

4th Sunday Ordinary Time "C" 2010

I. "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" Didn't he know every rock and hollows on the hillside behind the village? Hadn't walked the path to the synagogue beside their own boys; grown up under their watchful eyes? Sure, Nazareth was a small place in a remote land on the road to someplace more exciting.

II. Most of the people who gathered that Sabbath had heard rumors of healings in Capernaum; now they wanted the same. After all, Jesus was one of their own. But what do they get? Jesus reminds them of the story of the prophet Elijah who provided food for the widow of Zaraphath, a pagan from the land of Sidon; then to add insult to injury, He reminds them of the prophet Elisha who healed Namaan, a pagan from Syria. The Nazarenes are "filled with fury" as the Gospel says. God's grace pour out not to Jews, not to friends and neighbors, but to unbelievers, strangers in a strange land.

III. We meet the Nazarenes in Scripture and view them across the gulf of two millennia; separated by language and custom. But are we not at times like them? There's a Chinese greeting, which you may have seen on a fortune cookie, that works both as a blessing and a curse. It says "May you live in interesting times". We live in such times. More than many other generations, we are being stretched beyond what is familiar. How many of you have children or grandchildren living together "without benefit of marriage" as the old saying goes? Whoever thought we'd be arguing about gay marriage? Who ever thought a black man would be

president in their lifetime? Personally, the way my life has been turned upside down the last six months, is inconceivable. Our boundaries, values and ideas are constantly being challenged and re-defined especially when our core values are rooted in eternal truths.

IV. If we are honest with ourselves, we sometimes prefer a God that will do our bidding rather than expect us to His bidding. Don't we all think at times why doesn't God reward his friends and punish our enemies? When Jesus spoke that day in the synagogue of Nazareth He gave notice that His Ministry would embrace the stranger and include the outsider. As last week's gospel ended and this week's started, we have experienced this Scripture fulfilled in our hearing; might even feel the sand shifting under our feet, traveling to someplace more exciting and following the God we cannot tame.