none of them
except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon.
There were also many lepers in Israel
in the time of the prophet Elisha,
and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."*

When they heard this,
all in the synagogue were filled with rage.
They got up, drove Jesus out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill
on which their town was built,
so that they might hurl him off the cliff.

But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

The Gospel of the Lord