

Jesus Rejected At Nazareth

Luke 4:16-30

Introduction

The sermon that Jesus preached in his hometown of Nazareth as set forth in Luke 4:16-30 is an excellent example of Jesus' preaching everywhere He went in His 3-year ministry.

I. The Setting (4:16)

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up (4:16a). Although he was born in Bethlehem and later made Capernaum his hometown (Matthew 4:13), Jesus was always known as "Jesus of Nazareth" (Luke 4:34; 18:37).

And as was his custom, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day (4:16b). This was the synagogue where he had attended his entire life. Every Sabbath day Jesus was in worship at the synagogue. He sang the Psalms, listened to God's Word, and prayed to his Father.

On this particular Sabbath day, Jesus was asked to read the Scriptures and give an expository lesson. The synagogue ruler could invite any visiting teacher or qualified male to read the Scriptures. Jesus knew almost everyone in the synagogue that day. He had started his public ministry about a year earlier and his ministry was astounding people. They had never heard such teaching or seen such miracles. So, there was tremendous excitement when the hometown hero had come back and was about to read and expound the Scripture.

II. The Scripture (4:17-19; Isa 61:1-2)

All those in the synagogue that day knew that these verses were a prophecy about the coming Messiah. They knew that one day God would send the Messiah to deliver his people.

This Scripture summarized the ministry of the coming Messiah by means of four metaphors.

A. Good News to the Poor (4:18a)

Isaiah was not referring to material poverty, but to spiritual poverty (**Mt 5:3; Isa 66:1-2**).

The word *ptochos* is from a verb that means "to cringe, to shrink back, or to cower." It conveys the idea of a beggar. It refers to someone who cringes in the shadows, a person in total destitution who crouches in a corner begging. In classical Greek the image was that one hand went out and the other hand went over the face to hide identity, because begging was so shameful. This person had reached the point of abject destitution, of utter and total bankruptcy of all resources.

This is the word used to describe a beggar by the name of Lazarus who was begging for crumbs, anything to eat. It is not the ordinary word for "poor," which is *penichros*, meaning somebody who has very little. The widow in **Luke 21:2** who had just a few pennies was *penichros* poor. She had very little. But *ptōchos* means you have absolutely nothing, and that is the word here. "Blessed are the poor (*ptōchos*), for theirs is the kingdom of God" (**Luke 6:20**). Now that is good news!

When they put their trust in the Messiah, they will find the true riches that bring joy.

B. Freedom to the Captives (4:18b)

Israel thought they were merely captive to Rome. That's not the liberty the Messiah would bring. No one is truly free. All people are sinners, and are enslaved by their sin.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (ESV) ¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

When they put their trust in the Messiah, they will be set free from the bondage of sin.

C. Recovery of Sight to the Blind (4:18c)

All people are spiritual beings. That is why every culture in the world is religious. Every culture worships some god or gods. People manufacture gods out of their own imaginations because they are spiritually blind to God and his truth.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NKJV) ³But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Matthew 23:23-24 (NKJV) ²³“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. ²⁴Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Revelation 3:17-19 (NKJV) ¹⁷Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

When they put their trust in the Messiah, they will open their eyes to see the truth.

D. Liberty to the Oppressed (4:18d)

Isaiah was speaking of people who were crushed in spirit and shattered by the hard experiences of life. He was speaking of those who have experienced the powerful forces of evil in this world.

When they put their trust in the Messiah, they will find comfort and peace and purpose!

III. The Astonishing Declaration (4:20-21)

The crowded room was completely quiet. Everyone was looking at Jesus. **They all knew him, of course. What was he going to say?**

Jesus in turn looked at each of them. He knew them too. All of his childhood friends were there. All of his family members and neighbors were there. All of the people for whom he had built something as a carpenter were there.

After a long pause, Jesus began to say to them, **“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”** (4:21).

Other teachers spoke of a future fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. **But Jesus was saying that he—the one they all knew so well—was in fact the Messiah!** What an astonishing statement! What a remarkable claim!

IV. The Question (4:22)

Their first impression of Jesus' message was favorable (4:22a).

And then they said, **"Is not this Joseph's son?" (4:22b).**

They all believed the widely-held notion that the Messiah would be unknown to anyone until he suddenly appeared to redeem Israel (John 7:26-27). How could Jesus, whom they had all known since he was a toddler, be the Messiah?

V. The Proverb (4:23)

Jesus continued speaking. He knew these people well too. He knew what they were thinking and what they were whispering to each other.

Jesus said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself'" (4:23a). In other words, **"Prove your claim to us."**

They had heard of the miracles he had done in Capernaum, and they thought, "What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well" (4:23b).

Their problem was not lack of evidence, but hardness of heart.

VI. The Rebuke (4:24)

Jesus then stated a truism and said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown" (4:24). **John 1:11**, "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him."

VII. No Ears to Hear? (4:25-27)

1. Elijah and the Widow. God sent Elijah to save a Gentile woman who was in tremendous need. Her physical poverty matched her spiritual poverty, bondage, blindness, and oppression.

2. Elisha and Naaman. Naaman was not only a Gentile, but he was also a leper. Naaman was a double outcast.

No two prophets were more beloved. But both had been rejected by their people during their time prophesying. Jesus' point was unmistakable. If his listeners refused to abandon their self-righteousness and acknowledge their desperate spiritual need, they could not be saved.

VIII. Nope! (4:28-30)

How could they—upright, religious, law-abiding, and Jews of all people—not be in favor with God?

But Jesus' time had not yet come. Whether by miracle or by some other natural means, Luke simply notes that passing through their midst, Jesus went away (4:30).

Conclusion

Jesus taught that there were many widows and lepers in Nazareth. But only those who recognized that there was no hope for them apart from God's mercy received God's grace.

There are many widows and lepers in our community. In fact, there are widows and lepers even in our churches as well. They do not believe that they are spiritually poor, captive, blind, and oppressed. Instead, they view themselves as upright, religious, and law-abiding, and they strongly oppose any thought that they are in need of God's grace. Their upright lives and

church activities insulate them from their spiritual need. In effect, they cast Jesus out of their lives. Sadly, those most in need of God's grace often know it the least.

Only those who acknowledge themselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving his displeasure, and without hope save in his mercy receive the grace of God.

REMEMBER...

- ▶ **Good News to the POOR**
- ▶ **Release to the CAPTIVES**
- ▶ **Recovery of Sight to the BLIND**
- ▶ **Liberty to the OPPRESSED**