

Amy's Email Epistle – Thursday, September 27, 2018

Luke 4:17-20

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

Luke gives us a scene of Jesus returning to Nazareth and teaching in the synagogue there in his home town. Immediately following this reading people are amazed, they are proud, they praise him, and they claim him as their own. "Look at our hometown boy done good."

I imagine it feels really good to them, the way it feels to me to hear these words. I mean good news to the poor - yes! Proclaim release to the captives - right on! Recovery of sight to the blind - amen! To let the oppressed go free! Hallelujah!! And best of all the year of the Lord's favor - that means Jubilee - that means everyone is freed from debt. Yes, yes, and more yes. I am so so good with all of that. I imagine they were too. It feels good to hear the Good news doesn't it?

But Jesus does not stop there. He does not allow them to stop there. He goes on to remind them that although there were many widows during the great famine in Israel in Elijah's day God sent Elijah to only one, and though there were many lepers in Israel during Elisha's day he was sent to only one. When they heard this Luke tells us they were filled with rage and attacked Jesus. They drove him to the edge of town, which was built on a hill, intending to cast him off the top, but he slipped away like a mist.

Why do you suppose they went from one extreme to the other so fast? What bothered them so much? Was it because they thought Jesus was saying this Good news wasn't for them? Or was it because they understood that he was saying it is for everyone?

Elijah's widow and Elisha's leper were outsiders. Outside the faith. They were helped and healed by the prophets and they were not a part of the sanctioned community. Were they so angry....angry to the point of killing Jesus then and there because he had the audacity to say that in order to be a community of God you must let go these man-made boundaries and let everyone in. God's love extends beyond our borders.

Maybe that little community of faith had become so consumed with their needs that they had forgotten to look beyond themselves. Maybe. They were driven to a murderous rage, a rage that not only would harm others, but without a doubt would destroy them because they could not handle hearing that the Good News was not simply just about them.

How about you? Are you ready to recognize the outsider as your sister and brother? Are you able to welcome the stranger? Are you willing to accept that church, God, Jesus, Spirit and Love knows no

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borders? Does not subscribe to our human instinct to divide, label, and judge? God loves the poor, the wealthy, men, women, gay, straight, transgendered, cis-gendered, black, white, brown, yellow, God loves all. All means All. Does that bring you joy or does it enrage you?

Anytime we do not allow an "outsider" to be a full participating member of the faith community we are pushing Jesus toward the cliff.

Anytime we insist that the only way someone is worthy of God is that they become a member of our faith community we are pushing Jesus toward the cliff.

Anytime we begrudge someone their joy, their freedom, their jubilee we are pushing Jesus toward the cliff.

The trouble with that little community of faith in Nazareth who at first welcomed and saw Jesus as their hometown boy, "Joseph's son" ,was they did not see him at all. They saw what they wanted to see. When he revealed the truth they could not handle it. They didn't like the message that not only is God's love for everyone, but if they were truly to be a community of God they would have to change how they behave, they would have to break down the barriers between insider and outsider.

What about you? Are you willing to be transformed?

peace,

Amy