

—{1}. Luke 4:16–30 Despised and Rejected of Men

A. The Rejection of Jesus, the Christ

1. Most of you are no doubt familiar with the verse in Isaiah 53 from which our sermon title this morning comes: verse 3:
 - a. “He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”
 - b. and, you probably, much as I, associate this with Good Friday and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ
 - c. and, given the context of that verse in Isaiah, that is undoubtedly true

2. but, there is a sense in which the truth of that verse goes far beyond what is one of the central events of history
 - a. for that central event, the crucifixion
 - b. is but a portrait in miniature
 - c. of what has been taking place throughout all history
 - d. beginning in the book of Genesis
 - e. through the subsequent history of all nations
 - f. and that includes the children of Israel
 - g. right down to this day, this morning
 - h. that mankind has despised and rejected God
 - i. and, that when God sent His Son, His One and Only Beloved Son, He, too, was despised, “He is despised and rejected by men”
 - j. that this happened
 - (A) throughout his earthly ministry, as we have already read today in those verses from Luke 4,
 - (B) at the end of his earthly ministry on the cross,
 - (C) and throughout history since His return to heaven

3. from this passage, Luke 4:16–30, I want to look at
 - a. Jesus’ reading the Scriptures

- b. Jesus' commentary on those Scriptures
- c. The Nazarenes' astonishment
- d. Jesus' evaluation of their reaction
- e. The Nazarenes reject Jesus, as the Christ

B. Jesus' reading the Scriptures

1. Luke 4:16 begins (NIV): **He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.**
 - a. Jesus has been baptized of John and tempted by Satan in the wilderness while He fasted for forty days
 - b. verses 14–15 tell us that He had ministered in Galilee – for how long is uncertain, but it was long enough that He had worked miracles in Capernaum and His fame had spread abroad as a result
 - c. now, He is at home, and follows His customary Sabbath day activity, that of entering the synagogue — no doubt the same synagogue that He had attended before He began His ministry — a place where He was well-known

2. the narrative proceeds (NIV): **And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:**
 - a. the scrolls were kept in an ark or box, being rolled up around pegs at either end
 - b. Luke probably is the very earliest recorder of what took place in a synagogue service. We need not infer that what took place in later centuries with a fixed format of reading certain fixed passages was the case in Jesus' time. But, the reading of the Scriptures seems to have always had a place in the forefront of the worship in the synagogue
 - c. so here, Jesus stood up, indicating a desire to read; the servant in charge of the scrolls chose one and handed it to him, and it was the scroll of the prophet Isaiah.
 - d. now these Scrolls were very long; there is one from Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls that is over 20 feet in length (that's about 6 metres for those who aren't "bilingual") – Ryan has a photomicrograph of such a Dead Sea Scroll and it still stretches some 18 in (½ metre) in length
 - e. there are no chapters, no verse marking in these scrolls, so, Jesus would stand and roll through the scroll, looking at the head of each column to see what was written: He would have to know and recognize that to know which way to turn to find what he was looking for — and we think that we have

a problem when we are asked to turn to one of the minor prophets! — Jesus knew the Scriptures
f. and he came to what are now the 58th to 61st chapters of Isaiah, and he read

3. Now Luke only records a few verses: parts of Isaiah 61: 1, 61:2 and 58:6, but I have no doubt that Jesus read somewhat more than what Luke has recorded
 - a. the use of some key verses was a customary means of identifying the Scripture being read
 - b. for example, in referring to God's words to Moses, it is spoken of as the "burning bush passage" (Luke 20: 37)
 - c. and, how would you identify a Scriptural passage when there were no chapters or verses other than this way?
 - d. Luke also leaves an indication that this is the situation by his dropping a part of Isaiah 58:6 "to set the oppressed free" right in the middle of the quoted passage
 - e. and, although Jesus was reading from the Hebrew, Luke in writing to a Gentile believer, quotes word for word, with one small exception, from the Greek translation

4. Luke 4:18–19 (NIV): "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me 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, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."
 - a. now, in English, we miss something, which is more evident in Luke's Greek writing, and is obvious in the Hebrew: "because He has anointed – Mashach – me"
 - b. the last 27 chapters of Isaiah are the prophecy of the God's suffering servant, the Messiah
 - c. now, Jesus would have read these words in Hebrew, and then explained them in Aramaic which was the dialect of the day: the two languages were close but not identical
 - d. so, as He read, He would then render the Hebrew into the current Aramaic idiom
 - e. but when Jesus came to this word "He as anointed" there would be no need for translation to Aramaic, for all would recognized that this was speaking of the appointment of Messiah; and that surrounding this appointment were all of the attendant blessings found here.

C. Jesus' commentary on those Scriptures

1. so, Jesus read, probably translating into Aramaic at proper intervals, re-rolled the scroll, gave it back to

the attendant to replaced it in the ark or box in which it was stored, and then sat down, with the eyes of everyone: townsfolk, neighbours, friends and relatives resting upon Him; waiting

2. and He gave His sermon: **"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"**

- a. now, the actual message may have been longer, but
- b. Luke has given to us the heart and kernel of what was said
- c. the fulfilment of prophecy is not events, but a Person
- d. rejoice! Messiah has come!

3. you may have sometime heard a preacher of prophecy

- a. with all sorts of charts and time lines
- b. explaining in minutiae the events that are going to occur
- c. going on at great length with ear-tickling inventions
- d. Oh! that such people would broadcast that the fulfilment of prophecy is to be found not in events but in a Person
- e. rejoice! Jesus the Christ, Messiah has died for our sin!

4. you may have heard many a sermon on the Rapture

- a. interestingly, the word from which we get the term Rapture is only found one time used that way in I Thessalonians 4
- b. and the passage goes on quickly from that event – yes, for us it is a most important event – to the main subject in chapter 5 (neither Paul nor the Holy Spirit put the chapter division in that place; that was man's doing) which is the "Parousia" – the coming presence of the majesty of the returning Messiah in all of His glory and power
- c. rejoice! Jesus the Christ, Messiah is coming again!

D. The Nazarenes' astonishment: **All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?"**

1. there are two ways to view these words

- a. one is that their amazement was that of admiration and acceptance; and this may well be so,

- b. however, their subsequent discourse and actions seem more to indicate that their amazement was that of astonishment and disbelief – how could “Joseph’s son” (and there is a world of innuendo in those words) be speaking such words

E. Jesus’ evaluation of their reaction

1. Jesus makes an assessment of their motives and attitude, then gives his response in the action of two other prophets to Israel
2. Jesus uses a proverb of that day, “Physician, heal yourself” and extends it to identify what underlies their attitude
 - a. they want to see miracles; “do wonders for us!”
 - b. “repeat your Capernaum works here”
 - c. “we won’t believe until we see proof”
3. so the assessment? ... “I tell you the truth,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his home town.” (Luke 4:24 NIV)
4. which leads to the response of God as shown in two of the noted prophets to Israel:
 - a. first there was Elijah,
 - (A) who on account of the sin of the people called on God for a drought resulting in famine.
 - (B) who performed a miracle that a widow and her son might be spared along with himself
 - (C) and who was that widow? ... a Gentile of Zarephath, a town of Phoenicia between Tyre and Sidon
 - b. then there was Elisha, his successor
 - (A) also a mighty worker of miracles
 - (B) yet, in this instance, for whom was this power used?
 - (C) not for those in Israel who might have been lepers
 - (D) but for a Gentile, Naaman, a Syrian; even an enemy
5. now to those who were present, the meaning and implication of Jesus’ words was quite clear
 - a. Elijah and Elisha were prophets to the same parts of the country as these Galileans in Nazareth lived

- b. and their calls to the people to repent were ignored
- c. so the benefits of the power of these prophets went to those who were more worthy – to the despised Gentiles
- d. and Jesus is saying that the response of the people of His home-town of Nazareth is no better
 - (A) they didn't care for God's message
 - (B) they didn't care for God's messenger:
 - (C) He didn't come in the fashion which they anticipated
 - (D) He didn't do the things that they wanted
 - (E) So they wouldn't accept Jesus as the Christ He is
- e. therefore, the blessings that He is bringing will be for those who are more worthy, even, perhaps to the Gentiles
- f. and they didn't like these words! So...

F. The Nazarenes reject Jesus, as the Christ

1. those in the synagogue erupted in anger
 - a. we've already read it
 - b. they thrust him out of the city
 - c. they led him to a cliff top
 - d. they were going to throw Him off
 - e. and then Jesus performed a miracle for them! He walked, unharmed, through their midst and went on His way
2. In another time, in another place, Jesus portray this attitude with which he met in a very graphic illustration
 - a. (Luke 7:31-32 NLT): *"How shall I describe this generation?" Jesus asked. "With what will I compare them? They are like a group of children playing a game in the public square. They complain to their friends, 'We played wedding songs, and you weren't happy, so we played funeral songs, but you weren't sad.'"*
 - b. they each had their own pet ideas of how God and how His messenger should act, what He should do
 - (A) they weren't satisfied with John the Baptist

- (B) they weren't satisfied with Jesus of Nazareth
- (C) because He didn't dance to their tune
- (D) because He didn't say the words they wanted to hear
- (E) because He didn't do the things they wanted Him to do

G. Conclusion

1. Men and women are not much changed today
 - a. they don't mind a teacher of fine morals, but they don't want a Lord who asks that they leave all and follow Him
 - b. they don't mind a good example, but they don't want to have a Saviour who had to die for punishment of their sin
 - c. they want someone who will answer their wishes in the form of prayers when they have needs, or difficulties, or wants; but not the One who tells them that their prayer will have to be "Not my will, but Thine, O God, be done"
2. so Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, "is despised and rejected of men" today
 - a. just as He was when he walked this earth
 - b. just as when He came to His own home-town and read the Scripture and gave the message and explanation
 - c. just as when He entered Jerusalem to the cries one week of "Hosanna to the One coming in the Name of the Highest!" and left Jerusalem a week later to Golgotha to the cries of the mob, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"
3. but you here this morning
 - a. one by one, each of you individually
 - b. can prove exceptions to what the mob chooses
 - c. in your heart and in your life, you can be the one in whom Jesus is not despised, is not rejected
 - d. for you have accepted Him, received Him as your Saviour
 - e. you can be a shining example in a dark, dark world, of those who know Jesus, the Christ

4. John the apostle in his gospel gave a very succinct description of this aspect of Jesus life and ministry:
(John 1: 11-13, NAS): He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
 - a. when you leave here this morning will you be rejoicing in knowing that you are a child of God? If not, then hearken to the prayer of our closing hymn, "Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne."

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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