

January 30, 2022
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 4:21-30

Jesus continued speaking in the synagogue, saying, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. 30 But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

Background:

The first line of this gospel was the last line of last week's gospel. Repeating that single line makes for a smooth transition and helps us remember the context of the previous gospel. The shift in the mode of the gospel is dramatic. It also moves from an emphasis on the teaching of Jesus to the reactions of Jesus' extended family and the other people of Nazareth. In the beginning, Luke reports that the people "spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words" with which he spoke (Luke 4:22). But in the next verses, those same people "drove him out of town" and intended to throw him over the edge of the hill on which the town was built (Luke 4:29).

The text provides a window into how social expectations affected people in the society in which Jesus lived. By not continuing the profession of his father, Jesus had broken with what was expected and considered honorable. The expectation was that the first-born son took the name of his grandfather and the profession of his father. He was responsible for continuing the family line, not only in having children, but also in his profession. Small hamlets needed people with a variety of trades and skills for survival, unlike many places in the contemporary society that has been shaped by the industrial era. Those skills were passed down within one's family. Luke lets his audience know that Jesus' hometown community found what he said impressive, but they were at the least puzzled that he was not taking up the trade of his father, Joseph.

The second breach of social norms was with their understanding that the man took care of his family and relatives first. Most of the people of Nazareth would have been related to Jesus in a variety of ways. The text suggests that Jesus had not performed his healing ministry for those of his own town and extended family. This would have been looked upon as an insult, and a denial of one of his primary responsibilities. When he was questioned about this, he made no apology or attempt to restore the breach in his relationship. Instead, he pointed to two examples in their tradition when prophets acted as agents of blessings on Gentiles. Elijah visited a widow in Sidon. She and her son were about to starve to death. Elijah prayed, and the son was restored to health, and their small supply of flour and oil lasted throughout the famine of the land (1 Kings 17:1-24). In the second example, Naaman, a great army commander for King Aram, had a form of leprosy. When the Arameans captured the land of Israel and were told of the prophet Elisha in Samaria, Naaman went to him and was cured of the leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14). In citing these examples of prophets to explain his actions, Jesus was again casting his role among them in the light of being a prophet, and shunning their expectation for him to be a craftsman like his father.

Jesus reminding the people of Nazareth of these two incidents suggests that Jesus understands the word of the prophet Isaiah that Luke reports him reading in last week's gospel. "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because*

he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord (Luke 4:18). Isaiah looked to a time of divine fulfillment that would be extended beyond the Jewish community to the Gentiles. To Jesus' audience in today's Gospel, this was blasphemy, and it produced a violent response within them. They tried to kill him by throwing him over the side of the cliff on which the town was built.

Reflection Questions:

1. Where have you observed the power of social expectations in the culture in which you live?
2. Are you aware of times when social expectations have helped you make a decision or carry on a certain pattern of life for which you are not grateful or proud?
3. Are you also aware of times when social expectations have influenced your decision or encouraged a certain pattern of life for which you are not disappointed?
4. Have you ever been cast in certain light (either for the good or bad) because of your family? What was that experience like? What effects did it have?
5. The people of Nazareth were said to be amazed by what Jesus said. Given the events described in this gospel, what do you think Luke meant by the term "amazed?"
6. Place yourself among Jesus's neighbors in this gospel passage. What is going through you as you hear their comments as they turn negative?
7. As you hear Jesus' response to their comments, reminding them how God chose to act on behalf of the widow in Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian, what are you feeling?
8. Can you take some time to talk with God honestly and frankly about your thoughts and feelings about how people are responding to Jesus, and Jesus' response to their concerns, or perhaps how people have responded to you?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclalledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for January 30, 2022, the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The word of the Lord came to me, saying: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. Gird your loins; stand up and tell them all that I command you. Be not crushed on their account, for it is I this day who have made you a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass, against the whole land: against Judah's kings and princes, against its priests and people. They will fight against you but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.

I will sing of your salvation. In you, O Lord, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.
In your justice rescue me. Be my rock of refuge, a stronghold, for you are my rock and my fortress.
O my God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked. You are my hope; my trust, O God, from my youth.
On you I depend from birth. My mouth shall declare your justice, day by day your salvation.
O God, you have taught me from my youth, and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds.

Brothers and sisters: Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. I shall show you a more excellent way. If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, not inflated, not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. Faith, hope, love remain, these three; the greatest of these is love.

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying: "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when for three and a half years a severe famine spread over the entire land. But Elijah was sent to a widow in Zarephath in Sidon. There were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha; none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.

Excerpts from Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19; Psalm 71:1-6, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13; Luke 4:21-30

From Joe:

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for January 30th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. The Gospel from Luke picks up right where we left off at the end of last week's gospel, where Jesus had read in the synagogue at Nazareth the scripture passage from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to proclaim liberty to captives, and let the oppressed go free," and Jesus then said to them, "Today this passage is fulfilled in your hearing." This Sunday's gospel goes on from there: "At first, all spoke highly of him and were amazed at his words." But when they went on to ask, "Isn't this the son of Joseph," he said, "No prophet is accepted in his own native place." Furious at this, they drove him to the brow of the hill, but he passed through their midst before they could hurl him down. The other readings also refer to the appointed prophet prevailing, rescue from the hand of the wicked, and love which endures all things. In the first reading, the Lord said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the

womb I knew you, I dedicated you. Tell the nations all that I command you. I am with you to deliver you." Psalm 71 declares, "I will sing of your salvation. O Lord, in your justice rescue me. On you I depend from birth." In the second reading, continuing from 1 Corinthians, Paul writes, "If I do not have love, I have nothing. Love does not seek its own interests, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things; it never fails,"

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!