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## *But He Passed Through the Midst of Them and Went on His Way*

**A sermon by CanonCarolynne Williams**  
**Epiphany 4 – Year C**

The son of God was spreading Good News. He was bringing relief to the captives.

On last week, in our lesson, we were reminded of what he told the people in his hometown Nazareth.

These words are familiar to us as Christians. “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...”

Jesus was reading from the scroll to the people in the synagogue. When he finished, he sat down.

Who were the people in the temple and what had they heard about this man?

What had others outside of the temple heard?

They had heard what he had done in Capernaum and they asked him if he was going to do the same in Nazareth. Was this son of Mary and Joseph, this prophet, going to heal the sick; was he going to exemplify the example of loving those who did not love him? Was he going to continue to spread the good news that he was becoming famous for?

Those who had the privilege of being in his presence were skeptical. They had to “see to believe” and even after hearing, seeing, and being close to this person, this man, this child of God, they were not convinced of who he was and what his role was in that place.

After all he was in hometown, Nazareth, and folk that knew him and his parents felt that they knew this man and could imagine what he had to say.

They, the townspeople, could not allow themselves to give a thought to this prophet, this man, because his message was not one that they wanted to hear.

His message was about loving those in spite of; his message was exemplifying what others had decided that “they just could not do.”

Many of them, I imagine did not agree with this man. Even more had to be angry with someone. So, they cast their anger upon this man that they did not want to hear or try to understand.

They had to reject this man because of what he represented in their presence. So, they rejected him.

They “had to be angry with someone.” It is human to be angry. It is a natural part of the human condition to be in a place of rejection when there is something or someone that does not fit into our world.

So, he became the one who spoke out and loved those who were unlovable, by living into the presence of love within him—and he was crucified for it.

His message, in addition to healing folk who were sick and enabling the blind to see, and walking with those who were not aware of his presence and surrounding those whom he loved with a presence that was like non-other, he was not welcomed.

The good news is that this thing called love is still the message today. It is still available to all of us who will consider the possibility of being loved by a presence that we have never seen.

That is, being able to see the face of God, in others. We have never seen this presence of love except through the eyes of others.

Being rejected, as he was, is a two way street. We have ways of rejecting those things and people and ways of being that we do not want on our path and in our lives.

Rejection is something that brings to the surface all manner of good and the not so good. Jesus, in his ministry on earth, was bringing about the GOOD News.

His example of living, being and carrying out the good news, translates into untold possibilities.

When it comes to communicating with one another. It translates into something that, at times, appears to be unidentifiable.

Rejection is not inevitable. When I say that rejection is a two way street, I am speaking from a place of trust. When one experiences rejection, one comes to a place of calm and love, and remembering that model of living that is given to us, all of the time. The good news being all around us, even in the midst of.

Not fearing and being present to those who are in need of your love and my love. Love in our families and love beyond those places that oftentimes the best of the best cannot beyond. Just because...

In 2010 or 2011, one of the Cathedral EfM educational groups was co-led by one lay person and one clergy person. Margaret Jackson was the lay leader and I was the clergy leader. If the truth be told, she led and I learned to lead this group from her. I learned a heck of a lot, along with others in the group. We studied together for four years. We studied the scriptures and followed the curriculum put in place by the University of the South at Sewanee. All of the human emotions that one can experience, we covered with one another. After the completion of the four years, several of us from the group went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

We were taking a course at St. George's College. Our accommodations were on the campus, as was the cathedral where we worshipped and received Eucharist.

The portion of this pilgrimage that came to mind with our lesson today was being in Nazareth, the hometown of Jesus. The place where they challenged him about what he was teaching, preaching and how HIS MIRACULOUS healings were taking place.

As we entered the hometown of Nazareth and were taken to the convent where we were staying along with 23 other people from California—Coronado, to be exact—we were struck by many things. We settled in and went in various directions into town. As we walked, I noticed a billboard on top of one of the buildings, that was in the center of town sort of like the town square that was no more than four or five stories high. The billboard read something like this. I paraphrase loosely: "If you are a Christian, and you believe in him, you are not welcome here."

"If you are a CHRISTIAN, and you believe in him, you are not welcome here." That billboard could be seen from almost any direction, because it was in the middle of town. It was on the town square.

Some of us were surprised to read such words and others were stunned. Later, permission had to be granted for me to preach/celebrate the Eucharist at the convent where we were staying- because I am a woman and probably other reasons as well.

We all knew and understood and believed and remembered the words of our epistle for today. “For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part: but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways, for now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope. And love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

Amen.

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