

Part 13: Jesus, the Hometown Hated

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In the midst of a nation in disrepair, a young and idealistic leader stepped up to a broadcast microphone and delivered a rousing vision of hope and promise saying, "We will work as our first and supreme task to restore to people unity of mind and will. We will preserve and defend the foundations on which the strength of our nation rests. We will take under its firm protection, Christianity as the basis of our morality and the family as the nucleus of our nation and state...we will bring back to our people the consciousness of its racial and political unity and the obligations these brings."

Here we have language, aside from the reference to Christianity, which is compelling even today in our modern minds. Unity, restoration, peace, morality—this is a good and a compelling vision to be followed.

But there is one problem with this call. It has less to do with what it offers, and more to do with who offers it. This is a quote from Adolf Hitler's first radio address to the German people in 1933.

With the aid of history we can easily see that this salvation was no salvation, this Christianity no biblical Christianity, and this savior, no savior at all. Through the lens of history we might easily see the salvation we wanted, but the savior we didn't.

But if we rewind the clock some thousand years or so we can encounter another young leader, who stood up in a Jewish synagogue in a historically forgotten region, who also delivered a compelling call for restoration, freedom and salvation. But where Hitler's façade of hope was met with cheers of acceptance from his own people, the message of this historic figure, which offered the promise of something Hitler couldn't even dream of, was ultimately not met with cheers of acceptance but instead an aggressive and murderous mob.

You see our world understands that the promise of salvation is only as good as the savior who offers it. Where history has shown the evil depravity of Adolf Hitler, and therefore the pipe dream of his offers of safety, our study through the book of Luke, and the history of the Christian church, has shown that the man Jesus Christ, is of unparalleled character and his salvation is wider, lovelier, and more stunning than anything man could ever dream up.

Today, Jesus is going to quote a prophecy of salvation from the book of Isaiah which will make almost anyone in our culture today stand up and cheer. But our text shows it's not the message of salvation which people take issue with, but instead the person of the savior himself.

This Sunday we encounter a very fitting story given that it is Palm Sunday, the Sunday before we celebrate Easter. On Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem to cheers and acceptance, only to be killed as a criminal five days later. While we read that story earlier this morning, our passage in Luke today portrays not the final moments of Jesus' ministry on earth, but instead the beginnings of it. Yet the pattern is set: the person of Jesus is controversial and responses vary.

One author famously said: "The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God."

As Luke has spent the last few chapters showing us the reality and quality of who Jesus really is--the eternal second person of the Trinity born fully God and fully man--today we see how that impacts his ministry, but most importantly how that impacts those who wish to experience his salvation.

In other words, what is your idea of God and how does the person and the salvation of Jesus Christ sit with you?

Our main point this morning is: **The privilege of salvation is for those who receive Jesus with hearts full of worship.** This is outlined for us in the two portions of Jesus' teaching in our text. First we are going to **Hear the Message of Salvation** in verses 14-22a, but then we are going to see how we **Respond to the Man of Salvation** in verses 22b-30.

Luke begins our passage today with a bit of context: **Luke 4:14-15.**

After four chapters of prophecy and proofs and thirty years of life, Jesus finally begins his public ministry.

Thus far his ministry is characterized by three things: First, he is full of the Holy Spirit. Second, it's a localized but mobile ministry at this point. In other words Jesus' ministry is more like In-and-Out than McDonalds. He's not touring the whole Israel, only one region--the northern region which is furthest from the cultural center of Jerusalem. Lastly we see the response to Jesus ministry: people glorified him. Jesus was going from Jewish synagogue to Jewish synagogue and teaching people with the result being worship.

So at this point Jesus had set a pattern of a mobile ministry, teaching specifically on the Sabbath in Jewish synagogues, and being glorified by who? By all. This is all very important for us to understand as we begin our passage today where Jesus the prophet who was growing in fame brings his ministry to his hometown for the first time.

Perhaps you've read stories or seen news pieces when a war hero, or even a championship sports team comes home after they've gained fame and popularity. These small towns prepare by stringing up banners, maybe even throwing a parade. And because in small towns everyone knows everyone the relationships and shared experience are what heighten the whole celebration.

But even with this expectant welcome part at some point something goes terribly wrong. But before we get there we need to first submit ourselves to the text. This is where we encounter Jesus' first teaching in Nazareth and our first point today: **Hear the Message of Salvation.**

Read with me this stirring picture of hope in **Luke 4:16-22a.**

So what might be lost on us today was of astounding significance to the people who gathered to listen to this hometown hero. Everything that came out of Jesus' mouth here was astounding.

First, you'll notice the scroll of Isaiah was handed to him. The scroll of Isaiah is a copy of what we have today in our Old Testaments as the book of Isaiah.

This specific prophet was significant because Isaiah told Israel that they were going to be judged for their unbelief, but that God would eventually restore them back to his favor. This judgement and restoration would have been of great significance to this particular region of Galilee because it was the Northern Tribes who were judged first by the nation of Assyria.

Even when the exiles returned from Babylon most of the economic restoration focused on the southern part of the nation and Jerusalem. These Nazarenes probably felt a little left out. And they sat not under Assyrian rule, or Babylonian rule, they still sat under Roman rule. Meaning this whole area ached for the privilege of restoration.

So as the news of Jesus' message was getting out, I imagine someone handed Jesus this scroll as if to say: "Give us some of that salvation talk as well."

The part Jesus opened to described in detail the turning of God's favor once more to his people. It even described the inversion where the oppressed nation of Israel would rise up and rule over the other nations.

But the part of the scroll that Jesus chose focused less on the effect of salvation and instead focused on the person of salvation. This is from Isaiah 61, and look again at what Jesus read: **Luke 4:17-20**.

So Jesus opens the scroll of Isaiah and he reads a specific portion which speaks of a specific person who brings salvation on a massive level.

This text keys on one individual: The Lord's anointed. If you were with us a few weeks ago, it is from this anointed language which we get the word "messiah," or in Greek the word "Christ." But for us today, and for those who read it, it is no stretch to read the anointed as "savior."

There were many people who were anointed for specific tasks by God in the Old Testament, but the Jews knew at this point that there was also *the anointed*--that is there is a salvation so big and so broad that there was only one person, one individual so indwelt with God's righteous power, who could accomplish it.

The ministry of this individual is defined in verse 18. He would "proclaim good news." Here we see again one of Luke's favorite words return. What would the Lord's anointed do? He would be "gospelizing" or "good newsing."

Yes, this anointed one would set people free, but we also see that this salvation is a message. God not only plans to do something good, but he intends for it to be declared to people. He wants us to know it.

The man, who had this message, was going to do the work of speaking to the poor, proclaiming liberty to the captive, healing to the blind, setting free those who are oppressed. But more importantly this one man, this messiah, was going to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

This idea of favor really does mean that God's disposition will be happy towards you. But it also echoed back to what Jews knew as the year of jubilee. Every 50 years in Israel was the year of Jubilee. On that

year, all debts were cancelled, all servants were released, all land that was transferred or claimed was returned to its original family groups. In other words when we are brought back into the Lord's favor, when those who were once far off are restored back to God the whole of our life is restored, redeemed and reoriented.

We live in a world where we are sold products and promises which never live up to our standards. When we buy something branded to be the "best," or the "longest lasting" we understand what they are trying to communicate but we also don't really expect that to be true do we? We aren't surprised if something better or more durable comes out.

But for many of us this reality has changed how we think about God's salvation. We often think that in turning to God we find a renewed purpose in life. We find a worldview which makes sense of reality. We find a framework through which to view politics and morality. We find a culture to which we can belong for community and care. And while all those things are found inside of God's good news, God's good news is primarily centered not on life enhancement, but life itself.

It doesn't enhance our sight. It gives us sight. It doesn't give the oppressed a plan for freedom, it sets the oppressed free.

Whatever your thoughts on God might be, before we move on I want you to consider why you are attracted to God's salvation. Do you see in the message of God's salvation, for whoever you are and whatever your issues might be, the promise of freedom and intimacy with the God who loves you? Do you see the promise of new life itself?

It was this holistic understanding and anticipation which caused the Nazarenes to eagerly await Jesus' message on this passage. Jesus had told the people that the man with the message of magnificent freedom would come. So what's next?

And Jesus replied: **Luke 4:21-22a.**

So what is Jesus saying here? He's proving that he is in fact the messiah and that his message is this very message of salvation. He didn't say, "It's coming," or "It will be fulfilled." He said, "It is fulfilled." Now this is really important because this shows that at this point Jesus isn't talking about the completed work of salvation yet. It's very obvious that there are still captives, there are still oppressed, there are still the poor and blind.

But what the fulfillment of this message means is that the Lord's anointed, the Spirit-filled messiah, the good news-proclaiming, liberty-setting, sight-restoring, captive-freeing, favor-giving savior was there. Salvation had begun because the savior had come with his wonderful good news. And those Nazarenes who sat on the fringe marveled at his words.

But if you have your Bible's open skip down a few verses with me to **Luke 4:28-29.**

Despite the gracious words of Jesus, there was something that took their amazement and changed it to aggression. How did this happen? How did the hometown hero become the hometown hated?

This is where we see the how easy it is to love the idea of God's salvation, but our response to God's savior is the most important response. What we see in Nazareth is if we don't see God's savior, then it doesn't matter what we hear or what we see, we will not see his salvation.

This is our second point this morning: **Respond to the Man of Salvation.**

Read with me **Luke 4:22b-30.**

So what went wrong? Their response to Jesus was incomplete at best and hostile at worst because their familiarity with Jesus provoked their pride. They couldn't see who Jesus was because they were blinded by their own high view of themselves.

We begin to see the problem of what is going on when we hold in contrast two specific verses. First, look at **Luke 4:15.** As we saw everyone in Galilee who heard Jesus' message was responding directly to him with by glorifying and praising him. But what of those in Nazareth? **Luke 4:22.**

So what do we see here? I think we see the danger of assumption.

They assumed that speaking well of Jesus was the same as worshipping Jesus. They assumed that knowing the words of Jesus was the same as knowing the person of Jesus.

Speaking well sounds really good. Do you speak well of Jesus? Good. But do you worship him? Do you glorify him? Do you praise him? It's easy to change our social media bio to some marker of Christianity, or to slap a Christian bumper sticker on your car. But verbally identifying with Jesus is far different than glorifying him with your life. If tomorrow you woke up and you were mute, would your worship of Jesus till remain?

Did you notice Luke's subtle emphasis on what they marveled at? They marveled at the words that came out of his mouth. Despite the fact that Jesus' words pointed exclusively to his person, they couldn't get there. They were so captivated by the promise of salvation that they refused to marvel at the source of it standing in front of them.

How easy is it for us like, like Simon the Magician, to come to Jesus for his words and his wonder but to leave his person completely neglected? Knowing right doctrine, even having biblical vocabulary is nothing if the words of God don't get us to the savior of God.

Here we see a warning to anyone who thinks they know the message of salvation. Hearing the good news of grace, hearing the wonderful hope of salvation to the weak, wounded and wayward is no good if like the Nazarenes we fix our eyes without fixing our hearts. Consider God's word in **Isaiah 29:13a.**

These people saw the salvation of the Lord and assumed that seeing Jesus and saying Jesus-y things was sufficient for saving, but it's not. Has your relationship with Jesus or with his word led you to assume you've found salvation without finding Jesus?

But more than blind assumptions are also warned of the dangerous response of presumption.

More than simply assuming, presuming does some work, it investigates a little bit and comes to an informed, but not fully informed conclusion. The Nazarenes heard all of this and they presumed that given who they were, and given who Jesus was, of course he'd save them. Look at **Luke 4:22-23**.

Why do they expect Jesus to do those mighty works in Nazareth? Because he's Joseph's boy! There are plenty of small town football stadiums that are named after small town stars who made it big and donated money to rebuild the stadium. Why did they do that? Because that town played a role in making them who they were.

That's the danger of presumption. These townspeople probably assumed that Jesus owed it to them. Of course he wouldn't neglect his own hometown some of his miraculous prestige, they knew him! More than that, they don't bat an eye at Jesus' message of salvation because they already presumed it would be for them.

They are Israelites. Of course God would send his messiah, of course he would set us free, of course God would be favorable towards us. We are his special people!

This is the same privilege people boasted of in Luke 3 when John the Baptist called people to repent and they said, "Repent!? We are Abraham's children, we don't need to repent! Of course God will accept us!"

Do you remember the repetition we have seen the past few weeks of Luke? Jesus at every corner is being shown to be who? The son of God. Which is what makes the question of the Nazarenes so telling of their heart. Jesus is not just the son of Joseph. He is the son of God.

Here is the danger of presumption. How easy is it for us to look at our own lives and say, "This salvation is great, and of course God would save me. I can do a lot for him." "Of course Jesus would save me, I'm a middle-class American that's who we are."

I want to speak specifically to kids who are in here today. I'm guessing that if you are here, it's because you're parents brought you here. I'm so grateful for that. The Bible makes it clear that there is a wonderful and beautiful blessing of being in a family that raises you in the knowledge of God. But I want you to hear clearly that you do not belong to Jesus because your parents love Jesus. You do not belong to Jesus because you go to church. You will not be saved because Jesus saved your parents. Don't presume that.

You will be saved when you believe in Jesus because Jesus has mercy on undeserving sinners. This is where the pride of the Nazarenes is pricked as the straw which broke the camel's back.

Jesus reaches into the heart of ethnic and presumptive privilege and confronts it with two illustrations from the Old Testament: **Luke 4:24-30**.

So here Jesus really leans into their ethnic privilege by saying: "You think you're worthy of me because I lived here? Do you remember Elijah and the famine? Do you remember Elisha and Naaman?"

A bit of background, both Elijah and Elisha were prophets sent to serve Israel and call them back to repentance. But while the whole of Israel was in a famine, the Lord sent Elijah not an Israelite family to

be fed and cared for. But to a family who lived in Sidon, not Israel. More than he wasn't sent to a typical family, but a female widow who by nature of her station in life was on the outskirts of cultural value.

But when Elijah came, the widow cared for him and God miraculously provided food for them the whole famine while Israel suffered.

Elisha, served Israel when wars and political conflict raged all around. Naaman was a military officer of a nation who previously attacked Israel. He also had leprosy. He was according to the Israelites, not only a mortal enemy, but an unclean person. Yet it was Naaman's slave girl, an Israelite who was captured on a raid, who told her master of the great God of Israel.

Elisha didn't heal the lepers in Israel, but he healed a foreigner who had no standing or belonging with the God of Israel.

Why? Because the Lord came to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, restoration of sight to the blind, and the year of the Lord's favor.

Jesus came not for those who belonged by nature, but those who by nature did not. He came not to those who saw themselves as worthy, but those who had no worth at all in regards to righteousness. This is scandalous to our pride.

Yet, today we love stories like this. We are fully aware of marginalized and oppressed people groups. In fact the cultural doctrine of intersectionality says that the more minority subgroups you belong to, the more worthy you are.

While some parts of this movement do helpfully point us to cultural blind spots, on the whole it is simply shifting the position of worth. Now it's not the powerful who are worthy, but the weak.

You see Israel had no problem being the poor, the captive and the oppressed as long as they were the worthy poor, worthy captive and worthy oppressed. So too today, we actually find it advantageous to belong to a minority group because it is belonging to those groups which give us worth.

But both of these pictures miss the nature of Jesus' salvation. There is no one worthy of this anointed messiah. No not one.

So where then do we find our worth, where is salvation given to those who sit in bondage? In hearing the message of salvation and turning in worship to the one who brings it.

After Elijah spends time with the widow look at what she says: **1 Kings 17:24**.

When Naaman is healed look at what he admits: **2 Kings 5:15**.

When the prophet Isaiah says that Israel would be vindicated look at the hope he put back on the nations: **Isaiah 61:11**.

We are not saved because we are worthy or because we are unworthy. We are saved because Jesus is worthy. We access that worth, that saving beauty, that liberating power and glorious favor by worshipping the one who is worthy. That's where we find our worth—Jesus becomes our worth.

To those who have heard this message before and wonder if your heart could ever be turned, come to Jesus in worship. There is an important part of Isaiah's prophecy which Jesus didn't include: **Isaiah 61:1-2a**.

Yes, vengeance will come. One day anyone who rejected Jesus will fall at the feet of Christ the judge. But today, while the message of the man of salvation is being declared, you have the ability to fall at the feet of Christ the savior.

Jesus' salvation is massive. So massive that one day all economic, political and physical woes will be wiped away. But right now salvation is fulfilled by granting spiritual sight to those who are blind. Would you see Jesus for who he is?

Notice how Jesus miraculously walked through the murderous crowd at the end of this. Yet he didn't escape death did he? No. Instead of dying here at the hands of those who couldn't see him, Jesus was going to die in Jerusalem to give sight to those who couldn't see him.

How are you responding to Jesus? For some this response is the first response of faith. For those who have responded in faith and repentance, this response is a life of living for the glory of Jesus who saved us not because of who we are, but because of who he is.