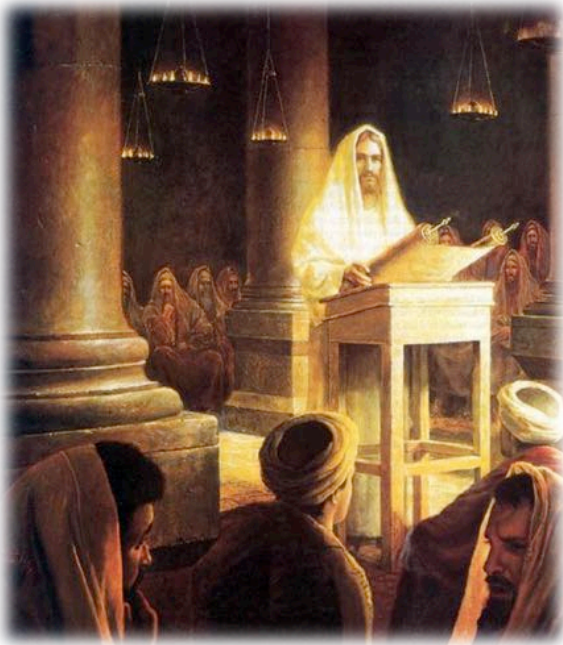


Jesus at Mount Precipice



¹⁶ He 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 ¹⁷ and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

¹⁸ “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, ¹⁹ and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

²⁰ 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. ²¹ He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?” ²³ 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.’” ²⁴ And he said, “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. ²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ But he passed through the midst of them and went away. (Luke 4:16-30)

Located south of Nazareth is Mount Kedumim has long been believed to be the sight where “the people in the synagogue” attempted to kill Jesus by pushing Him off its precipice; as a result it is known to the Christian world as Mount Precipice. At its top Mount Precipice is slightly higher than 1300 feet and as you can tell by the photograph at the right a fall from its heights would very likely result in death. Archeological excavations of caves within Mount Precipice revealed that Byzantine monks occupied this area as early as the 6th century. These excavations may offer further evidence supporting this location as the actual site of the Luke 4 event. The caves were not open to the public. Also of interest is the discovery of Neanderthal remains dating back some 50,000 years in the caves of Mt. Precipice.



A climb to the top of Mount Precipice affords the pilgrim spectacular views of the Jezreel Valley, the city of Nazareth, and Mount Tabor (the site of the Transfiguration). Arriving at the top of the mountain one will find a monument and in its center an olive tree, a gift by Pope John Paul II to the Jewish people as an expression of peace between Christians and Jews. A plaque on the monument mentions that Mount Precipice has also been known as the “Leaping Mountain” because some people believed that Jesus leapt off the mountain to escape his persecutors. Such a belief is clearly heterodox and contrary to scripture.



The Ruach Hakodesh of Adonoi Hashem is upon me, Moshiach

For Catholics, and I suspect most Orthodox Christians as well, most of our experience with the Scriptures occurs during Mass or Divine Liturgy. Although this is a beautiful setting in which to read and listen to the scriptures sometimes it means that the Gospel story is removed from the context of what has happened just before. In writing this photo-journal I thought that I would just write about those places in Israel we visited and the events that occurred there. In fact, I wrote and reflected on the Mount Precipice incident prior to writing the entry: *Between the Marriage of Cana and our next stop, Mount Precipice*. I felt it was necessary to go ahead and write the “Between” entry and when I did I realized just how important it was to include it because it places the Precipice incident in the proper context.

So, prior to returning to His home in Nazareth, Jesus was already beginning to make a name for Himself. He had been to Jerusalem, created a stir there with the turning over of the money changers’ tables in the Temple, He began to gather a following among some of the Jews in Jerusalem, and a leader of the Jews, Nicodemus, approached Him and Jesus delivered to him some of the most beautiful teaching to be found in the Gospels. Jesus then travels to Galilee and Caper’na-um, but along the way He stops and speaks to the Samaritan woman. Here Jesus reveals that He is the source of living water, that the Father seeks worshippers who worship in spirit and truth, and that He is the Messiah. As a result, the Samaritan town of Sy’char believes in Him. Then Jesus makes His way to Caper’na-um where a nobleman begs Jesus to heal his dying son. Jesus does so by simply telling the child’s father that he would be healed.

This context must be understood to appreciate why things went down the way they did at the synagogue in Nazareth and on Mount Precipice. The Nazarene Jews knew what Jesus had done in Cana, Jerusalem, Samaria, Galilee and Caper’na-um. What were they expecting from the Jesus now that He had returned home? It all begins in the when Jesus is handed the scroll to read in the synagogue.

¹⁸ *“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,¹⁹ and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”*

Most Christians are familiar with this passage, and so too were the Jews attending synagogue the day when Jesus read these two scriptures. As Christians we have two thousand years of the Church reflecting upon these scriptures and these reflections form our understanding of what Jesus was telling His audience that day. The Jews who were sitting there also had a tradition through which they understood these verses from our Isaiah. We are going to look at both traditions to help us understand what happened that day, which will also give us insight as to why Jesus selected this passage to begin His teaching ministry.

What the Nazarene Jews Heard that Day (and possibly might have missed):

The translations that I have used throughout most of my Photo-Journal entries are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) and the Revised Standard Version (RSV). But, to help us have a better understanding of what was going through the minds of the people listening to Jesus we need to turn to a different translation, the Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB) which contain is a mix of Hebrew with enough English for the non-Hebrew reader to get a better sense of the scripture as written in its original language.

¹*The **Ruach Hakodesh** (Holy Spirit) of **Adonoi Hashem** (Lord the Name) is upon me, **Moshiach** (Messiah), because **Hashem mashach** (the Name hath anointed) me [**Moshiach**] to preach *besurah* (good news) unto the **anavim** (meek, poor, oppressed); He hath sent me to bind up the **nishberei lev** (the brokenhearted), to proclaim **deror** (freedom, liberty) for the **shevuyim** (captives), and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;*

²*To proclaim the **Shnat Ratzon L’Hashem** (the year of the L-rd’s favor and grace), and the **Yom Nakam L’Eloheinu** (our G-d’s Day of Vengeance); to comfort all the **avelim** (mourners). (Isaiah 61:1-2; OJB)*

One of the first things that would have leapt out of this passage for Jesus’ Jewish audience was the word, *Moshiach*, which means Messiah. This word is generally not included in our Christian translations (such as the RSV I quoted above). The inclusion of *Moshiach* made it very clear to the Jewish audience that the one anointed; the one sent to preach the good news to the poor, the oppressed, and the captives is the Messiah. It also needs to be understood that the Messiah that the Jews were expecting was *not* the Suffering Servant that Isaiah spoke of earlier in chapter 53, but a warrior King who would liberate Israel from her oppressors, and rule the world from his throne in Jerusalem.

Another word, or rather phrase, that would have stood out to them was *Shnat Ratzon L'Hashem*, which is translated as the “year of the Lord’s favor and grace.” What this phrase is referring to is the Jubilee Year, which is described in Leviticus chapter twenty-five. A Jubilee Year occurs in the Jewish Calendar every fifty years. In some ways this is like a Sabbath year where no agricultural work is done, but there is a lot more to it. Land that had to be sold to pay off debts was returned to the original owner. Indentured servants were freed; and debts were forgiven. Everyone was given a “clean slate.” It was a year of restorative justice and of God’s bountiful mercies. For the first century Jews many of them believed that the Messiah would usher in not only a Jubilee year, but also a Jubilee era of freedom, justice, and mercy. A Jubilee would have resonated deeply with the Jews who were under the oppression of the Romans, and perhaps even more so by the Nazarenes who were looked down upon even by their fellow Jews (remember when Nathaniel said to Philip, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”).

What the Jews did not hear that day was the second part of verse 2:

...and the Yom Nakam L'Eloheinu (our G-d's Day of Vengeance); to comfort all the avelim (mourners).

If they were paying attention they may have asked themselves why did Jesus omit this part of the scripture. That’s an interesting question. Why did He? If we understand that Jesus selected this passage of Isaiah to introduce His ministry then we know that He came as Jesus of Nazareth to preach the Good News of Redemption and to redeem us from our sins through the salvific sacrifice of the Pascal Mystery (and, as I have written previously, to betroth Himself to the Church). This was the mission of His First Coming. When He comes again (the Second Coming), He will indeed come as a warrior King and it will be “our God’s Day of Vengeance,” and it will also be our wedding day, the Marriage Feast of the Lamb and the Bride. A perceptive Jew may have picked up on this, and perhaps some did.

What a Christian Might or Might Not Hear Today (that Jesus’ Jewish audience probably would have missed):

The first thing we “hear” when reading this scripture is “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me....*” It is, without doubt, a beautiful passage. Yet, when we read the original Hebrew we see that Jesus is introducing a deeper mystery that he will unfold over the next three years of His public ministry.

The Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit) of Adonoi Hashem (Lord the Name) is upon me, Moshiach (Messiah)....

What is this mystery? The Trinity. Jesus is the *Moshiach*, the Messiah. He also identifies Himself as the Son and that He and the Father are One. Jesus promises His disciples that He will send the Councilor... *the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name...* (John14:26). Jesus’ final instruction to His disciples was:

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* ¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father (Adonoi Hashem) and of the Son (Moshiach and Son of Adonoi Hashem) and of the Holy Spirit (Ruach Hakodesh),* (Matt 28:18-19)

It would have been difficult for the Jews listening to Jesus reading from Isaiah to have discerned the revelation of the Trinity given what was available theologically to them at that time. Jesus had just introduced the idea in His very first teaching and the doctrine was not fully developed by the Church until sometime after the first century, and it was not codified into doctrine until the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

In addition, Christian would understand why Jesus left out the second part of verse 2 recognizing that the “Day of Vengeance” is reserved for the Lord’s Second Coming.

What Happened Next:

Then... 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.”

As a Lector I have the privilege and the honor to read God’s word at Mass. Sometimes people will come up to me after mass and tell me how well I read the scripture and how much it ministered to them. I love when that happens, but can you imagine what it must have been like to listen to the Word of God being read by the Word made Flesh? No wonder they said,

And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

But then, as Jesus' words, "*Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing,*" began to sink in... wait a minute, did Jesus just say that he's the *Mosiach*, the Messiah?

"Isn't this the son of Joseph?"

They believed the words Jesus had read from Isaiah, but how could he be the Messiah, after all they knew this man; he was the Carpenter's son. As the old saying goes, "Familiarity breeds contempt," and Jesus perceived their lack of faith. He said to them:

"Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place."

Jesus clearly identifies the Nazarene Jews' familiarity with Him as keeping them from accepting that Isaiah 61:1-2 as being fulfilled in their hearing. And to demonstrate that He was indeed a prophet, but even more than a prophet, Jesus proceeds to tell them that they, and most of the house of Israel, will reject Him as they had rejected Elijah and Elisha before Him:

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."

In fact, Jesus goes further by pointing out that the only ones that Elijah and Elisha were able to help out were Gentiles, not Jews at all. Why? Because they were stiff necked, just like the people of Nazareth. This was just too much for them to bear. Who does he think he is? Of course they rejected him as Messiah, after all, he's Joseph's son. Now he has the audacity to reject us? They were furious:

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.

Jesus begins his public ministry at home. He is amazingly straightforward with them; you could say that He didn't pull any punches: "Guess what guys. I'm the one you have been waiting for. I'm the Messiah and everything is going to be different from here on out." But they wouldn't have it, and now they wanted to kill him. It would seem, at least from a human perspective, that this was an inauspicious beginning to His public ministry. Jesus would go elsewhere where He could find a more receptive, faith-filled audience:

But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

That must have left them wondering. "What just happened? How did He just walk right by us?" Another miracle just happened—that's what happened. Were they aware? Might some of them have reassessed their initial rejection of Jesus? Perhaps, the scripture doesn't reveal this. We can hope for their sakes they had a change of heart.

In this perhaps the briefest of His teachings, Jesus revealed that He is the Messiah, that He would be rejected by the people He came to save opening the door for the Gentiles to be grafted onto the Olive Tree of Israel (see Romans 11), and He gave hints of the Trinitarian theology which would forever change our understanding of the Godhead: Father (*Adonoi Hashem*), Son (*Moshiach*), and Holy Spirit (*Ruach Hakodesh*). Actually, this was quite an impressive start to the most important three years in the history of the Cosmos.

Kevin's Reflection:

Frankly, this passage about the Jews of Nazareth rejecting Jesus bothers me. Why? It bothers me because I don't think we (perhaps I should just say—me) are that much different then they were. How did Jesus fall so quickly in their esteem for Him? Remember the passage earlier from Luke where it said,

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52)

Their favor was even with Jesus when He read the two verses from Isaiah 61:

And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. (Luke 4:22)

So far so good, but things take an abrupt turn when they processed what Jesus meant when He said, *“Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”* Jesus was basically telling them, “I am the Messiah, and I am going to be preaching the good news to you, liberating you from that which oppresses you, and ushering in a new era of God’s favor and grace.” This could have elicited any number of responses, but given the apparent respect that Jesus had earned in His community it shouldn’t be hard to imagine a scenario like this could have happened in the synagogue.

Then one of the elders stood up and addressed Jesus. Yeshua, we have known you for many years; your mother and father for many more. Your father was a good man, and your mother...there is not a finer woman in all of Israel. Many of our children grew up, and played with you. We all watched you grow in wisdom and stature and we all sensed that God’s favor was upon you, did we not?” the elder asked, turning to the congregation. The congregation nodded their head affirming what the elder had spoken.

“Many of us thought that you would go to Jerusalem to study, return home and become our new rabbi. But then you went off to find that wild man, John, the one who baptizes. Now you come home and you tell us this? That you are the Messiah? Out of respect for your mother and father, and out of respect for the young man I thought I knew, I must ask you, why? Why are you saying this? Why are you saying that you are the anointed one of Adonoi Hashem? Help me to understand. Help your family, friends, and neighbors to understand. We are all looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. Give us a reason to believe in you.

This of course did not happen. Instead they said,

“Isn’t this the son of Joseph?”

We don’t have to speculate why they asked this, Jesus told us why and He told His audience as well,

“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.’”²⁴ And he said, “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place.

Jesus wasn’t going to put on a show for them. He told them who He was, and they refused to believe that He was the *Moshiach*, the Messiah. Even the Samaritans, who were not even Jews, believed in Him. That wasn’t the first time the Jews had missed out on what God was doing, and that is no doubt the reason why Jesus reminded them of the stories of Elijah and the widow and Elisha and Naaman the Leper.

The Jews rejected Jesus out of hand without even considering the possibility that He might actually be the Messiah. Why? They knew Him and even though He had found favor with them in the past Jesus did not meet with their expectation of whom the Messiah should be and in so doing they missed out what God was doing. It reminds me of yet another scripture, Isaiah 43:19:

*“Behold, I will do something new,
Now it will spring forth;
Will you not be aware of it?”*

This is what bothers me about this story, the Jews of Nazareth were not aware of the “new” thing that God was doing in their midst even when one of their own was telling them what was happening. They could accept the scripture reading from Isaiah, but they could not accept Jesus as the one whom the scriptures were speaking about. Their prior knowledge of Jesus and the assumptions they had about Him made it impossible for them to be “aware” enough to accept even the possibility that Jesus was speaking the truth. And I have to ask myself, am I any different then them? Will my knowledge and assumptions I form from this knowledge hinder me from being aware of “something new” that God is ready to spring forth in my life, in the life of the world?

The verse (Isaiah 43:18) just prior to the one quoted above warns of this very thing:

*“Do not call to mind the former things,
Or ponder things of the past.*

This is a hard saying, at least for me. I love the “former things.” I love pondering the “things of the past.” By this I mean that I love to “call to mind” and “ponder” the bible, church history, and theology—former things, things of the past. Could the knowledge that I love, the very foundations of my beliefs, cause me to miss out on something new that God may want to do in my life or something that He may be doing in the world? How can I avoid this? How can I take the knowledge that I have and keep it a positive and not a negative in my spiritual life?

I've been praying about this as a result of this reflection and I believe that the Lord has shown me a couple of things that might help, not just me but others who find themselves in the same predicament. When we accumulate knowledge we don't (or at least shouldn't) leave it as a jumble of disparate factoids. What we do is attempt to assemble this knowledge into a coherent worldview by which we understand the past, navigate our way through the present, and extrapolate our expectations and hopes for the future. We do not do this completely on our own. We undertake this task in the context of family, and community (church, school, media, etc.). We do not always do this consciously; our worldviews are often constructed as if they were assembled according to the invisible template of a cultural *zeitgeist* (literally "time ghost" or "spirit of the age," is the dominant set of ideals and beliefs that motivate the actions of the members of a society in a particular period in time). How much of our worldview we have actually assembled for ourselves versus have allowed others to develop for us we rarely if ever examine. But, once that worldview is formed we become committed to it; we define ourselves by it, and we will often support this worldview by emerging ourselves in an environment of confirmation bias (aka the "bubble") while defending it vehemently through the avoidance of cognitive dissonance (the mental stress or discomfort experience when confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values).

What I have written above, and what will come after, is applicable not just to religious worldviews (our topic here), but also to all worldviews including political, economic, historical, and scientific. Our concern here is to avoid the attitude that the Jews of Nazareth had towards Jesus and the cognitive dissonance that He presented to them at the synagogue. The "mental stress and discomfort" that the Jews of Nazareth experienced was so profound they tried to kill Jesus. We saw this again with the martyrdom of Saint Stephen when some of the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem covered their ears to prevent them from hearing the words spoken by Stephen; such was their hatred for what he said that they dragged him outside the walls of Jerusalem and stoned him.

What must we do so that our knowledge and beliefs do not become a stumbling block keeping us from being aware of the "new thing" that God is planning to do? First, we must be humble. Our knowledge and the worldviews we construct from it often becomes a source of pride for us. The educated and those who hold high graduate and post-graduate degrees are particularly vulnerable to the sin of pride. We all must recognize that our worldviews, even our religious worldviews, are imperfect and partial, as Paul reminds us:

⁹ For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. (1Cor 13:9-12)

Our knowledge is imperfect and partial and it will remain that way until we see Him "face to face." This must be the foundational axiom upon which our beliefs and worldviews stand, even our religious ones. This is challenging for us because we think our beliefs must be certain, but that's what trapped the Nazarene Jews in an old paradigm when God was about to do something new. If our beliefs are based on imperfect and partial knowledge then we must accept a level of uncertainty in our beliefs and not be afraid of it. It is that uncertainty that allows for malleability not only in our beliefs, but also in us and it may be what keeps us from missing that "something new" that God is about to "spring forth on the earth."

Part of the confusion arises out of thinking that belief and faith is the same thing—they are not. Faith and belief are different and complimentary, and together they will bring us to that place where someday we will see Him face to face and we will understand fully. Let's discuss these differences and explore what faith really is.

I must confess that I too confused faith and belief until just recently. I was thinking about this very topic when Jan and I decided to attend an Orthodox service (Divine Liturgy) one Sunday at Saint George Greek Orthodox Church in Fresno. The Gospel for that Sunday was from Matthew 9:1-8. In most respects it is very similar to the incident that occurred in the synagogue we've been reading about here. In the story recorded in Matthew chapter nine Jesus tells a paralytic that his sins are forgiven. The scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" He asks them which is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven or rise and walk?" Of course, we know its easier to say your sins are forgiven, after all, who would ever know other than God whereas to say rise and walk it will be very obvious as to whether or not Jesus has the power He claims to have.

The point is, just as in Nazareth these scribes know and believe their scripture, and the scripture says that only God can forgive sins. That's why they said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming" because they were not aware of the "new thing" that God was doing which was that God had anointed the "Son of man" to have "authority on earth to forgive sins." The believing scribes missed it, just as the Nazarene Jews had. The priest in his homily made it clear that belief is not enough and that what was also needed was faith. Belief and faith are different. When he said that

my ears definitely pricked up because I had been thinking something very much like that in my reflection about the Nazarene Jews. I'm going to summarize what the priest discussed in his homily and add a bit to it.

Belief is words. It is the words we have in our minds, the discussion we have within ourselves and the information (knowledge) that we bring into our minds through a process called "discursive reasoning." This knowledge that is passed down to us from the Church is the Holy Scripture, her creedal statements like the Nicene Creed, they are the stories and sayings of the saints, the tomes written by theologians, and much more. What they all have in common is that they are expressed and thought in word, and through discursive reasoning we decide whether or not to believe in them. When we do believe in these words we call this "belief."

Faith is another way of knowing, not through words, but by silence. It is quieting the mind of words and of the discussion that we have with ourselves in our thoughts. In this silence we wait upon the Lord:

*but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles..., (Isa 40:31)*

*Listen to me in silence, O coastlands;
let the peoples renew their strength; (Isa 41:1)*

Belief is the domain of the mind. Faith is the domain of the heart. As one monk (whose name I don't remember) once said, "The ladder of divine ascent begins with a descent into our own hearts." It is here where we enter the divine image in which we were created. Here lies the Holy of Holies where we as high priest enter with fear and trembling because this is where we encounter the Lord of hosts as Isaiah described:

In the year that King Uzzi'ah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.² Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.³ And one called to another and said:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory."*

⁴ *And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.*

⁵ *And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:1-5)*

It is in the silence of our hearts that we begin to see the Lord *face to face* and to know in a way beyond discursive reasoning. The knowing heart does not dissect the object of its seeking, but bowing before it as it not as object but as its own Subject we humbly listens in silence receiving through immediate apprehension the reality of its being intuitively, or as the Eastern Fathers say, *noetically*. It is here, in the silence of the heart, that the virgins become awake and attuned to the call of the Bridegroom. They recognize Him while others sleep; and He recognizes them and knows them by name while the others knock on the door, but He says to them, "I do not know you."

This is what the Nazarene Jews and the scribes did not have. They searched the scriptures because they thought that in them they would find life, yet it was those scriptures that testified of Jesus (John 5:39). They had belief, but they did not have faith. They did not wait upon the Lord in silence, and missed the testimony of Christ within the scriptures. I know I lean too heavily on my mind, but I am now more aware that I must go to my heart as Moses went to the Tent of Meeting to commune with the God. No one can do this for any one of us. We are the high priest of our hearts. It is here, in silence, that we behold God face to face so that we may know Him as we our selves are known by Him. And in the silence of faith He gives me a new name which only He and I may know:

I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.'
(Rev 2:17)

This is why no one else can enter our hearts, as the Proverb says:

With all vigilance guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life. (Prov 4:23)

We cannot abdicate this responsibility to another, not a pastor, priest, monk, or spiritual advisor, not even our own spouse. Yet, all of these may help us discern what is experienced in the heart. Why is discernment necessary? The heart has also been compared to Eden where God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening. It's a

wonderful vision that we all would like to experience. However, there was another in Eden, the deceiver disguised as an Angel of Light. Yes, even in our hearts we can be deceived and that why Jeremiah said the following:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it? (Jer 17:9)

Isn't this dangerous going into your heart alone? Yes, but if you think its safe outside the heart of faith and to remain in the mind of belief you need to ask yourself, "How did this work out for the Jews of Nazareth?" Yes, we have to be careful. We need to follow Saint Paul's exhortation,

Test everything; retain what is good. (1Thes 5:21)

Here we can bring the Scripture, Church teaching, our pastors and spouses as confirmation. But the knowledge of the heart is essentially different then the knowledge of the mind. The knowledge of the heart is the intimacy of relationship between persons, the Person of Christ and our selves. It was for this that Paul considered all else rubbish so...*that [he] may know him and the power of his resurrection (Phil 3:10).*

And when we do all these things, then we may hope that our Belief and our Faith may quicken us to recognize the Lord and the new things He is bringing forth in our lives and in our earth. Let us not be counted among those who missed out because of the presumption of our beliefs, rather let us approach boldly before the throne of grace upon which the Lord of hosts sits within the silence of our hearts (Heb 4:13) for in the final analysis it is not *what* we know that will save us, but *Whom* we know.

"Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:1)

Jan's Reflection:

Jesus was very blunt with the Jews of His hometown of Nazareth. He did not mince words or veil His message in parables. He flat out tells them he is the Messiah; the one they have been waiting for. And He tells them they will reject Him, but the gentiles will receive Him. These Jews are the most familiar with Jesus and His parents. They should have known Him the best, but He does not match their understanding of the Messiah. They become so enraged and blinded by their pride that they want to kill him by throwing Him over the precipice. Miraculously, Jesus leaves their midst unharmed without performing any other miracles in Nazareth. His rejection here foreshadows the rejection He will receive from most of the Jewish community before Pilate.

After reflecting on this event I've asked myself the following questions:

- Do I really know Jesus or just a lot about Him.
- Are the scripture a way to judge others and fill myself with pride or are the scriptures a source of life and illumination of the truth for guiding my life?
- Am I the wise or foolish virgin?
- Does familiarity prevent me from discerning the truth?

These thoughts are highlighted to me for reflection as I read the story of Jesus at the precipice. Please, Lord, do not pass me by as you did with the Nazarenes because of a lack of humility and discernment.