

Luke 4: 21-30

**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 this not Joseph’s son?”**

**He said to them:**

**“Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb:**

**Doctor, cure yourself!**

**And you will say:**

**“Do here also in your home town 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 home town.**

**But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah,  
when the heaven was shut up for 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 him 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 he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.**

## **Meditation**

**I'm a middle child.**

**I have an older brother and a younger sister...  
both of whom were a lot more rebellious than I,  
when we were growing up.**

**As a result, it was well known among us that I was the  
favorite child!**

**And that favored position, I have to admit, did come with some perks...  
But being considered the favorite child also cause some resentment  
among us because it implied, at least to my siblings,  
that Mom and Dad loved me more than they...**

**And that is what some people think when they hear that the Jews  
are God's chosen people...  
Some folks, both Jew and non Jew alike, think that being chosen  
means being loved more by God  
and means having a special status,  
a few more perks, if you will**

**We know that is true because of our reading today.**

**When the hometown crowd first hears Jesus read and preach in the synagogue they are  
thrilled!**

**“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the**

**gracious words that came from his mouth....”**

**But then things quickly went south.**

**Wait a minute you can imagine them thinking...Is not this Joseph’s son?**

**Kids weren’t supposed to do better than their parents.**

**Who the heck does he think he is?**

**Jesus picks up on their murmuring and answers them:**

**“Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb:**

**Doctor, cure yourself!”**

**Apparently the townfolk have heard that he healed some  
folks in the neighboring town of Capernaum...**

**but he has yet to heal anyone in his own village or family...**

**And that upsets them.**

**And they want some special treatment...**

**they want some perks from this great healer...**

**their hometown boy...**

**They want to be first priority for all the miracles he can do!**

**But then Jesus reminds them Elijah and Elisha:**

**two of Israel’s greatest prophets.**

**Elijah helped a non Jewish widow find food during a great famine**

**when there were starving Jews and Elijah did not help his own...**

**and Elisha cured a leper who was not Jewish and there were plenty of Jewish lepers who  
would have welcomed a healing...**

**and that makes his hometown people angry....**

**They thought that being God's chosen people would give them the perks:  
first to the food when they are hungry...  
and first to the healing when they are sick...**

**but that wasn't how Elijah or Elisha or Jesus understood  
what it meant to be chosen.**

**According to theologian and Scripture Scholar John Shea:**

**“Jesus reminds the Nazarenes of an unpopular strand of Jewish tradition. They were not  
chosen by God to form a closed society and become the beneficiaries of divine blessings of  
abundance...They were chosen to bring the benefits of the one God to all people.  
The focus is not on themselves but on what they can do for others.”**

**Go figure.**

**That did not go over well in Jesus' day and  
I know plenty of Christians today  
who wouldn't be too happy with this perspective either.**

**There are many Christians who believe that as long as we belong to the right group or tribe  
or denomination ...we are God's favorite, God's chosen...  
and will be saved after we die....**

**But Jesus disputes that line of thinking...  
As Christians...if we are God's special people...and that is debatable...  
it isn't at all about us:  
it is all about us being there for others:**

**feeding,  
healing,  
and liberating...  
here and now.**

**Our specialness or chosenness...  
is in fact a special obligation  
that requires us to serve others.**

**Euwww...not sure I want that!**

**This is what made the Jews so angry in our reading today.  
It is why they wanted to kill Jesus...  
because he was serving, healing and feeding others...  
and expected them to do that as well...  
and so it shall be for us.**

**Being chosen, Being saved isn't about find a place of honor  
in the hierarchy of heaven after we die,  
but about being the first ones to step forward and offer a lending hand,  
a listening ear  
a supportive shoulder.**

**It is about being proactive with food and lodging and friendship  
with those who are shut out and displaced.**

**It is about standing with the oppressed  
seeking justice for those condemned unjustly,  
for giving voice to those who cannot speak for themselves.**

**and in our day and age,  
this includes all of Creation.**

**The animals and the ancient trees,  
the rivers and mountains and fish and the air that we breathe  
need us to speak for them, to legislate for them, to honor them  
as kin in the great and sacred web of creation...**

**It is not about simply me and mine...  
it is about all of us, the whole Earth community  
being loved, being chosen by the Holy...**

**It is not about simply me and mine  
being special or first  
but about all of us taking care of each other,  
not taking more than we need,  
and making sure that the least among us has a seat at the table.**

**In that way we are all God's favorite...  
and for that we can say, "thank you!" amen.**