

Rejected  
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Luke 4:16-30

Towns love to celebrate their “hometown heroes!” We’ve all seen the signs when you drive or fly into some cities hailing the famous people they claim as one of their own. Sometimes they erect statues or name buildings, airports, and streets saluting these sons and daughters of their community. Not so in Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth during his earthly ministry. There were no brass bands, banners, or keys to the city. Though Jesus was celebrated elsewhere in Galilee, He was rejected in His hometown. Why was that? What caused that? What causes people to reject Him today?

Some people reject Jesus’ offer of salvation because they reject God in general. Others are open to "religion" if it comes with benefits and no inconvenience. Some consider themselves religious but they want a "custom Messiah." They want to customize Jesus to be the way THEY want Him to be.

Big Idea: The promise of eternal life only comes to those who accept Jesus as we see Him in scripture. He is Savior and Lord, not a “custom Messiah.” Sadly, some simply refuse to accept Him for Who He is.

- Before the text, some context. Though Luke positions this right after Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, the other gospels indicate that His ministry of preaching and healing was well underway before this “guest appearance” in His home synagogue in Nazareth.
- 4:14-15 tell us, *“Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. <sup>15</sup> He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.”<sup>i</sup>* 4:23 indicates that the citizens of Nazareth were well aware of the healing ministry of this “hometown boy.” Sadly, to quote Jesus himself, *“no prophet is accepted in his own hometown.”<sup>ii</sup>*

Luke 4:16–30 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, <sup>18</sup> “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, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” <sup>22</sup> 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?” <sup>23</sup> 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.’” <sup>24</sup> And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. <sup>25</sup> 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, <sup>26</sup> and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. <sup>27</sup> 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.” <sup>28</sup> When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> But passing through their midst, he went away.

- “As was His custom” Jesus went to they synagogue on the Sabbath. Even the Son of God valued being in God’s house. [Not shaming anyone who isn’t yet able or comfortable with in-person worship during COVID-19.]
- Matthew and Mark also documented this incident in Jesus’ “home church” but as is typical of Luke, he gives us more detail.
- It was not unusual for a “guest rabbi” to teach the congregation. Jesus followed the pattern of reading the passage and then teaching about it.

- He taught from the prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-2. We don't know whether He requested this scroll specifically or if it was the scripture for that day, but God the Father orchestrated that choice of text either way.
- That prophecy would have been familiar to this hometown congregation. These words were an "autobiographical" quote that Isaiah prophesied could only be spoken by the coming Messiah.
- The Messiah would be anointed by God's Spirit to bring good news of salvation to the spiritually bankrupt, physical and spiritual healing, and spiritual freedom (liberty) to those oppressed and captive to sin. He would usher in the "year of the Lord's favor." A "jubilee" era when God would right all wrongs for His people (Lev 25:10). *"The [Old Testament] year of the total forgiveness of debt is now turned into a metaphor for salvation. Jesus had come to proclaim that God was ready to forgive sin totally."*<sup>iii</sup>
- As was the custom, Jesus stood to read the text then sat down to teach.
- Verse 20 says every eye was fixed on him. *"What would He say?"*
- His exposition of the text was amazing, even shocking! *"The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"*<sup>iv</sup> *"Wait, what? Did Jesus, Mary and Joseph's boy just claim to be the Messiah? I think so!"*
- The next few minutes became a rollercoaster of reaction from the people.
- First, they "spoke well of him and marveled at [His] gracious words."
- *"Could it be that our hometown hero is actually the Messiah? Everyone has heard about all that healing He's been doing in Capernaum."*
- *"Wait a minute, this can't be. We know him. We watched him grow up. He's one of us." "But, what about all that healing? We sure need some healing here in Nazareth!"*
- Before they could say it out loud, Jesus knew what they were thinking.

- He spoke again: *“You’re thinking of that old proverb, ‘physician heal yourself.’ You want me to be your “hometown healer” for Nazareth.”*
- Jesus knew they wanted the benefits of His ministry without accepting ALL of His teaching. He knew when He proclaimed what it means to be His disciple, this “prophet wouldn’t be acceptable” to His hometown crowd.
- To make His point He used two historical examples of God’s prophets whom Israel had rejected. When Israel wouldn’t believe their teaching, God directed Elijah and Elisha to offer His healing to Gentile people.
- The “reaction rollercoaster” just took a steep drop! The congregation realized that not only was Jesus claiming to be the Messiah, He was teaching that He would bring salvation for Gentiles as well as the Jews. This offended their core belief that the Messiah was coming only to the Jews. They went from impressed to enraged!
- *“I told you this guy that grew up down the block couldn’t be the Messiah! He needs to be run out of Nazareth! No, He needs to be thrown off a cliff!”*
- They tried, but it wasn’t time for His death. That would come later.
- Jesus hometown congregation was initially excited that one of their own might be the Messiah, but only if He was the Messiah they had in mind.
- They wanted all the benefits of His healing but none of the obedience.
- And this business about Gentiles, they couldn’t put up with that!
- *“No Messiah of ours would say these things! “*
- *“We’ll take a pass on this Jesus, we want a “custom Messiah” of our own.”*
- It’s not that different today. Why do people reject the Jesus of scripture?
- Here are some examples of why people reject Him as Savior and Lord:
  - They don’t think they need a Savior. *“I’m basically a good person.”*
  - They don’t accept that Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6)

- They fear losing all their social connections. (John 12:42-43)
- They don't want to give up the sin they enjoy. (John 1:19)
- Their hearts are calloused from rejecting the Holy Spirit. (Acts 7:51)
- Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2, but if you look at Isaiah 61:2 you'll notice that He stopped the quote in the middle of that verse. After He said He came to "*proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*" there is a comma. After the comma it reads: "*and the day of vengeance of our God...*"
- Warren Wiersbe writes, "*The people who do not want Him and who reject 'the acceptable year of the Lord' will one day face 'the day of vengeance of our God' (Isa. 61:2). How significant that Jesus stopped reading at that very place!*"<sup>v</sup>
- Jesus always told the truth and holding up a mirror could rile up a crowd.
- Darrell Bock writes, "*The church has a difficult task. On the one hand, to discuss redemption and release we must mention sin. On the other hand, the offer of the gospel is ultimately positive, so that the goal is not a message of doom but of hope.*"<sup>vi</sup>

### So, What's the Takeaway?

- The promise of eternal life only comes to those who accept Jesus as we see Him in scripture. He is Savior and Lord, not a "custom Messiah" with commands we can "pick and choose" to follow or reject.
- Sadly, some simply refuse to accept Him for Who He is.
- How does this passage apply to us this week?
- First, if we claim Him as Lord we need to examine our own hearts for any area where we might be doing some "picking and choosing" of how we respond to His commands in scripture. Have we accepted Him as Savior but not fully surrendered to Him as Lord? Repentance isn't just for pagans!
- What about when those you love reject Christ? It's a painful situation every believer will face. How should we respond when this happens?
  - First, don't take it personally. It can feel like they are rejecting us when they reject Christ. Love them and preserve the relationship.

- Remember that God is God and we're not. Only the Holy Spirit can change a heart. It's hard to watch a loved one rejecting Christ so we might tend to think WE can change their heart. We can't change their heart, only God CAN. We need to trust His will for their life.
- We need to be loving witness who doesn't push them further away. Though our heart breaks over the situation, our tone in witnessing to them is very important. Anything that feels like withdrawing your love for them or rejecting them will do harm. You don't have to condone sin but it's likely they know where you stand already.
- Keep being a "light" and trust that God may be working even if you don't see outward evidence of heart change yet. That can mean giving them some "space" while He works.
- Finally, PRAY without ceasing in these ways:
  - Ask God to direct you on when and how to talk to them about Him. We need the Spirit's direction to help us balance our urgency for not wanting them to spend eternity apart from Christ with the danger of pushing them away from Him.
  - Pray for the Spirit to do the work of drawing them to Himself.
  - Ask God to give us peace to accept His sovereignty.
- This week let's thank God that He sent a Messiah for all people who offers healing, freedom, and favor not because we deserve it but because of His mercy and grace.

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<sup>i</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Lk 4:14–

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Lk 4:24). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> Biblical Studies Press. (2006). [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Lk 4:19). Biblical Studies Press.

<sup>iv</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Lk 4:21). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>v</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 185). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>vi</sup> Bock, Darrell L.. Luke: The NIV Application Commentary from Biblical Text to Contemporary Life (p. 143). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.