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Monday's Gospel: Welcoming Jesus' Words

Gospel for Monday in the 3rd
Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 4:24-30*)

Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many

lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But passing through the midst of them he went away.

Commentary

Jesus spoke these words in the synagogue of Nazareth. He knew this site very well thanks to the many years he had attended it accompanied by Mary and Joseph to pray and listen to God's Word. But his presence in the Synagogue now is quite different. The time has come to

make himself known and he does so as a prophet: “no prophet is acceptable in his own country.”

Those listening to him were familiar with the history of Israel when he mentioned the examples of Elijah and the widow in Zarephath and the prophet Elisha and Naaman the Syrian.

The people there turn against Jesus, filled with anger. They refuse to accept that someone with Jesus' humble background could be a prophet, a messiah. They were looking for a messiah to free them from the yoke of the Romans. Their hearts weren't open to the truth. They seemed to be filled with prejudices, which always hinder the richness of God's Word and its saving action. They try to kill him, but fail in their attempt. Jesus leaves, passing right through them. The moment of Jesus' death on the Cross, known

only to the Father, has not yet arrived.

We read this Gospel passage in the middle of the season of Lent. Once again we see Jesus being rejected by some of his own people. The one who has come to fill all souls with true joy is neither understood nor accepted. This season of Lent is a good opportunity for us to meditate on how we ourselves welcome Jesus' words. Both those that please us and those we find more difficult to accept.

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