

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

“In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus read from the book of the prophet Isaiah, and began to say, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ 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 hometown the things we have heard you did at Capernaum.’ And he said, ‘Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown.’ ... 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.”

—The Gospel of Luke

By Ken Woodley

How truly awful. The beginning of Jesus’s public ministry foreshadows its ending. There are those who want to kill him right at the outset.

The people of his own hometown are intent on hurling him off the cliff to his death.

The question, “What child is this?” has been replaced by, “What man is this and who does he think he is?”

But unlike the question posed at the birth of Jesus, this one isn’t filled with reverent, holy wonder. The heralding angels are a distant memory and there is not a wise man in the crowd, much less three such men of wisdom.

In an instant, the synagogue’s reverent congregation becomes a mindless mob with nothing but murder on its mind.

That’s a definite attention-grabber, but what is most gripping here is the mysterious end to this passage from the Gospel of Luke:

“But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.”

How is that possible? They just spent a considerable amount of time with Jesus in the synagogue so they know exactly what he looks like. Plus, most of them already knew him as Joseph’s son. He grew up there.

How then could Jesus—their sole focus—simply pass through the midst of them and go off safely on his way? Surely, at least one person would have noticed and shouted out, “Hey, he’s getting away!!”

There are several takeaways for us from this story. Here's one: sometimes we just don't recognize a Jesus Moment when it's standing right there in front of us. We let it pass through our midst.

The presence of Jesus is trying to be manifested to us, for example, through the loving kindness of others—and such Jesus moments can be so very real—but we just don't see it.

Jesus tries to reach out to us but we're way too busy or depressed or hurt or angry.

Likewise, there are also times when *we* have the opportunity to seize a fleeting instant in the day and become the presence of Jesus for someone else.

Sadly, sometimes that moment—and the presence of Jesus it promises—also passes through our midst and goes off on its way.

We have an idea about reaching out to someone who needs us, but we become distracted, or think too much about it and begin to doubt our ability to perform even a small “miracle” of loving friendship to someone we know. Or perhaps a passing stranger.

The opportunity was right there. Now it's gone. And we are left standing alone at the side of a cliff, wondering how we got there and where Jesus went.

But be aware that there are other times, too, when Jesus manifests his presence directly and often when you most need it—when people or events push *you* toward a cliff. Be ready to recognize Jesus and believe because, with that faith, he will pass you through the midst of them and take you on your way.