

Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C

Lk 4:21-30

Dear Friends,

Today's gospel passage offers a dramatic turn of events. It is a look back and a plunge into the future.

It is hard to grasp the incredibly rapid transformation from **"All spoke highly of him."** (Lk 4:22) to they **"led him to the brow of the hill...to hurl him down headlong."** (Lk 4:29)

Their rejection was clear and emphatic. It had been foretold by Simeon in the Temple. **"Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted."** (Lk 2:34-35)

Looking to the future, the scene of furious and singular rejection will be repeated on a larger scale as Jesus arrives in Jerusalem. At the heart of both the earlier and later rejections, and the continuing rejection in our day, is Jesus' message of universal love. Jesus presents a God who offers hospitality to all. This image of God calls for change. A deep conversion must shatter the limited and comfortable religious vision expressed in the statement, **"Isn't this the son of Joseph?"** (Lk 4:22) Isn't he one of us? Doesn't he share our sense of privilege and prestige and exclusion as God's special people? The townsfolk quietly understood, just like the chief priests and scribes later on, that Jesus was a threat to their comfort and control. They would have gladly made Jesus a local hero if they could set the agenda. They were the first in a long history of Christianity to try to make Jesus over in their image. Their Jesus would fit right in with their prejudices and ignorance, their lack of concern for the **"other"** in all its many manifestations that still are expressed in today's headlines.

I recently heard a joke on this issue. They got rid of all the foreigners, immigrants and poor at the Nativity scene so only the donkeys and cows were left.

Jesus understood clearly. He faced a choice about the integrity of his message and the reality of the God of universal acceptance and hospitality. The **"Nazareth**

game” is played out in our churches, parishes, communities and Church even today. We are ever into the Jesus make-over. We definitely are looking for the more comfortable model.

“Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.” (Lk 24:30) He did the same with the hostile leaders who thought they were getting rid of him in the crucifixion. That time Jesus passed through their midst in the resurrection and ascension. He does the same to us. Yet he never forsakes us. He is always calling us, like Peter, to a place we would rather not go.

Walking with Jesus involves a relentless shattering of our horizons. It makes a steady and consistent expansion of our reluctance to accept the **“other.”** Jesus’ message never lets us rest in the comfortable home of our prejudices and blindness. Jesus is always asking us to share the hospitality of the Father for all.