
Knowing Jesus

The Proclamation of Christ

Luke 4:16-30

1/13/2019

Main Idea: We demonstrate our understanding and acceptance of Jesus' mission through our actions.

Lesson Objective: Share Jesus with others.

Introduction

As your class time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

"Recently scientists discovered that our bodies process feelings of rejection and social pain (associated with feelings of depression and anxiety) in the same part of the brain as physical pain... Harm, whether physical or social, activates certain areas of our brain that cause us aggravation. This study went on to show that higher levels of rejection in a person's life result in "more negative self-feelings and reductions of self-esteem." Rejection literally changes our brains. The fact is, we need other people to survive. It's part of our design. And rejection threatens this basic need, so our bodies literally process it as pain.

"Luke tells us the story of Jesus' return to Nazareth after He's had some success teaching in the 'countryside.' Imagine 30-year-old Jesus, fresh out of the desert, articulating His cause clearly and with passion and getting His first taste of a supportive audience. Luke 4:15 even tells us "everyone praised him." Now depending on which Gospel you read, the story differs here. But upon returning to His hometown, Jesus decided to speak at the synagogue, the Jewish public space, clearly hoping to continue His mission and passion with the people who He knew best from His childhood. At first, things looked up. The crowds were amazed and asked themselves, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" But then they realized something. This wasn't a prophet. This was little Jesus, the carpenter's kid. Then crowds belittled Jesus. They had no faith in Him.

"Outside of His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion, one may imagine that getting rejected by His entire hometown must have been one of the most hurtful experiences of His life. But Jesus didn't stop. He didn't stop after Nazareth, and He didn't stop after the cross. He had a cause, a passion, a reason to go on.

"Jesus' encounters with rejection changed the way He understood His ministry. After all, Jesus spent a lot of time in little cities—not metropolitan centers. He didn't run with the "in" crowd. In fact, He was called a drunkard and a glutton and hung out with people who were very familiar with rejection.

"Jesus' rejection became someone else's salvation."

"As disciples, we're called to imitate Jesus, to take up our crosses, and perhaps even turn rejection into compassion— both for ourselves and for others. We should realize that pain is not evil, and rejection should not be feared. We shouldn't fight the feelings it invokes in us. Rather, this rejection can be used as a catalyst and chance to love others. ... Even when we suffer the results of rejection, we still have the power to accept someone else. Jesus didn't let rejection stop Him. ***Jesus was constantly responding to pain and death with resurrection.*** And we should too.

"It's time we accepted our rejection. " ¹

¹Chris Abel, for Relevant Magazine

The Proclamation

Luke 16-21

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. 17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 18 “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, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” 20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#).

Over the past couple of weeks, we have noticed the workings of the Holy Spirit within the life of Jesus. We listened to Luke describe the anointing that He received after being baptized (3:22). The same Spirit then drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tested (4:1), was present in His teaching in the synagogues throughout Galilee (4:14), bringing initial acceptance by virtually everyone.

A general consensus among scholars revealed that Jesus lived in Nazareth in Galilee from the time He was a small boy until He began His public ministry, when He was “about 30 years old”. As a faithful Jew, He would have always worshiped in this synagogue on the Sabbath (the Sabbath lasted from Friday night at sundown to Saturday night at sundown) in Nazareth. In our

passage today we see that Jesus returned to Nazareth and to the synagogue, but this time He would proclaim His role as the Messiah.

In the backdrop of everything that has happened, we can recognize that as the promised Messiah would lead and reign over Israel, Jesus was anointed by God the Father with the Holy Spirit as the rightful Messianic king of Israel. However, Jesus wanted the people to understand more of His role as the anointed prophet **to proclaim good news**. He chose the passage that highlighted the person and work of the Messiah and used it to define His mission. Jesus came to preach the gospel to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. This doesn't mean that the gospel is only for those who are impoverished. The types of people that the passage mentions are types that are weak and helpless, cast-aways in their society. This doesn't mean that the rich are not able to hear and understand the gospel, because upon truly hearing the wonderful news, people are broken and in a helpless spiritual state.

From what is known about synagogue services of that era, the reading from the Mosaic law (Hb torah) was usually prescribed, while the person chosen to read from the books of the Prophets (Hb nebi'im) had the latitude to choose any passage he wished. When Jesus was given the Isaiah scroll, He unrolled it and began reading from Isa 61:1.

Jesus stopped reading from Isa 61 in the middle of verse 2 and sat down (the normal posture for reading Scripture was standing; teaching was done while sitting). He ended the reading precisely at the phrase to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor because this is exactly what His preaching proclaimed: the season of God's grace had come in Messiah's ministry. The very next phrase in Isa 61:2, which Jesus did not read, is "and the day of our God's vengeance." This refers to the second coming of Christ and His judgment of the world (Rev

19:11-21). Thus Jesus read in the synagogue the part of Isa 61:1-2 that was being fulfilled at that time, but held off on reading the portion that would not be fulfilled until the time of judgment.

As followers of Jesus, we are to be on the same mission as He. Being on mission with Jesus does not only impact one day of the week or simply change the way we think. This mission involves all of our lives and requires that we pattern our lives around Him. Though the needs of our communities may look different than those in Jesus' time, there are many people who are lost apart from Jesus who need to be freed by the good news of the gospel.

What's the significance of Jesus' use of the Isaiah prophecy to define His mission?

How did Jesus describe His mission in verses 18-19?

How should Jesus' description of His mission impact the mission of churches today? In what ways should our lives as believers reflect the focus of His mission?

What opportunities are available in our community to reach out to the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed?

If we recognize Jesus' mission, what hinders us from joining Him in pursuing it today?

The Challenge

Romans 10:8-13

22 And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" 23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.'" What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.' " 24 And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

The immediate response to Jesus' message in the synagogue was mostly positive, as it had been elsewhere in Galilee. The people could not help but be impressed by the things Jesus taught and the manner in which He taught them. But knowing Isa 61 was a messianic prophecy, it greatly troubled the people that the young preacher whom they thought of merely as Joseph's son was claiming to be the long-awaited Messiah. Before we cast a judgmental attitude toward the people, let's consider what they would have known. They had seen Jesus throughout His life walking around Nazareth. They knew His family, and none of them seemed to be extra-ordinary. All of a sudden Jesus stood before them and proclaimed to be the long awaited Messiah. SO they questioned themselves, "This is Joseph's boy, right?"

Jesus responded to their question by using a proverb. The thought behind the proverb was something like, "You certainly make big claims; we don't think you can deliver. Why don't you do show us by doing some of those 'miracles' that we have heard about!" The people in Jesus' hometown of Nazareth, motivated by doubtful curiosity rather than genuine spiritual interest, expected to see Him heal, as they had heard about Him doing in nearby Capernaum.

Instead of satisfying them, Jesus illustrated a principle that often proved true in OT times: A prophet is not accepted in his hometown.

Their view of Jesus quickly changed as they became skeptical due to their familiarity with Him. Sharing the gospel with those closest to us may present unique obstacles. In addition to familiarity, we face an obstacle that Jesus did not, our own sin. Those closest to us are most familiar with our sin. While this is a challenge, God can use transparency about our sin as a means by which we glorify Him to others.

What demands do people sometimes make of God because they misunderstand His purpose?

Why did the Nazarenes' familiarity with Jesus present a challenge to their acceptance of His mission?

Why is it sometimes hardest to witness to a family member?

Beautiful Feet

Luke 4:25-30

25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” 28 When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, he went away. [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

Jesus' first example of a prophet being rejected by his own people was Elijah, who was so unpopular in Israel during the three years and six months of a drought that he had to seek refuge in the home of a widow in the Gentile town of Zarephath in Phoenicia, on the Mediterranean coast, northwest of Galilee (1Ki 17:1-24). The second example was the prophet Elisha, who skipped over all the lepers of Israel in his time and only healed... Naaman the Syrian, a Gentile general (2Ki 7:1-19). Jesus' use of these Old Testament prophets illustrates how God sometimes works in unexpected ways. God worked miracles through Elijah and Elisha, but not to the house of Israel. Through these prophets, God's mercy and healing was extended to Gentiles—people outside the typical Jewish concept of who was acceptable.

They were filled with wrath. Not only would Jesus not be persuaded to conform to their pressure to perform miracles at their request, but also He added the insult to injury by stating that those pagan gentiles were better than them. Jesus rocked their theology by including Gentiles in His definition of who could be righteous. In turn they wanted Him dead. A recent discovery has shed some light on the next part of the passage. It seems that in those days the Jewish people were not overly in the habit of stoning people, but if someone was dying from a fall, then they could extend mercy towards them by finishing them off by stoning. This really seems weird, but it follows the text very closely. There was not enough evidence to convict Jesus of blasphemy, but if Jesus were to fall off a cliff, they could help Him out by stoning Him to death. Picture the crowd who once was excited to see the hometown favorite Jesus, now turn into a mob that wanted Him dead. They surrounded Him shoulder to shoulder and led Him to the hill, intending to make Him fall, but Jesus walked right through the crowd. It is difficult to interpret whether this was a miracle, Luke did not elaborate on how He was able to pass through. However, we do know that Luke's point was that this was one of many times when the people wanted Jesus dead, but He would not die until the appointed time had come.

These people seemingly valued their religious customs and traditions more than the good news and healing and freedom for poor, dying, oppressed and blind people. Refusing to compromise who He was or alter His agenda to appease the critics, Jesus passed through the angry crowd unhurt, then left the town. This passage serves as reminder that we must not let customs and traditions take precedent over the mission that Jesus has called us to pursue. The crowd in the synagogue was enraged because Jesus' examples implied God's acceptance of Gentiles and His rejection of Israel. Jesus foiled their

attempt at mob violence by walking right through the crowd, an odd circumstance that may imply a miracle. Alternatively, it may only indicate that Jesus' presence was so forceful that the people, though angry, willingly stepped aside and let Him through.

Why were the people so enraged by Jesus' word in the synagogue that day?

What customs and traditions have unknowingly become more important to us than they should be?

Why do you think Jesus used the two Old Testament illustrations of Elijah and Elisha immediately after proclaiming that no prophet is accepted in his hometown?

How did the ministries of Elijah and Elisha show that God also cares about Gentiles?

What may change in our lives when we acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and understand the true nature of His mission? Is this a one time change or ongoing? Explain.

How can we imitate Jesus' concern and mercy for all people—even for those some are prejudiced against?

What specific actions can we take this week to show we accept the nature and extent of Jesus' mission?

What people or people groups in our community may sometimes be viewed as "outside" God's concern? Why do you think this view prevails even among some Christians?