

“No Honor in His Home Town”
(Luke 4:14-30)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning, we saw
Jesus go into the wilderness
To be tempted by the devil –
To succeed against him
Where the first Adam failed –

How the devil attacked Him –
With the same three-pronged approach
That he used to overcome Adam and Eve;
The same that he’s used successfully
Against the majority of the world:
Appealing to bodily needs and desires;
Parading worthless things before the eyes;
And promising to enhance self-worth.

And we saw how Jesus defeated him –
And how we can as well –
By being aware of his character –
That the devil is a liar –
By comparing what he said
With God’s Word;
And by choosing to do what’s right,
By the power of the Spirit.

B. Preview.

Having defeated the devil –
And the devil having retreated
For the time being –
Jesus now begins His ministry.

This evening, let's consider
The difficulty He faced
In His hometown of Nazareth.

II. Sermon.

A. We see first Jesus' popularity in Galilee.

Luke tells us
That He returned to Galilee
In the power of the Spirit.

He apparently began
By preaching openly
And performing miracles
So that news about Him
Spread throughout the region.

Eventually,
He was welcomed to teach in the synagogues –
Having gained recognition as a competent Rabbi –
And was praised by all (vv. 14-15) –

B. There was, however, one place

That wasn't quite as welcoming.

In verse 16,

We see Him come to Nazareth:

His hometown –

As was His custom,

He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath,

That He might worship His Father –

Jesus is God's most faithful Son.

He kept the Sabbath holy –

As the Law required –

Part of which was gathering

With God's people to worship –

An example we are called to follow.

On this particular occasion

He was asked to read –

There were several who would read

During synagogue worship –

Seven in all:

A priest,

A Levite,

And five other Jewish men

Who were members of the synagogue –

It's likely they asked Jesus

Since they had heard of His reception

In the other synagogues in Galilee.

Luke writes,

“And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him” (v. 17).

We should note that

It wasn't the reader who chose the book:

It was the minister of the synagogue –

He also chose the text –

In this case, Isaiah 61:1-2 –

Which just happened –

In God's Providence –

To be about the Messiah.

Jesus found the passage

And began to read:

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD” (Luke 4:18-19).

The Jews likely understood this passage

As referring to Messiah's coming

To free them from the tyranny of Rome –

But it was really referring to

His work of freeing His people

From the tyranny of sin and Satan.

Isaiah tells us:

Messiah would be anointed by the Spirit –

Empowered to preach the Gospel –

Which Jesus already was –

That He would preach the Gospel to the poor –

The poor in spirit/those humbled by their sin –

Which Jesus was already doing –

That He would “proclaim release to the captives”;

“Set free those who are oppressed” –

That’s what He was doing by preaching the Gospel:

Freeing those bound by the devil and sin,

That they might live a holy life,

No longer bound by sinful desires.

That He might make the blind see –

Jesus did this literally,

To prove to the Jews what He could do spiritually:

Show those blinded by their sins

His beauty and that of His ways,

That they might turn from their sins,

Believe in Him and be saved.

That He might “proclaim the favorable year of the Lord” –

He’s referring here to the year of Jubilee:

When those sold into slavery for their debts were freed;

And those who had sold their properties

For the same reason, received them back –

Only this time,

It was their sins that would be forgiven

Through faith in Him.

John, who was then in prison,

Would later send two of his disciples to Jesus

To ask if He was the expected One,

Or if they should look for someone else –

Jesus will respond by pointing

To how His ministry fulfills this text:

“And He answered and said to them, ‘Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: *the* BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, and *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised up, *the* POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me” (Luke 7:22-23).

When Jesus finished reading,

He gave the book back to the minister

And sat down –

Teachers in those days sat down to teach,

Rather than standing –

And everyone in the synagogue looked to Him,

Waiting to hear what He would say (Luke 4:20).

There was already an expectation

That Messiah’s coming was near –

That’s what John was preaching;

The Nazarenes had also heard

What Jesus had been doing throughout Galilee.

But they didn't seem prepared

For what Jesus would say next:

“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21).

At first,

They were impressed at His speaking ability –

They spoke well of Him,

And were amazed at His gracious words –

But then reality began to set in:

What was He saying?

Isn't this the carpenter,

The son of Joseph (v. 22)?

And they were offended at Him –

Jesus knew what they were thinking –

Both by the Spirit,

And by what they were saying –

And so He began to address

What they were about to do.

“He said to them, ‘No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, “Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well”’” (v. 23).

“Physician, heal yourself!” was a Jewish saying that meant

That one should deal

With his own faults first

Before trying to minister to others:

“Jesus, deal with Your delusions of self-grandeur,

Before you presume to minister to us.”

Further, they challenged Him

To prove His claim by doing the miracles

They heard He had done in Capernaum –

Why did the Nazarenes reject Him,

When the majority of Galilee welcomed Him?

Jesus tells us it’s because,

“No prophet is welcome in his hometown” (v. 24).

Every prophet comes from somewhere –

But if he happens to be from your town –

Or worse, from your family –

You’ll be much less likely to listen

And believe what he has to say:

“Familiarity breeds contempt.”

But contempt is dangerous:

Jesus points to two OT examples

To show how their hardness of heart

Would turn God’s mercy away from them:

“But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, *in the land* of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian” (vv. 25-27).

Because His people hardened their hearts,

And refused to listen to Him,
He turned away from them
To show mercy to others –
To those outside the covenant –
To Gentiles.

Jesus is saying, “The same will happen to you.”

This is a prelude of what would happen to Israel as a whole:
They would reject Jesus,
And He would send the Gospel instead to the Gentiles.

Finally, we see their response:

In the same way Stephen’s sermon
Would later provoke the Jews he indicts,
So this synagogue turned into a mob
With only one goal: to kill Jesus.

Luke, “And all *the people* in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff” (vv. 28-29).

Remember, these were Jews;
Part of the OT/Lord’s church;
They were also Jesus’ friends and neighbors,
With whom He lived for thirty years –
They dragged Him out of their synagogue,
Out of their city,

And to the edge of a hill
To throw Him off a cliff:
To execute Him without a trial.

But it wasn't yet His time:
Luke writes,
"But passing through their midst,
He went His way" (v. 30).

They wanted to see His miracles –
Here was one:
They intended to throw Him off the cliff,
But they suddenly stopped,
And He walked right through the crowd
As though He wasn't even there.

The saddest thing about this
Was that Messiah had come to them
To show them the way of salvation,
But they wouldn't listen.

Instead of their knowing Him
Working to their advantage,
It worked against them:
"No prophet is welcome in his hometown" (v. 24).

C. What can we learn from this?

First, that Jesus has come to offer salvation

To those who will receive Him:

That's what Isaiah said His coming was all about:

He came to preach good news to the humble –

To those who by His grace

See their spiritual poverty –

Their debt to God's justice –

And want His forgiveness –

He came to open the eyes of the spiritually blind –

To take away natural blindness

And reveal His beauty

And that of His ways –

He came to free those bound by the devil –

To break the power of sin in their hearts,

By giving them love for what is good

By His Spirit.

If we don't know Him,

This is what He will do for us

If we will only receive Him.

If we do know Him,

This is also what we are to offer others in His name.

Second, we see

That if we follow Jesus –

If we identify with Him,

And stand for His values –

We're going to be hated

By those who don't share them –

By the world:

Jesus, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you" (John 15:19).

The closer we are to them,

The more likely we'll be hated by them:

"Familiarity breeds contempt."

Jesus did say He came to divide households (Matt. 10:35).

But third,

We need to speak the truth

Even if we'll be hated.

Jesus didn't hold back

Even though He knew what they'd do –

Neither did He stop

When they became angry:

He trusted the Father would keep Him

Until He had finished His work.

We also need to trust

That the Lord will protect us:

We're invincible until it's our time to go home.

That doesn't mean we won't get hurt –
Remember what Paul had to go through,
As well as Peter and Silas and others –
But it does mean we can't be killed
Until God allows it.

When the Lord places a holy people
In an unholy world,
This is the result.

We need to do this for Him –
As He did this for us –
That He might gather His people –
Even as He gathered us.

May He give us the heart
And power to do so
By His Spirit. Amen.

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