



2/3/19 Luke 4:21-30 & Jer 1: 4-5, 17-19

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Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [On Being Jealous of God's Generosity](#)

[Jesus Reads from Isaiah](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Michael Quoist says: "First of all, let us examine our conscience. Are we not Christians out of self-interest and habit? We are like the congregation at the temple, we accept the Lord but on the condition that he uses his power for our benefit. In fact, what we want is a God who is an indulgence-bank on which we can draw the checks we need; we want a God who fulfills the desires we ourselves cannot satisfy; we want a God who can give us a better world without our having to dirty our hands working for it - otherwise 'What good is religion?' We are making a tragic mistake. God isn't a supermarket for indulgences, or some kind of sugar-daddy or an all-risk insurance policy. He isn't a 'providential' political leader for the foundation of a just society or a genial Minister of Finance for economic miracles. He is first and foremost a loving Father who waits to be loved freely by his sons (and daughters). Let us not make any mistakes here, otherwise the Lord will repeat his words to the faithful at the temple that no prophet is well received in his own country, and he'll

turn his back on us, leaving us to the indifference of our good conscience and our miles of selfish prayers" Pg. 33.

Quoist, Michael. [Living Words](#). Denville, NJ. Dimension Books. 1978.

[Luke 4:21-30](#)

21 Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, "Today this **scripture is fulfilled** in your hearing." 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the **gracious words** that came from his lips. "Isn't this **Joseph's son**?" they asked. 23 Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: '**Physician, heal yourself!** Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in **Capernaum**.'" 24 I tell you the truth," he continued, "no **prophet** is accepted in his **hometown**. 25 I assure you that there were many **widows** in Israel in **Elijah's** time, when the sky was shut for **three and a half years** and there was a **severe famine** throughout the land. 26 Yet **Elijah** was not sent to any of them, but to a **widow** in **Zarephath** in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with **leprosy** in the time of **Elisha the prophet**, yet not one of them was cleansed--only **Naaman the Syrian**." 28 All the people in the synagogue were **furious** when they heard this. 29 They got up, **drove him out** of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to **throw him down** the cliff. 30 But he **walked right through** the crowd and went on his way.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: God in Jesus, is bringing new news and the people were not ready to receive it that day. So Jesus walks away to find those who are ready. Am I ready?

PRAYER: Gracious Jesus, I am so tired of trying my old ways that get me nowhere. With your help I think I am ready for something new. You are giving me another new year to work on those things in my life that need to grow beyond where I am stuck. Every new day, week, month are growing opportunities. Please keep me aware that you are always there as I explore new ways to receive and give love. Amen

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

SCRIPTURE IS FULFILLED: The long awaited moment is here. The promises of God are being realized.

Try to imagine the exhilaration these words evoke in the synagogue that day. Remember a time when you heard someone saying all the right things and your heart leapt for joy. What was going on there?

GRACIOUS WORDS: Jesus' words were full of grace and people were amazed, yet spoke well of him. A person no one would ever expect renewed the promise of Isaiah in their hearing that day.

Has someone I never expected good news from, caught me by surprise like Jesus did the people that day? What was my initial reactions? Did my 'common' sense ever get in the way of believing the good news?

JOSEPH'S SON: Common sense kicks in now and people start to question. How could Joseph's son ask them to believe such good news?

Have I ever found yourself saying: "If it is too good to be true, it probably isn't"? Or; "Don't mess with my mind!"

PHYSICIAN: Often a physician's ability to heal is negatively affected if the person needing the healing is aware of the physician's human limitations. (See saying below)

Does knowing too much about my pastor, teacher or doctor affect their ability to serve me? Why do I think this is so? If I would have baby-sat Jesus in his youth, do you think this would get in the way of hearing what he had to say?

CAPERNAUM / HOMETOWN: Capernaum was the hometown of Peter and Jesus will make this his base of operations. Jesus knows the people and they know him. He begins his ministry offering his best to those closest to him.

Have I ever offered my best to those closest to me and had them question my abilities or motives? If so, how did that make me feel? How do I think Jesus felt as the people in anger wanted to throw him off the brow of the hill?

ZARAPHATH / SYRIA: Jesus mentions the time in the Hebrew Scriptures where prophets of the past were treated just like he was being treated now, and was an acknowledgment that he expected such a response.

Have I ever gone out on a limb, been rejected, and then found myself saying, "I knew this would happen?" How did that knowledge help me? How might it have helped Jesus? The new disciples?

PROPHET: The role of the prophet was to be someone who spoke to the people on God's behalf. They were people with a God's eye view of things.

Who are the prophets today? How do I know when I am hearing someone speak for God?

WIDOW / NAAMAN: These two foreigners, one a lowly widow the other a highly placed foreign official; represent the spectrum of possibilities of those who God chose to speak to in the days of old.

Can I think of examples today of these two people? One lowly, another important? Both foreigners?

ELIJAH / ELISHA: In 2 Kings 2:1-18 Elijah takes Elisha with him and is carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, leaving Elisha his mantle and a double portion of his spirit of prophecy.

What associations might Jesus have hoped that the people might make when he reminded them of these two prophets? What associations do I make?

THREE AND A HALF YEARS: Seven was thought to be a complete number and was often used as a metaphor for godly things. Elijah was told (1 Kgs. 17: 1) that no rain would fall for three and a half years which made famine very probable. It was understood that this was to awaken the people to their errant ways.

In what ways have I missed the mark and needed something to get me back on track? Can I remember a time when I were faced with dire want and awakened to what the really important things in life were?

SEVERE FAMINE / LEPROSY: Famine and disease, two deadly realities, were alleviated for the widow and for Naaman. The outsiders accepted the prophets and were taken care of by God's prophets, while the insiders ignored the words of God spoken by these same prophets.

Why does it always seem easier for the outsider to see what is going on? Have I ever been an 'outsider' and saw something that the 'insiders' rejected or ignored? What was going on?

FURIOUS: Using their own scriptures, Jesus deflects the peoples' rejection. This enrages them to the point of murder.

Can I remember a time when someone used my own truths to confront me? Why does this approach seem to have such power to enrage?

DROVE HIM OUT / THROW HIM DOWN: So early in his ministry, Jesus is on the defensive. He makes the people look at their truth in a way they are not prepared to do at this time. Any truth that is too far ahead of where people are at the time becomes very threatening, and is often violently rejected.

Do I think Jesus was aware of this dynamic? What do I think the new disciples thought of all this? If I were one of those new disciples, would I rethink my commitment to following Jesus?

WALKED RIGHT THROUGH: The people were so agitated and enraged that Jesus was able to walk right through the mob and leave. He will shortly leave home and set up his home base in Capernaum.

Have I ever seen an agitated mob? What do I think made it possible for Jesus to just walk away from this scene? What do I think was going on in Jesus' mind and heart as he walked away?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Lk. 4:24 // Mt. 13:54, 57; Mk. 6:2; Jn. 7:15; Jn. 4:4; Lk. 4:25 // 1 Kgs. 17:1, 18:1-2; Lk. 4:27 // 2 Kgs. 5:14; Lk. 4:29 // Jn. 7:30; Lk. 4:30 // Jn. 8:59;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Jer. 1:4-5, 17-19; [Ps. 71: 1-6, 15-17](#); 1 Cor. 12: 31 – 13:13; Revised Common Lectionary: Jer. 1:4-10; [Ps. 71:1-6](#); 1 Cor. 13:1-13; Lk. 4:21-30;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

So the prophetic vocation is first to help the faith community to embrace a loss that it does not want to admit and then, secondly, to proclaim to the people a hope that they cannot dare to imagine. Fr. Bryan Massingale

The prophet is not a divine “ambassador pleni-potentiary” from God, who alone has independent or absolute access to God’s plan. The prophet is part of the people to whom he or she is sent, nurtured from birth in the religious and social wisdom of that people, product of its history, participant in its prayer, inheritor of its dreams, victim of and sometimes even sharer in its sins and errors. It is because the prophet is one with the people that he or she can speak for this people to God and for God to this people. Sr. Sandra Schneiders

A true spiritual authority challenges us with our own potential our own vision, our own promise of glory. A true spiritual authority leaves us busy thinking our own thoughts rather than merely mouthing his. The one sure way to spot false authority in spiritual matters is the suggestion that your troubles are over and that you have arrived, that the work of your imagination is complete. A true spiritual authority leaves us with our own work to do. There is no final ending. Pg. 164.

Jones, Alan. Exploring Spiritual Direction. Boston. Cowley Pub. 1999.

Jesus’ synagogue sermon (Lk 4.16–30) Replacing Mark’s account (Mk 6.2–6) of Jesus’ rejection in Nazareth, this depiction of Jesus’ preaching in the local synagogue is generally recognized as the Gospel’s signature story: Jesus announces that Isaiah’s predictions about the one “anointed” (4.18: the Greek *echrisen* is related to the term “Christ”) are fulfilled in his ministry; the Gentile mission is suggested; and the Jews in the synagogue violently reject him. Rather than manifest the “recovery of sight to the blind” or the leaping “the oppressed go free” (4.18), Jesus first goes on the offensive against the people in the synagogue and next cites two precedents to his ministry: the prophets Elijah and Elisha performed miracles not for Jews but for Gentiles. Luke then describes how the congregation was “filled with rage,” “drove Jesus out of the town,” and sought to “hurl him off the cliff” (4.28–29). Christian sermons occasionally explain the fury of the congregation by claiming that the Jews, as not only ethnocentric but also xenophobic, wanted to reserve the messianic benefits for themselves; therefore, they seek to kill Jesus because he has a positive message for the Gentiles. Such conclusions misread Jewish history. Jews in general had positive relations with Gentiles, as witnessed by the Court of the Gentiles in the Jerusalem Temple, Gentiles as patrons of synagogues (7.1–10), and Gentiles as god-fearers (Acts 10). They also expected the redemption of righteous Gentiles, who would come streaming to Zion, as Zech 8.23 states, “In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’” The rejection of Jesus is not prompted by xenophobia; it is prompted by Jesus’ refusal to provide his hometown with messianic blessings. Pg. 107. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

For messianic interpretations of Isa 61, see 1QH 18.14; 11QMelch 1.18. Spirit . . . is upon me, 3.22. Release to the captives, ironic, given John’s imprisonment (3.19–20). Luke omits Isaiah’s reference to “the day of vengeance” (61.2). 22: Joseph’s son, see 2.33,48; 3.23. 23: Doctor, cure yourself, a similar proverb appears in Gen. Rab. 23.4. You did at Capernaum, Luke does not describe these events; see 4.31–41. Capernaum (from “Kefar-Nahum,” Nahum’s village), a fishing center on the Sea of Galilee. 24: Truly (Gk/Heb “amen,” lit., “so be it”); the only Hebrew word Luke uses), a term usually found at the end of prayers, but Jesus’ usage is not unique (e.g., Jer 28.6). 25–26: See 1 Kings 17.8–16. 27: 2 Kings 5.1–4. 28: Filled with rage, not because of beneficence shown to Gentiles but to Jesus’ withholding his powers from them. 29: Cliff, Nazareth is not built on a cliff. Pgs. 106-107. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

“It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work. . . . We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future that is not our own. -Archbishop Oscar Romero

Like many in the prophetic tradition, Jesus preached God’s imminent approach (*hanan*) in *hesed we met* (Mk. 1: 5, Lk. 4: 14-21), and he called upon his listeners to rely on it totally (Mk. 1: 15, Mt. 13: 44-45). This brings us back to the scriptural stories of people who believed him and through their faith were opened to a power greater than mental and physical illnesses. (That is, they were healed of physical and mental affliction), a power greater than death itself.

Peters, Dr. Carmichael. A Gadamerian Reading of Karl Rahner’s Theology of Grace and Freedom. NY. Catholic Scholars Press. 2000. Pg. 92.

Jesus’ detractors are those who find their authority in the Scriptures: Jesus turns their authority upside down....Their argument is derived from the written Scriptures, but Jesus’ response implies that they have erred, both from their own perspective of the sole authority of written texts and from the perspective of the greater authority of the oral tradition. Pg. 209.

Schmiedewind, William M. How the Bible Became a Book: . Cambridge, UK. Cambridge Univ. Press. 2004.

In the Mediterranean world of antiquity everyone had a proper place that was established by birth. No one was ever expected to become something better than or to improve on the lot of the parents. This fact is the basic foundation of honor, the public claim to worth, and the public acknowledgment of that worth by others. Each child inherits, carries on, and is expected to safeguard the family’s honor....This even as Luke reports it reflects the tensions this kind of behavior (of Jesus) would raise in any tiny Mediterranean village. Pilch, John J. The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle C. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1997. Page 28.

Scripture scholars agree that in Luke 4:14-19, Jesus in the Nazareth synagogue proclaimed his own mission using the words of Isaiah 61:1-2. But why, after he proclaimed his mission, was the whole audience filled with indignation to the point of wanting to hurl Jesus over the edge of the mountain (Lk. 4:30)? The Jewish listeners wanted the Messiah to be vengeful to the Romans, to the Sidonians, to the Syrians-to all but themselves. But in quoting Isaiah, Jesus skipped the sentence in 61:2 which speaks of God's vengeance on enemies, and instead declared that God's "favor" rested on all-Romans, Sidonians and Syrians alike (Lk. 4:26-27). Jesus angered his Jewish listeners because he was proclaiming the end of vengeful punishment and the reign of a Messiah whose "favor" shines on the just and the unjust. As Robert Jewett explains, by skipping the sentence regarding God's vengeance and thus placing himself in opposition to the vengeance tradition, Jesus violated the literal interpretation of scripture prevalent in his time.

Linn, Dennis, et al. *Good Goats*. Mahwah, NY. Paulist Press. 1994. Pg. 57.

Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1, Logion 6: Jesus Says, "A prophet is not acceptable in his own country, neither does a physician cure those who know him." See also: *The Gospel of Thomas, Logion 31*.

Throckmorton, Burton H. Jr. *Gospel Parallels*. Thomas Nelson Inc. Pub. NY. 1949. Page 15.

In an early church manual known as the Didascalia, we find in chapter 12 a discussion on how a bishop was to preach at worship: "And you, O bishop, tell him (the visiting bishop) that he preach to your people. Indeed, the intercession and admonition of strangers is very helpful, especially because it is written: 'There is no prophet that is acceptable in his country'".

Ehrman, Bart. *After the New Testament*. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Page 358.

"To demand that others should provide you with textbook answers is like asking a strange woman to give birth to your baby. There are insights that can be born only of your own pain, and they are the most precious." - Janusz Korczak

People will recognize us as speaking with authority only when they sense that, like Jesus, we are under divine authority ourselves, that our message is not our own, that our actual lives stand behind the message, that our words are meant to reveal God and not ourselves, that we love others enough to give up protecting ourselves, that our real concern is God's kingdom and not how we impress others, that we consider the community bigger than ourselves, and that we are willing to sweat blood rather than get bitter or walk away.

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. *Ministering with authority*. The Catholic Messenger, 2/6/03. Page 10.

"It is one thing to say with the prophet Amos, 'Let justice roll down like mighty waters,' and quite another to work out the irrigation system. Clearly there is more certainty in the recognition of wrongs than there is in the prescription for their cure." - William Sloane Coffin

"The poor tell us who we are, the prophets tell us who we could be, so we hide the poor, and kill the prophets." -- Phil Berrigan

As individuals participate in these webs of community and culture, they may experience reality that does not seem to "fit" their embodied knowledge and encultured cosmos. Some may simply ignore these misfit perceptions. Others who persist in attending to them will strive toward discovery. Whether they are physicists, anthropologists, prophets, healers, poets, or geographers, discoverers are people who participate in the culture and cosmos of their tradition yet have an intuition that some experience of reality is not accounted for by that tradition or theory, and they are driven by a desire to reconcile the cosmology of their community with the reality they have experienced. There are risks, but discoverers are awed by reality and are restless until they can stretch the words of their language or theory of cosmos to account for what they have perceived. When communities are open to discovery, to new experience and perceptions of reality, discoverers are encouraged and discovery is celebrated. Then communities are not open, discovery is denied and the discoverer is excommunicated. Pg. 914.

Scanderrett-Leatherman, Craig. *Anthropology, Polanyi, and Afropentecostal Ritual*. Zygon. 12/08

Prophets help the community see through the present, to recognize God's action breaking into our life. James D. and Evelyn E. Whitehead

A prophet is one who keeps God free for people and who keeps people free for God. Richard Rohr

Ironically, a prophet must be educated inside the system in order to have the freedom to critique that very system. You have to know the rules of any tradition, and you have to respect those rules enough to know why they do exist--and thus how to break them properly, for the sake of a larger and more essential value. Richard Rohr

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2010*. Pgs.36-39. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007*. Pgs. 46-19. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)