

30 January – 5 February 2022 Luke 4: 21-30

Dare to speak

Read the passage from Luke. It is written below.

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 not this 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.

Bible notes

It must have been incredibly exciting for the people of Jesus' home village to recognise that they had someone special in their midst. Who is this man? A rabbi? A prophet? The messiah? Whichever, this small village in Galilee initially receives Jesus' words with warmth and grace. Yet, almost from the outset, the people raise questions: isn't this remarkable young man the son of the carpenter?

Jesus seems alert to the way his audience might have mixed reactions to him. This is his hometown, the place that has nurtured him. He is aware that some will think that he should be able to work at least the equivalent wonders that have been seen among the 'strangers' over in Capernaum. In a small-town world these rivalries matter. Yet, Jesus surprises those with whom he has grown up, and indeed us. He reminds his audience, through examples such as the widow at Zarephath, that God's generosity is often shown to outsiders rather than to the inside crowd.

In short, Jesus reminds his hometown that God's grace and generosity is not reserved for those who – whether family, friends or neighbours – think they deserve it. God's grace is risky, perhaps even scandalous. This is what Jesus discovers when he speaks out and tells this truth to those who think they know him the best. It's enough to get you run out of town.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Jesus annoys his home community by reminding them that God's message of love and justice is for everyone – including outsiders. Could this be like one of your ministry team going to preach at the local mosque? How often do we say, help begins at home? It is not difficult to find headlines that criticise the help given to refugees or homeless families, or the benefits for single parents or disabled people. How would we behave if a convicted murderer walked into church this morning? Or a homeless person with addiction issues? Are these the outsiders with whom God asks us to share the good news?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



Questions

- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus spoke out in challenging circumstances?
- Where is it easiest/most difficult to find and use your voice?
- How do you respond when voices around you are challenging?

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

A prayer of thanksgiving

Lord, we thank you for not leaving us content.
You do not allow us to wallow in self-satisfaction,
thinking we are in control.
Instead, you unsettle us with your truth.
You disturb us into new ways of thinking.
Thank you, Lord, for continuing to challenge us;
may we prove worthy of your attention,
able to accept your truth and act upon it.
Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

God of love, help us to be loud,
to speak your word,
to spread your love,
to be a voice for the voiceless.
Help us to be quiet,
to listen to you,
to listen to those that most need to be heard.
Let it be so.
Amen