

**When you think about it:**

**it's common sense to take care of your family and your friends first...**

**and *then* you can take care of everyone else...**

**When you think about it:**

**taking care of 'your people' first has been done from the beginning of time...**

**it's just the way things are...what's the big deal????**

**When you really think about it:**

**Jesus' teachings often contradicts supposed common sense and**

**usually seeks to change the way things always have been...**

**and today's reading shows what a very big deal that is!**

**So that you can understand what I am talking about,**

**I'd like to briefly paraphrase today's Gospel:**

**Imagine that guy in the synagogue and he has just heard Jesus read from the prophet**

**Isaiah and he could be thinking to himself:**

**"Wow...he's one of our boys, wooh! wisdom! such gracious words...**

**IF this guy is the real deal, if he is indeed the one favored by God...well... He's our ticket to paradise!!**

**Who better to benefit from his connection to the 'big guy upstairs' than us?!**

**his family and friends????" I love ya, brother!**

**That could be what the people in the synagogue were thinking that day....**

**that's why they all spoke well of him....at first...**

**But then....they really start to think about it...**

**"oh...but wait a minute, something is fishy here...**

**isn't he Joseph's son? Where did he learn to talk like that? He's getting a little too big in**

**his britches... Is he really telling the truth? Why isn't he in his father's workshop,**

**carrying on the family business...his dad is getting old, he should be helping him!**

**Not out here pretending to be all hootie tootie....**

**all smart and holy...wait a minute...what is going on here?????**

**ok, Jesus, if you're so smart...if you've got some connection to Yahweh...**

**if you are the real deal:**

**perform some miracles for us...**

**heal our sick like we have heard that you did in Carpernaum...**

**Because if you really did it for them, complete strangers,**

**you certainly should be able to help us out: your family and close friends....**

**Ahh...but Jesus doesn't take the bait...he banter with them:**

**Now picture in your mind's eye him responding:**

**'No prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town.'**

**Even if I did heal some folks, you still wouldn't believe in me...**

**because in your eyes, I'm only Joseph's son...**

**You have already put me in a box, telling me what I can do and what I cannot do...**

**and to be a messenger of God's liberating love, is not, according to you,**

**in my job description.**

**And besides...just because you're my friends and neighbors and family...doesn't mean that**

**I or Yahweh will show you any special favors...**

**Yahweh doesn't love or favor you any more than anybody else,**

**just because we are from the same home town,**

**just because we are Jews...**

**Yahweh loves EVERYONE....everyone...who is OPEN to God's healing love...**

**and you do you remember the widow in Zarephath in Sidon who survived the famine and drought when Elijah was alive?**

**She wasn't a Jew, yet the prophet went to her home and she was provided for...**

**Remember all those lepers that walked the streets of Israel when Elisha was alive?**

**There were hundreds of them! all Jewish! but Yahweh healed none of them!**

**instead he healed the one gentile leper, Naaman the Syrian!!**

**It is not because of the group you belong to or the town you come from**

**that Yahweh heals or provides for you, Jesus says:**

**God heals you because of your open and contrite hearts...."**

**and with that...the people in the synagogue become enraged with him and want to kill him!**

**Why were they so angry?**

**Because, according to Jesus being the chosen people didn't mean**

**being special or being loved more so that you could get more perks and special treatment..**

**Being a chosen people, meant that you are 'chosen' for a special task:**

**and for Jesus that meant the Jews were to share God's love with EVERYONE....**

**even those, especially those, whom they considered**

**unworthy, unclean, unloved and unlovable.....**

**This unboundaried Love is one of the major themes Luke's Gospel:**

**God love's all people...but especially those judged by others as**

**unloved and unlovable.**

**Remember the way Luke tells the Birth of Jesus:**

**the long awaited Messiah is born to a poor couple in a stable**

**far from family and friends....**

**The birth of this Messiah was announced to scummy, low life shepherds**

**who do not obey the laws of the temple...**

**From the very beginning of the Gospel,  
Luke is telling his listeners that God's love knows no boundaries...  
and if you think you have a 'special in'  
with the Lord of the Universe...  
you had better think again...**

**That is why they wanted to kill him...**

**The Jews in his hometown synagogue didn't like hearing that God loved their enemies...  
that Yahweh could heal their lepers and provide food for their widows...  
God was supposed to hate *THOSE* people as much as they did...**

**So think about it....**

**is there any group of people, those of a particular ethnicity, orientation, socio-economic  
level, that you think God is supposed to dislike, if not hate, as much as you do?**

**Is there any group of people, let's say those in prison or sleeping under the viaducts,  
or those in a particular nation or belonging to a particular political party  
that God assuredly dislikes as much as you do?**

**If there are ....you had better think again.**

**One of the primary messages of today's Gospel is that any human boundary that we might  
create means nothing to God...**

**No one is more favored, more loved, more liked than anyone else in the eyes and the heart  
of the holy one.**

**It doesn't matter to the Lord of the Cosmos a tiddly wink where you worship, or not....  
it doesn't matter what group you belong to or not...**

**it doesn't even matter how much you put in the collection basket  
or how well you follow the rules...**

**It only matters how well you can love, how large you can love, how often you can love.  
and when you think about THAT....It's a LOT to think about  
and it is a REALLLY BIG deal....amen.**