

## The Engineer Luke 4:25-30

Once, a construction engineer finished a long and frustrating day of work and left the office. On his way home, he decided to go to his church and confide in his priest and began speaking with him saying, "Father, today I had a meeting with the head of a company who intends to build a big and complicated project. I've been meaning to earn his business for a while. I know that his project demands good planning and high quality materials. But unfortunately, today he chose to trust a different engineer who will use cheap materials and rush the planning stages. Not only will this be dangerous to the people who will eventually live there, but all my time and effort has been wasted without getting paid! If there is God, why did my client not follow God's will and hire me for this project? Where is the righteousness here?" After hearing the engineer's complaints, the priest handed him a Bible and said, "Take this and read it, you may find some of the answers you seek within these pages." Surprisingly, the engineer responded by saying that he does not believe what the Bible says and wanted to find the answer outside of the Bible. The priest turned to the engineer and said, "Just as you choose to only follow *your* will, and do not believe in God's project of salvation, which leads to the Kingdom of God, so also the head of that company believes in looking out only for the financial and timely interests of his company. As it is for you; for him, what is most important is the time and the money he will save, not the well-being and quality of life of others.

In today's Gospel reading, we see that Jesus sensed that the people around Him did not believe in Him as a Messiah. He began warning them of the danger of their unbelief by using examples from their own histories. Two of their most famous prophets were outsiders and not citizens of Israel. In the case of Elijah, God had sent him to miraculously provide food for a poor widow and her son in a time of severe famine in their part of the world. The Gentile woman, living in a pagan land, truly trusted God at a time when Israel did not. In Elisha's case, God helped a man who assisted Israel's despised enemy, the King of Syria. That very man, Naaman, came in belief to the prophet and was healed of his leprosy even though many people had long thought that non-Israelites had been denied the blessings extended to foreigners. Jesus used these examples to warn that God does not favor those who are simply the descendants of Abraham. Rather, God instead blesses and provides for those who are true, obedient believers in Him, no matter which nation they may represent.

However, these warnings did not bring the Jewish people of Nazareth to their senses. Even worse, in their murderous fury, they attempted to kill Jesus by throwing Him over a cliff. But Jesus simply walked away, never to return to the town that had been privileged to see Him grow up. Their unrighteous attitude towards Jesus deprived them of God's forgiveness and restoration that He had so graciously come to offer them. Most of the Israelites did not believe, but God chose to bless those other nations who did. The Church has always been largely composed of Gentiles. The Armenian people have historically been counted among those who trusted that Jesus was and is the Incarnate God, who died in their place on the cross to take away their sins and restore them to God. For almost seventeen hundred years our church has stood as a witness to this truth.

In today's story, we witnessed an engineer who was angry and frustrated with the head of a company that decided to not use him for his project. We also understand that our engineer did something similar to his own priest; by approaching him and seeking his time and advice, only to reject the Bible that was handed to him and the subsequent wisdom that was to be found within. Just as the head of the company seemed to trust someone else for his project, the engineer sought to trust a source other than the Bible for his answers. Similarly, Israelites declined Jesus' gift of salvation and wanted to throw Him over a cliff. Today's reading and story lead us to examine our hearts. Do we follow what God has instructed us to do? Are we the ones who listen to and carry out the commandments found in the Bible? If the people of Nazareth turned away from the Good News of Christ and wanted to kill Him, could we not unknowingly do the same by turning away from the good news offered to us today?

Today, as we open up our church doors, let us also open the doors of our hearts as well. Unlike the construction engineer, let us accept God's mercy and strengthen our faith. Let's work toward the greatest of projects, the project of God's salvation. Let us recall great examples of faith like those from the Old Testament. One who was saved from severe famine and the other who was healed by the grace of God; both being obedient believers, regardless of their nationality. Today, by means of repentance, we as believers of God's restoration ask God to renew our covenant with Him and fill us with the grace of the Holy Spirit. So that we may, unashamedly, grow as His stewards and servants. Amen.