

Sr. Peg O'Shea
Reflection
Monday
December 5, 2022

Today's gospel ends with the words of the crowd: "*We have seen strange things today.*"

This exclamation is so appropriate for us who in the recent past have witnessed *very strange* events indeed: protests in Iran against religious/political leaders, people on the streets in China pushing back over Covid restrictions, Nuclear tests in North Korea in front of a child, unspeakable horror in Ukraine... Definitely, *strange things* are happening on our watch.

Nonetheless, our first reading directs our attention toward a different kind of *strange things*: a glorious depiction of a healed and peaceful earth, flowers in the desert, water in the sand, no ravenous animals, joy and singing, and all creation responding in fulfillment of the vision of Luke 4 with the eyes of the blind opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame leaping like deer, the mute singing, and the redeemed counseled not to fear. Joy and gladness will overcome sorrow and sighing.

The psalm picks up and deepens the theme: "Our God will come and save us' – an *absolutely wonderful and strange reality!* "OUR GOD WILL COME AND SAVE US."

In the gospel, we watch as a man is brought to Jesus in a way that is *strange* to us through the roof of a house on a stretcher! He is a lucky man; he has friends who care deeply about him and want him to be able to approach Jesus' face to face despite the obstacles at the door. The healing that the man and his friends seek is for his body. the healing Jesus offers goes beyond his physical infirmity to the root of his suffering, "*Your sins are forgiven.*" The healed man then does something *strange*; he picks up his stretcher and leaves the house on his own with new freedom, revealing Jesus' power both to heal and to forgive.

How *strange*, yet not *strange*, that the scribes and Pharisees are incensed at Jesus' assumed authority. They care neither for the man's health nor for his inner peace. They oppose Jesus taking on the role of God. They are the religious leaders and they make the rules.

How *strange* indeed that they, and sometimes we, do not treasure the depth of peace and healing forgiveness offered by the God who loves us more than we can fathom. Today's readings invite us to quietly ponder things that present themselves at first sight as *strange*.