

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: April 13, 2008

Disregarded By Past Acquaintances

by Dan Trygg

“And He said, “Truly I say to you, “no prophet is welcome in his hometown.”

Luke 4:24

Luke 4:14-30 follows immediately upon the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (cf. Matt. 4:1-11). While it alludes to the growing ministry and popularity of Jesus, **the main point of this passage has to do with His preaching at His hometown, Nazareth.** He had been preaching for probably over a year by this time. Although His first public miracle had been at Cana (Jn. 2:1-11), less than 10 miles away from Nazareth, He had spent much of His time ministering in Judea, or in the region around the Sea of Galilee (Jn. 2:13-4:3; cf. Lk. 4:23). During His time away, He was teaching in the synagogues of the Jews, and doing many miracles in conjunction with His preaching. Luke is careful to point out that it was the “power of the Spirit” that enabled Jesus to do this (4:14), and reports of His exploits had made their way back to Nazareth. So, now that He has finally returned home, the people were expecting Him to do similar things there. The little village was abuzz with all the excitement and anticipation.

Luke introduces this particular incident, “And He came to Nazareth, where He was brought up...”(vs.16). This is critical information. **This was not just another crowd of people. These were the folks who knew Him from childhood.** They had seen Him grow up from a scrawny kid to manhood. He had played in their streets, and for many years had served them in business as a carpenter. He was part of their community, one of them, one of their peers. Now they had heard rumors of His preaching and miracles. Some had even witnessed these at the feast in Jerusalem, or they had heard of (or seen) the wonderful signs that took place at Capernaum in conjunction with His ministry (cf. Jn. 2:12,23-25; 4:43-54). What was going on? What had come over this small town boy?

One of the themes which Luke desired to communicate to his readers throughout his gospel was the consistency and depth of Jesus spiritual life. One aspect of that was that **He customarily attended the synagogue meetings.** Thus, we read, “...and He entered, according to His (personal) custom on the day of the Sabbath, into the synagogue...” (4:16). From the time He was a child, He had done this. This was a habit and expectation established by Joseph and Mary which He had made His own. What had begun as a matter of submission to His parent’s wishes had become a customary rhythm of His own life. The synagogue was a place where there were songs of worship, the scriptures were read and some exposition of them was presented, and corporate prayers were offered to God. This part of His life had not changed, even though already His days were becoming quite hectic. **To Him, busy-ness, or even exhaustion, were not excuses to justify skipping out on the gathering of God’s people.**

What happened in that synagogue meeting at Nazareth that day?

(1.) Jesus read from the scriptures. He read Isaiah 61:1,2a, a passage about the preaching and healing ministry of the Messiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has *anointed* Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

(2.) Jesus taught from the scriptures. After reading, He then rolled up the scroll and handed it back to the attendant and began His teaching with, **“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” To Jesus, these words were a declaration of what His ministry was all about.** This passage certainly agreed with what He was beginning to do. He was preaching good news. He was setting people free of sickness, demonic oppression, and offering the release of forgiveness to those weighed down with sin. This *was* good news!

Let’s break this down a bit more: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” – This certainly was Jesus’ experience. It was what happened after His baptism, and was intensified after His testing in the wilderness. “He has anointed me” – **The title “Christ” or “Messiah” literally meant “anointed one”.** Thus to quote this in reference to Himself could be understood to be a claim to being the Messianic King. “To preach good news to the poor” – The word for “poor” here means people who are destitute, in need of support or help of others, beggarly. It implies not only that they are poor, but that they are also asking for help. Good news to a poor person would be the promise of a better life, an end to their poverty. **Jesus came to declare good news to people in need.** “He has sent me to proclaim release from captives” – The word for “sent” is the verbal form of the word “apostle”. **Jesus was sent out by the Father** as His representative, just like He would later send His apostles out to represent Him (Jn. 17:18). Note that He was sent out “to preach” or “proclaim”. His job was primarily a declarative role. **He came to announce the Kingdom of God. Then**

it was up to His listeners to respond. This was the other side of His message, “Repent, and believe the good news” (Mk. 1:14,15). The word for “release” is another word that means “to send away”. The same word is used in relation to sinners as the “sending-away” or “forgiveness” of sin. He proclaimed release or forgiveness to people held captive. The verse doesn’t specify what kind of captivity, physical or spiritual. Just that these people are held prisoner by something or someone. **Jesus came to set prisoners free.** The next couplet is “recovery of sight to the blind” - So that they might see again. Literally blind, or spiritually? The verse is open to interpretation. **Jesus came to give sight to blind people.** “To send away at liberty the oppressed” – This is a powerful word picture in the Greek. It literally refers to those who “have been beaten, bruised and broken in pieces” by life, referring either to emotional or physical brokenness. Literally, the Greek is “to send away the ones having been traumatized-to-brokenness in release or forgiveness (the same word as used for release/forgiveness of captives). **Jesus came to set broken people free from past pain, as well as from their own resentments against those who hurt them.** All of this could have been understood in terms of political revolution, or as a spiritual awakening and healing.

What went wrong? We don’t know all that Jesus was saying. At first, the townspeople were amazed at Jesus’ teaching, surprised and marveling at the words of grace coming from His mouth. They said to one another, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” At that moment, **they stopped focusing on what He was saying and, instead, began to close their hearts to Him as the messenger.** He had surprised them, and now **they sought to impose their former expectations of Him back upon Him, i.e., to put Him in His place,** so to speak. This is a “counter-move” or “change-back reaction” such as is common when one person in a relationship begins to change. The others in relationship will notice the change and attempt to counteract the change by some kind of resistance, often by an oppositional statement or act, designed to keep the person from changing their way of relating to them.

The response of the people also tells us is that Jesus was acting differently than He had when He was growing up. Apparently, He had never been this outspoken before. If He had taught in the synagogue before, it was not to promote Himself, in any way. Certainly, He had not done miracles there in the past. Furthermore, if they were understanding the implications of the Isaiah passage, He seemed to be claiming to be their Messiah. If true, (and they were sure it was *not*) this would mean that they would have to serve *Him* as their King. He had been a nobody to them. They were not at all open to accepting *that* kind of change! They were *offended* at the thought!

Jesus sensed their growing resistance and changed the direction His message was going. He could detect their, “Oh, yeah. Prove it!” attitude beginning to build. Instead of continuing to preach the good news alone, He began to talk about responsibility. He correctly diagnosed the root of their objection. They thought they had Him pegged, and **they were unwilling to consider that God might be choosing to speak to them through Him.** Therefore **He warned them of the danger of rejecting the messenger of God** by bringing up two parallel examples from the past. Elijah was a prophet of God, and yet because Israel rejected his message, the Lord sent him to a Gentile woman in the heart of pagan Sidon, to be cared for (I Kg. 17). Again, although there were many lepers in Israel, only the Gentile Naaman, from Syria, came to the prophet Elisha seeking healing, and *he* was healed (II Kg. 5). The point of these examples was that **if they rejected Jesus because of their unwillingness to believe He could be the messenger from God, they not only would miss out on the benefits God had for them, but God would turn His face toward others,** even those outside of Israel, to be the recipients of His grace. The principle, “A prophet is without honor in his own home town” is found in every gospel (Matt. 13:57; Mk. 6:4; Lk. 4:24; Jn. 4:44). It is meant to serve as a warning to us.

God may choose to speak through people we may deem as unlikely (cf. I Cor. 1:18-31).

**Or, He may ask us to do something that is a departure from our past character or behavior,
...and we may meet resistance from family or friends, just as Jesus did.**

We must continue to press on, anyway, leaving the results to God.

They rejected Jesus, so we should not be surprised that people will reject us (Matt. 10:24-25).

Vs. 28 tells us that they “were filled with rage as they heard these things”. Certainly at the core of this extreme reaction was a deep-seated belief that *they* were God’s people, and that the only way to have relationship with Him was to become a Jew. As an oppressed people, dominated by foreign invaders who cared nothing about their beliefs or customs, this holier-than-thou attitude of spiritual superiority was fiercely held, and they were not about to consider that it may be mistaken. In any case, they were prepared to throw Jesus down from the cliff upon which the city of Nazareth was built in order to prevent Him from continuing to probe at this false-pride. He, however, by God’s grace, was able to escape, “passing through their midst”, and He went His way.