

Gospel According to Luke

July 15, 2018

Reading: Luke 4:14-30

Sermon #13

Luke 4:14-30

Hope Rebuffed

Revelation of Hope

I want to begin by pointing out a small detail at the end of verse 16, which says Jesus “stood up to read.” This was a mark or sign of respect towards the Word of God. In case any have wondered, this is why we stand when the Scripture is read before the sermon. Tradition and liturgy are good and appropriate when they help create right thought and behavior, in this case reinforcing our need to show respect towards God’s Word.

Now let me get into what we need to learn from this morning’s scripture passage. At what seemed to be the normal response the crowd in the synagogue was in awe of Jesus’ speaking ability reading verse 20, “all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.” This was the same response of people during the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew chapter 7. If we go back to verse 15 it reads, “he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.” So Jesus had been teaching in a variety of synagogues in various areas before coming to Nazareth and people were praising his teachings. In Acts chapter 10, Luke tells us that Jesus began a preaching tour in Galilee after John baptized him and he went throughout the country teaching and then went to Jerusalem. So, up to this time people were impressed with Jesus’ teaching. However, Nazareth would be different. When I was in business if I wanted to have a training workshop for my employees, even if I was well versed in the subject, it was often better to bring someone in from outside. We tend to see anyone from

outside of town as an expert. Many considered Jesus as a prophet, but how could Jesus be a prophet or more than that, the Messiah, in his hometown?

Nazareth is different from the rest of Jesus' preaching tour. Why? Because here in Nazareth Jesus announces in verse 21, **"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"** and everything changes. Jesus says, "today" but the Jewish people were looking for God's kingdom to be established on earth in the future. Jesus is saying now is the time, now is today for God is acting in the present time. Today, this very day, captives may be freed from sin. Leaving the past for the people of Israel is just as hard as it is for people today. People do not handle change well and they often do not want the change – so they cling to the past. When someone leaves their past or in this case assumed past it is not easy. In Nazareth, with an estimated population of 2 to 4 hundred, the people saw Jesus as Joseph the carpenter's son and struggled to see him as more than that. I remember after I became a Christian at the age of 33 there were many people, family and friends, that either wanted me to stay in my past life, for misery loves company, or did not want to see me as Christ had made me anew. I really clung to the verse in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."** (2 Corinthians 5:17) I was a new creation, but Jesus was not made a new creation for he is the Creator. However, as the old saying goes, **"Familiarity breeds contempt."** It was a combination of people not wanting to see Jesus as more than a carpenter's son and the reaction of the leaders that this Sabbath service began with wonder and turned to violence.

The leaders and many of the Jewish people saw themselves as God's chosen people, righteous people and people of privilege, but Jesus says for people to receive salvation they had to admit they were sinners who were spiritually poor

and blind. Those in the synagogue were devote Jews; obeying the law, tithing, observing the ceremonies and rituals, like many cultural Christians today – but for these Jews most importantly they were Abraham’s descendants and their prideful attitude was recorded by John, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone.” (John 8:33) The first part of this statement is obviously true, but the second half seems to be ridiculously untrue. After all, historically they had been slaves or a vassal state of most of the world’s great powers: beginning with Egypt, thereafter Assyria, Babylonia, Media-Persia, Macedonia, Egypt again and Syria, then finally Rome. The statement of the Jews concerning never having been in bondage was obviously not a mere political evaluation of their history. It was instead a religious statement rooted in their conviction that they were the spiritual children of God and they were the “descendants” of Abraham. However, in reality this pride it was a way to avoid admitting their spiritual poverty and bondage to sin and their need for a Savior. In both of these incidences found in John and our passage in Luke this morning the people turned on Jesus to avoid dealing with reality of their sin. Sounds familiar, does it not?

Reading their minds, for after all Jesus is God, he says to them in verse 23, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ ” Jesus knows the people are wanting him to prove to them he is the Messiah. They want miracles. Jesus knows what they are thinking and they wanted proof. So, he voices what is on their minds, saying, “What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.” They wanted the same signs and miracles they had heard Jesus had done in Capernaum. It was not a matter of lack of proof, but the hardness of their hearts. Mark goes into a little more detail writing of Jesus’ ministry in Nazareth, “And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And he marveled because of

their unbelief.” (Mark 6:5-6) No one, even the temple leadership ever questioned the reality of the miracles Jesus performed – there was too many witnesses and too many supporting facts. The sad thing is even though they admitted Jesus did miracles, because of the hardness of their hearts, they would not accept the truth of what these miracles proved concerning Jesus. As we can observe throughout Jesus’ ministry there were never enough miracles and people always wanted more. Is this not the same today? In order to not have to face their sin people will go to extremes to deny God. Matthew’s record shows we have the same problem today, **“Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him Jesus, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, ‘Can this be the Son of David?’ ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.’ ”** (Matthew 12:22-24) Their logic defies all reason and truth. How can the devil cast out demons? Jesus recognizes that because they knew him as child and his family it would be difficult for the people of Nazareth to believe no matter how miracles he performed. The people of Nazareth saw Jesus through the lens of his past; therefore, he says in verse 24, **“Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.”** Jesus was an unwelcome prophet in his hometown, so he makes this brilliant transition in verses 25 to 27.

Rejections of Hope

Jesus in effect says, since I am unwanted prophet, I am in good company. What about Elijah and Elisha? Jesus says beginning in verse 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.” Elijah prophesied during the reign of Ahab from 871 to 852 B.C. Ahab was wicked, as recorded in 1 Kings, “Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.” (1 Kings 16:33) From king Saul to king Ahab were a total of 9 kings and Ahab was more wicked than them all. He desired to kill Elijah the prophet of God. The Jewish people did not like being reminded of how Elijah had announced God would shut the skies and it would not rain for 3 ½ years. The hard part of this story was that God did not send Elijah to an Israelite widow, even though there were many, but to a widow who was a Gentile, a foreigner and not a descendant of Abraham. In fact, Sidon was the homeland of queen Jezebel and she too was wicked. We know this widow, a non-Jew was a believer in the God of Israel from the story in 1 Kings chapter 17 when Elijah meets her and heals her son and her responses. She begins by saying to Elijah, “As the LORD your God lives ... What have you against me, O man of God? ... Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.” (1 Kings 17:12, 18, 24) This widow who was a non-Jew, admitted her helplessness and the Jews before Jesus in the Nazarene synagogue would not. God is not limited; it is only mankind that wants to limit God to keep from facing their lost state.

But Jesus is not through making his point. He now brings up the successor to Elijah, the prophet Elisha. Verse 27 reads, “there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” Elijah had gone to a Gentile woman and Elisha goes even further, Naaman was not only a Gentile, but he was also a leper and therefore an outcast. On top of this Naaman was commander of the military for the Syrian king Aram, who the Lord also commanded to defeat Israel in battle. The prophet Elisha told the

general to bathe in the Jordan River and he humbled himself and was cleansed of his leprosy. Jesus' point is clear - God brought salvation by His arrival and not only to Abraham's descendants but to those who recognized their spiritual need for salvation.

The question I mulled over is, do they not believe or do they know there is a God but do not want to be accountable to their Creator? This brings up the topics of God's "General Revelation" and "Effective Call". If we move to the new location this would enable us to come together on a Wednesday night to learn what the difference is between these two and have a Bible study to understand these. Quickly I will give you a definition of both.

General Revelation: The knowledge of God's existence, nature and moral law that is made known through creation to all mankind. Paul said it this way, "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1:19-21)

Effective Call: Is the act of God, speaking through the human proclamation of the Gospel of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit by which people's souls are regenerated and they respond to Him in saving faith. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:44) God uses believers to preach, teach

and proclaim his written Word, the Bible, and his Living Word Jesus to draw those people he has chosen to him.

Rage Again Hope

Returning back to Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth, by his using Elijah and Elisha the people in the synagogue go from worshippers to a mob because of their self-righteousness and denied sin. Reading at verse 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.” Jesus had only quoted and taught out of the Scripture of God, he had taught truth, but like most people they did not want the truth of God but the false reality of man-made truth that is relative. Their self-righteous egos were assaulted by God’s truth and they desired to kill Jesus. God’s plans will always be fulfilled and Jesus’ time had not come. So Jesus, “passed through their midst, he went away.” I quoted Mark earlier, “And he *Jesus* could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And he marveled because of their unbelief.” (Mark 6:5-6) I would take exception to Mark and say that Jesus “passing through their midst, he went away” was indeed a mighty work or miracle. However, it was not the miracle the people had asked for. In Capernaum Jesus did many signs and wonders; healing the ill, casting out demons, healing Peter’s mother-in-law and healing the paralytic man let down through the roof are just some of his miracles. The people of Nazareth wanted to see these types of miracles. Even if Jesus had done many miracles it would not have been enough and many would continue to not believe.

This righteous mob from the synagogue refusal to admit their spiritual need and bondage stands in stark contrast to the Old Testament stories he told of the repentant Gentile Sidon widow and Syrian army general who was a leper. James, the brother of Jesus wrote, “Do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, ‘He God yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us’? ⁶But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” (James 4:5-8) It is the effectual calling of God that begins the process of drawing one to Christ.

Many of the church models today are called “seeker sensitive” but this what not what Jesus did; he preached the Scriptures and God’s truth. Canyon Bible Church desires to model itself after Jesus; preaching the Scriptures and God’s truth which convicts and brings those with regenerate souls to their knees before a holy God. The darker the world becomes the brighter will the remnant church’s spiritual light shine and draw people to seek Christ.

May we fully understand our mission here on earth until we die or Jesus returns! Let me bless you so that when you leave here and reenter the world you may be strengthened to stand firm in the midst of spiritual warfare. From Paul’s letter to the faithful in Corinth, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14) May you have the power and grace of our Triune God to live out the Gospel. Amen!

We will close in song and then take a few minutes to come together in small groups to pray – giving thanks to God, interceding for each other, praying for our

nation, state and community, praying for those we love who need a Savior and praying for discernment considering moving out church location.

Then we will spend a couple of minutes talking about the possible move to the new location.