



12/31/25

Oh my goodness!!! This is the last Climbing email of 2025. I know tomorrow is just a new day, but something about the turning of the calendar year makes it feel bigger. As I look back at this last year, I see that the Lord has taught me a lot about trusting Him and waiting on Him more faithfully. As I look ahead, I think of a saying on a plaque I was given years ago that's in my basement... "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." This year is ending with a lot of unknowns. But God knows. And so I can trust that He will work everything for my good... just like He will for you as you entrust yourself to Him.

*Happy (almost) New Year,
Jonna*

Luke 4:16-30

This is the beginning of Jesus' ministry. The only big things that happened before this day were Jesus' baptism and His temptation in the wilderness. I know from reading those accounts that Jesus was being led by the Spirit and empowered by the Spirit, so I can be sure that what happened in this passage was the leading of the Spirit, too. Jesus never went rogue. This is important for me to see because this situation is gonna go bad... Jesus didn't cause it to go bad, but He did speak words that exposed the hearts of His hometown people. And it wasn't good.

Kind of like that dreaded word "COVID". Ugh! It exposed a lot of hearts... some hearts proved to be extremely fearful and some hearts proved to be extremely angry. When someone doesn't want to change, they don't embrace their heart problem. They cast blame and attack others. O Lord whatever You expose in my heart, and I know there's a lot to expose, please let it only serve to help me humble myself and repent, knowing that only You can transform my heart.

Soon after He began teaching in the synagogues of Galilee, "being glorified by all" (vs. 15), Jesus went to His hometown synagogue in Nazareth. He stood up to read the scriptures. (Not something someone would randomly do in our church without being asked, but it was their culture to do this.)

Coincidentally (NOT), Jesus was given a scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He read from what we know as Isaiah 61:1-2a. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." This is the good news of the gospel!!! Freedom... Sight... Overcoming oppression... God's favor! This is why Jesus came... not to make me a better rule follower, or to expose my shame... but to set me free from my shame and guilt.

After Jesus read this, He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. This reminds me of what Hebrews 10:12 says about His sacrifice. "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God." He sat down because His work was finished. The sacrifice for sins was complete. Here, He sat down to show that His work had begun. There was nothing left to be said, except to say, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Whoa! He was telling the people that He IS the Messiah!

I remember from Luke 2:52, when Jesus was 12 and growing up among these particular people, He "increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God AND MAN." These people liked Him.

They all looked at Jesus and said, "Awww, what a good boy. He has such sweet, encouraging words... liberty, sight for the blind... So nice. But let's not go too far. This is, after all, Joseph's son."

Here's where it went bad. Jesus didn't want them to just think well of Him. He didn't want them to pass off His words as just nice. He wanted them to see their need. So He exposed it. "Doubtless, you will quote to Me this proverb, 'Physician, heal Yourself.'" This must have been a common saying among their culture because it's not a quote from scripture.

But I know from Matthew 13 their astonishment at Jesus did not lead to belief.

They couldn't get past the fact that His brothers and sisters were still living among them in Nazareth, and they took offense at Him. "And He did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58).

Later, when He was crucified, many leaders and people said, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him" (Matthew 27:42). Wow... in this moment in Luke 4, Jesus was prophesying His death.

Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in His hometown." Then He brought up the story of how the prophet Elijah was used to protect and provide for a Sidonian (not Jewish) widow during a 3 1/2 year drought, and how the prophet Elisha healed a Syrian leper but not any of the lepers in Israel. In other words, Jesus was foretelling how He would be a light to the Gentiles. And they got the message.

Instead of falling on their faces and saying, "What must we do to receive life and healing?", they were filled with anger! "How dare You imply that the Messiah would care for GENTILES! They literally tried to throw Jesus over a cliff!!! Talk about the need for anger management!!!

"But passing through their midst, He went away." If I read on, I will see that there were many attempts to kill Jesus before His time had come. He did not run or hide in those times. He simply walked through their midst. God is able to accomplish His purpose exactly when and how He chooses, and no one can stop Him.

Let me not miss His authority and power in this passage. Let me not miss His ability to speak the truth. Jesus said in His final recorded prayer before His crucifixion in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." O Lord, please help me to receive Your word in humility, and when it exposes the arrogance of my heart, please help me to surrender and repent... and not dig my heels in farther.

Your word says in Proverbs 15:31-32, "The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence." Please help me to know that Your reproof is life giving. Help me to receive it and grow in wisdom... and not despise myself by ignoring what You want to teach me. Here is the wonderful news!!! What You want

*to teach me is that You are the way to freedom, to spiritual sight, to overcoming,
and to a pleasing relationship with You. Praise Your name!*