Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Is this not the son of Joseph?"

He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'"

And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land."
It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

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**Our Scripture Reflection**

What in the world happened that caused the hometown crowd to turn from amazement and admiration of Jesus at the beginning of His service in the synagogue to outright hatred and an attempt to kill Him at the end? After proclaiming the nature of His mission, to heal, to liberate, to feed, He goes on to describe who the initial recipients of His saving work would be using two very familiar Old Testament examples. Elijah was called by God during a time of famine and starvation to feed a pagan widow and her only son and Elisha was called during a time of extreme and widespread leprosy to heal a pagan, enemy general. Neither were members of the “hometown crowd.” The crowd presumed that as members of the chosen ones they would get privileged treatment, first. What was the point Jesus was trying to teach? God, His Father, can not and will not be boxed in by human desires and demands. He is free to act as He sees fit. Please note: Jesus was not saying that the needs of the chosen ones would be ignored. No, they would be loved and cared for but the pecking order would begin with their enemies being rescued first. And that, was more than their hardened hearts could bear that day.

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**Food for your Journey**

In our work, we are taking the bits and pieces of people’s shattered lives and opening ourselves up to God’s work of creating caring, discerning communities — just as happened after a hurricane hit a small town in South Louisiana. Walking around the area surveying the damage, it pained the pastor to see the houses torn apart and contents spilled on the ground in broken and tangled heaps. As he walked among the tree limbs, he saw in the dirt an image of a smiling face. Bending over to pick it up, he realized it was a wedding photo that the storm had ripped and discarded in the street. Someone, somewhere, was missing the photo. He wondered who it could be.

So, he decided to open the basement of his church and allow the community to have a photo lost and found. He set up long tables and invited the whole town to bring in any pictures they had picked up out of the storm debris. People came with the bits of anonymous family histories: proud men standing in front of cherry-red Chevrolets, women posing in their Sunday best in front of bursting azalea bushes, anxious couples going to their high school dance, and small children playing on the park swings. Along with the crumpled bits of pictures, people began to pour into the fellowship hall, recognizing parts of their own lives and those of their neighbors. Years after the fact, people still talk about the church that opened its doors to all the torn bits of people’s lives. When I heard about it, I wondered what would happen if all our churches began to reach out to our communities, inviting people in so they might have some spiritual grounding
in our cultural storm. Imagine: church as a space where men, women and children can gather with the bits of their broken lives and seek wholeness with their stories, their histories and their neighbors.

A Prayer from the Heart

Holy Father, You once said through Your Prophet Isaiah, “My ways are not your ways; My thoughts are not your thoughts.” (Is.55:3-8) Lord, when things do not go according to my way, my plan, help me to remember that You created me and You love me. Make me humble and patient, Father. Amen