

Reflection Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January

## **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 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 hometown. 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.

As a young preacher, many years ago I found the phrase "no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown" a strange thing to read for it was not what I found amongst the congregation I had grown up within. When I started preaching they were always gracious and listened to what I was saying. It was a gracious fellowship or perhaps I did not challenge them enough.

Initially the crowd wondered with amazement at the "gracious words that came out of his mouth," as they listened to Jesus. Then suddenly things changed. Jesus recognised from his knowledge of the history of his people that there were times when his own people felt let down by God. Jesus pointed out lessons from the past to express that which he was about in the present.

The message Jesus had was a message with a wider parameter than one race of people, one geographic region. Yet His message was not counter to the things of the past but building upon what had gone on which many had not recognised as the things of God. Through Elijah and Elisha God had shown compassion and care upon Gentiles.

It is not that God changes but that he opens up to his people new challenges to the practices of the past. What the Church and the people of Christ need to do is discern that which is of God and that which is of human desire and comfort.

To speak out is to risk rejection; to speak out is to risk oppression; to speak out is to risk persecution; to speak out is to help someone else find liberty; to keep quiet is to let someone else suffer.

I am writing this on Holocaust Memorial Day, 27<sup>th</sup> January.

In Germany in the 1930's there were many who did not challenge the persecution of the Jewish community. Many stood by said nothing and did nothing to protect their neighbours.

The name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer comes to mind as one who stood up to be counted. A German Lutheran pastor spoke out against the Nazi regime and was imprisoned and then executed. His death just days before the American forces liberated the camp in which he was held.

His stance was motivation to others in the future such as Martin Luther King. Jesus was about liberation, healing, freedom and justice and his message took him the way of suffering and death. Others have expressed the same message in different ways but often with the same result.

"And he opened not his mouth," Isa 53:7 – The only time those words applied to Jesus was for his own defence, at the end of his life and not for the defence of others – that is a challenge to me and to many.