

Double Take

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time year C

Luke 4:21-30

This incident is the continuation of last Sunday's gospel incident.

What an interesting, dramatic incident.

Jesus experiences what some Hollywood or political stars experience:
an abrupt plummet in popularity.

I will mention no names.... (crash and burn)

The only difference is

that there will not be an episode of "Where Are They Now?" about Jesus.

What exactly happens in this incident?

The crowd does a double take on Jesus.

Jesus has just finished reading a passage from Isaiah,
and boldly declared that

- it speaks of him
- he is the fulfillment of the prophecies

The crowd is in awe of him.

"All were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth."

Then in a New York—or Nazareth—minute, their perspective slips.

What actually happens is that they no longer look with eyes of faith
—which see beneath the surface, and lead to awe,
and look with eyes that only see the surface.

"Wait a minute, 'Isn't this the son of Joseph?'"

Jesus detects the slip, the fading of faith in them,
and directly responds to it.

Jesus underscores what happens

when faith fades or we step outside of faith.

In faith we have a deep conviction of the truth of God, Jesus—
but with no proof.

On a bad faith day, we can sometimes want proof.

Jesus sees this happening in the crowd.

**"He said to them, 'Surely you will quote me this proverb,
Physician, cure yourself.'"**

Jesus puts the finger on their surfacing desire for proof.

He then lets it be known clearly that he cannot be welcomed in this way.

The only way to welcome Jesus is in faith, thanks to which we let him be.

He also lets it be known that they have lacked faith before.

**“When the people in the synagogue heard this,
they were all filled with fury.”**

What a striking reaction.

It is a reaction grounded in arrogance, in pride.

Pride places us in the center, as the measure.

Jesus sought to draw them beyond themselves, and they refused.

So outraged are they that they want to hurl Jesus over the cliff: wow!

If we are here, it is because we have the gift of faith.

We may not always know it.

It is not something one feels.

It is something one knows—thanks to faith.

I realize this sounds terribly subjective.

We have been a given a gift,

for whose activating we are responsible.

The gift of faith enables us to welcome and to know God, Jesus.

How do we activate faith? By *wanting* to believe.

“Lord I want to believe”

As Saint Augustine says,

“Wanting to believe is already believing”

Put that on your fridge.

It is truly that simple.

Living, that is, *loving* faith puts us in intimate relationship with God.

Thus, all we must do to experience intimacy with God is *want* it,

and God will take care of the rest.

Wanting is a deliberate opening of the heart.

Indeed, open hearts lead to deeply satisfied hearts.

Let us dare open our hearts—tired or overjoyed or broken as we may be.

All God needs is the slightest of openings.

As Saint Teresa of Avila (+1582) once prayed

to this merciful, resourceful God,

**“You are happy if I give only a single second of honest prayer,
turning that second into a seed of love.”**