

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee – Rejection at Nazareth

Goldstone Church – 07-May-17 10:30am

Luke 4:16-30

Introduction

We are starting a new Bible series in the book of Luke: “Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee”. These were the early days of Jesus’ ministry: how Jesus interacted with different people – either in a group or a one-to-one conversation. Jesus goes out of His way to meet with everyone, shows them who He is, and seeks relationship with them.

Luke 4:16-30 is sometimes known as “Jesus’ Manifesto”; Jesus openly sets out His aims and objectives at the start of His ministry.

1. [Jesus’] REVELATION (Luke 4:18-21)

Jesus makes some amazing claims about himself:

- a) [Jesus Reveals His] **Office** (v.18a).
“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.” (Luke 4:18a)
Jesus is the Anointed One; He has been set apart - a phrase reserved for when the King of Israel was crowned.
Jesus’ mission was to declare that God’s promised and Anointed King had arrived.
- b) [Jesus Reveals His] **Mission** (v.19)
“to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” (Luke 4:19)
Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-2, a prophecy about the liberation of the Israelites from their exile in Babylon.
The “*year of the Lord’s favour*” = the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:9-10). All debts would be cancelled, all slaves would go free, and all property would be returned to its original owners.
Jesus’ mission was to liberate everyone – not just physically, but freedom from the enslavement of sin and death.
- c) [Jesus Reveals the] **Beneficiaries** (v.18b)
“to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed” (Luke 4:18b)
Jesus outlines who will benefit from His ministry:
 - a. *The Poor*. This word doesn’t just mean financially poor & helpless, but poor in intelligence and education, poor in moral standards, poor in influence and position; most importantly, poor in spirit.
 - b. *The Prisoner*. This word also means someone who has been captured and imprisoned by something or someone else.
The challenge to long-term prisoners who have accepted being locked up, is that they don’t consider freedom a better option!
 - c. *The Blind*. This word doesn’t just mean physically blind, but also blind mentally and intellectually, and blind spiritually. Jesus will bring healing to their spiritual blindness.

- d. *The Oppressed*. Literally, this means shattered, and broken into pieces. This is referring to people who are completely demoralised, destroyed physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Jesus' mission was:

- to those who knew that they were *poor* in some way;
- to those who were *captives* in some way;
- to those who were *blind* in some way; and
- to those who were *broken* in some way.

Conversely, Jesus' mission was NOT:

- to those who thought they had it all;
- to those who thought they controlled it all;
- to those who thought they knew it all; and
- to those who thought they could fix it all.

Jesus' mission was to bring salvation the lost. Jesus did not impose this salvation on anyone; it was an invitation to a relationship with Jesus. Today, through the power of His Holy Spirit, Jesus is offering salvation and a relationship with Him.

2. [The People's] REACTION (Luke 4:22, 28-29)

There was a mixed reaction from the people – a recurring theme throughout the Gospels, i.e. what Jesus said and did, resulted in a variety of different reactions from those who heard or saw what Jesus did.

a) **Amazement** (v.22a)

“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.” (Luke 4:22a)

The word means 'to admire', to 'marvel' and be impressed with what Jesus is saying.

Although many of the reactions were negative, there were still some people who were excited, stimulated and attracted to what Jesus said.

b) **Derision** (v.22b)

““Isn't this Joseph's son?” they asked.” (Luke 4:22b)

The people tried to belittle Jesus, discounting him as 'just' the son of Joseph the Carpenter. Instead of viewing Jesus as a man in His own right, or a teacher with great insight, or even the promised Messiah, the people are verbally abusing at Jesus.

c) **Fury** (v.28)

“All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this.” (Luke 4:28)

The word means to have 'intense rage'; the equivalent of being so mad and angry at someone, that murder could result.

Note: Jesus faced an angry crowd, bursting to kill Him, both at the start and at the end of His ministry.

d) **Aggression** (v.29a)

“They got up, drove him out of the town” (Luke 4:29a)

This word means to cast someone out, either with actual or implied physical violence. The people *expelled* Jesus, with bodily harm as a definite possibility.

Today, when Jesus is mentioned in a conversation, our society has mixed reactions:

- Some people try to reduce Jesus to a fable or an insignificant nobody.
- Some people get angry and upset just hearing the name of Jesus.
- Some people become aggressive and even violent.
- But yet some people are amazed and want to know more.

No other person in history has caused such a spread of different reactions.

Nevertheless, Jesus allows everyone to react the way that they want to. This is not indifference to what people are saying, but Jesus' ultimate expression of love.

3. [Jesus'] RESPONSE (Luke 4:23-27)

Despite these conflicting reactions, Jesus responds to the people. After all, Jesus knew them well; He had grown up in Nazareth.

- a) [Jesus responds with] **A Proverb** (v.23a)
"Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!" (Luke 4:23a)
Effectively, the people wanted proof that Jesus was the Messiah, by revealing His power to them, and do a miracle. Jesus' point is that their problem was not lack of evidence, but hardness of heart.
- b) [Jesus responds with] **A Rebuke** (v.24)
"I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his home town."
(Luke 4:24)
The people who had watched Jesus growing up, they did not receive what He had to say.
"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." (John 1:11)
- c) [Jesus responds with] **Two Illustrations** (v.25-27)
 - a. *Elijah and the Widow.* (Full story: 1 Kings 17).
The point Jesus made was that salvation was only available if, like the woman, they put aside their own efforts and trusted in God wholeheartedly.
 - b. *Elisha and Naaman.* (Full story: 2 Kings 5).
Naaman was a double outcast: both a Gentile and a Leper.
What Jesus was saying is that God's salvation is for everyone – everyone who sees themselves as spiritually poor, as spiritual prisoners, spiritually blind, or spiritually oppressed - and regardless of their nationality or their circumstances.

Many people today react negatively to what Jesus says; often it is the simplicity of Jesus' message that is the biggest problem. But this is Jesus' manifesto; His formal plan and intention:

Jesus Christ, God's only Son, the Anointed Messiah and Saviour of the world: He has come to liberate those who are in spiritual need. The problem is not with Jesus; the problem is with the Lost. Jesus is waiting for our call for help.

Today, Jesus is offering you a new life in His name. All you have to do is to say, in faith, “Yes, I need help”.

CONCLUSION

One of the striking aspects of this Bible passage is the way Jesus speaks to the people in Nazareth. The first people that Jesus speaks to about salvation are those who are nearest to Him; geographically and socially.

As Christians, as Jesus’ modern-day disciples, we need to do the same; to follow Jesus’ example, and speak to those who are nearest to us. This is not preaching, it is an everyday conversation with those that we meet.

Like Jesus, we will encounter different reactions from people, but this shouldn’t put us off. Instead, we need to keep the dialogue going, respectfully and appropriately.

“who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don’t worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.” (1 Peter 3:13-16)

As Christians, we have been filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit. So, let us overflow and share the love that we have for Jesus with those that we meet.

AMEN