

Luke 4:22-30

"The Rejected Prophet"

May 26, 2024

1. Intro

- a. Last week we looked at the incredibly good news of Luke 4, verses 18-19
 - i. As Jesus returned home to Nazareth, he went into the synagogue and preached from the book of Isaiah
 1. He spoke of the good news that those who were spiritually poor and humble and meek could now be lifted up
 2. He spoke of the good news that those who were captives under Satan's oppressive rule could now be set free
 3. He spoke of the good news that those who were spiritually blind to the glory of God could now have their sight restored
 4. And he spoke of the wonderfully good news that today, NOW, is the year of the Lord's favor
 - a. What could possibly be better than to hear that all of these amazing promises were now "fulfilled in their hearing," as Jesus stated in verse 21???
 - i. The answer, as we saw last week, is NOTHING IN ALL THE WORLD can be better than the things that Jesus proclaimed on that day
 1. This is the GOSPEL!
 - a. That Jesus has come to the humble and the meek
 - b. He has come to set us free from Satan's tyranny over us
 - c. And he has come to open the eyes of our heart, that we might behold the glory of God!
 2. This is the message WE are called to proclaim, for this is the ONLY message with the power to save!
 5. So, surely, as Jesus spoke of these incredible things to all of his family and to his neighbors he had grown up with...
 - a. Surely they received all of it with eager and excited hearts, right?
 - i. Unfortunately, the answer is yes AND no
 1. Let's look now at our passage for this morning...

2. Luke 4:22-30

- a. *²²And 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?" ²³And 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." ²⁴And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. ²⁵But 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, ²⁶and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹And 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. ³⁰But passing through their midst, he went away.*
- b. Well, if we're reading the Scriptures honestly, we have to stop and ask the question, "What in the world just happened???"

- i. In verse 22, Luke writes that the people were marveling at the gracious words coming from Jesus' mouth
 - 1. And then in verse 29 they're trying to throw him off a cliff
 - a. What happen in the six verses in-between to cause such an abrupt change in these people???
 - b. What would cause a bunch of people who just heard the good news of the Gospel to then try to MURDER the one proclaiming it?
 - c. And why does it appear that JESUS was actually the one who provoked the people to such anger?
 - i. Well, let's look carefully at the passage to try to find some answers
3. The first thing we need to look at is the "marveling" or the "wonder" of the people as they heard Jesus' words
- a. We need to understand that this word for "marveling" doesn't necessarily mean that their marveling is a GOOD thing
 - i. In Luke 7:1-9, we read the story of the centurion whose servant was close to dying due to his sickness
 - 1. The centurion sends some messengers to Jesus, and he says to them to tell Jesus, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore, I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed."
 - a. When Jesus heard these words of the Roman centurion, Luke says that he marveled at the man's faith
 - i. And the centurion's servant was healed as a result
 - 1. So in this example, the marvel and wonder that Jesus felt was ABSOLUTELY a good emotion
 - ii. But we also read in Revelation 17:8 that, when the great beast of Babylon is seen on the earth, everyone "whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will MARVEL to see the beast"
 - 1. In this example, the marveling of the people is NOT to be commended
 - a. For their marveling is not one of awe and wonder
 - i. But instead, their marveling is more like an infatuation, or an unhealthy fascination
 - iii. And if we think back to the historical context of this passage that we talked about last week, I think it is safe to say that this was the case for Jesus' neighbors as well
 - 1. If you remember from last week, before Jesus came back home to Nazareth, we read in John's Gospel that Jesus had already performed many signs throughout Judea
 - a. He had already turned the water into wine in Cana
 - b. He had already drove out the moneychangers in the Temple in Jerusalem
 - c. And he had already healed an official's son in the town of Capernaum
 - i. And in John 4:48, Jesus exposes the hearts of the people, saying to them, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe"
 - 1. You see, Jesus knows what's in our heart
 - a. We might SAY that we believe in him, and that we marvel at his glory
 - b. But it is what he sees IN OUR HEARTS that truly matters
 - 2. In John 2:23-25, we read that,
 - a. ²³When Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs

that he was doing. ²⁴But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

- d. This marveling of the people in the synagogue was not a marveling that would lead them to bow their knee to the King of kings and Lord of lords
 - i. It was a marveling that was obsessed with signs and wonders
 1. And Jesus KNEW what was in their hearts
2. So 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.’”*
 - a. In other words, “Come on Jesus, quit preaching and show us some miracles! THAT is why we’re all here... let’s get to the GOOD stuff!!”
 - i. And so Jesus, knowing what was in man, did not entrust himself to them
 1. Instead of giving them what they wanted, he instead picked a fight
 - a. And he began by making an incredible statement about himself...
 3. Remember, Jesus had left Nazareth months earlier as simply Jesus, the son of Joseph, the village carpenter
 - a. He was beginning to make a name for himself as a Rabbi after his ministry in Judea
 - b. But in verse 24, he makes this unbelievable claim...
 - i. *“Truly, I say to you, no PROPHET is acceptable in his hometown.”*
 1. Don’t miss the weight of this title that Jesus bestows on himself
 - a. I am not just the town carpenter...
 - b. I am not just the son of Joseph...
 - c. I am not even just a Rabbi...
 - i. I am a PROPHET... one sent FROM GOD, to speak HIS words to His people
 - ii. Friends, before John the Baptist had arrived in the wilderness a few months before Jesus had left, there were no prophets in the land!
 1. God had been silent for nearly FOUR CENTURIES
 - a. But then John showed up in Judea and started baptizing people and calling them to repentance, like the great prophets of old
 - b. And now Jesus – OUR Jesus!! – is calling himself a prophet as well?
 - i. We’ve known this Jesus since he was a little kid
 - ii. Sure, he might be a nice guy, but A PROPHET??
 - iii. It’s not hard to imagine the people turning to one another in this moment and grumbling to each other, “Who does this guy think he is???”
 - iv. And then Jesus quickly delivers two punches to their ego by referencing two familiar stories from the Old Testament
 4. In verses 25-26, Jesus says,

- a. ²⁵But 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, ²⁶and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.
- i. Turn in your bibles to the book of 1 Kings, chapter 17, and we'll look at this story in its context (vs. 1-16)
 1. *¹Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." ²And the word of the LORD came to him: ³"Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁴You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." ⁵So he went and did according to the word of the LORD. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan. ⁶And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. ⁷And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land. ⁸Then the word of the LORD came to him, ⁹"Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." ¹⁰So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." ¹¹And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." ¹²And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." ¹³And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'" ¹⁵And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.*
 - b. So, there are some important things we need to note about this story
 - i. The first thing is to see that this happened during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel in the northern Kingdom of Israel
 1. If you're familiar with your Old Testament, you'll know that this husband and wife set the standard when it came to the wickedness of the rulers of Israel
 - a. 1 Kings 16 tells us that Ahab did more evil before the Lord than ANY of the kings that came before him, provoking the anger of the Lord more than any other king as well
 - i. But it wasn't JUST Ahab and Jezebel that were wicked
 1. It is evident that the people of Israel WILLINGLY followed in all of his idolatrous ways
 2. We even read at the end of chapter 16 that a man named Heil of Bethel rebuilt the city of Jericho, something that God had explicitly told the people never to do
 - a. And he ended up losing his oldest and youngest sons as a result of his sin
 - ii. So, Israel is going through a time of deep darkness and depravity

1. And God punishes them by sending a three-year drought upon the land, which caused a great famine to begin
 - iii. During this time, God sends Elijah first to Ahab to pronounce His judgement upon the land, and then to the brook Cherith, which is EAST of the Jordan
 1. God miraculously provides for Elijah for a time, but then sends him away to Zarephath
 - a. What's crazy is that Zarephath was not anywhere near Cherith
 - i. In fact, it was over a hundred-mile journey, forcing Elijah to walk across the entire width of Israel to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea
 - b. And in Zarephath, God again miraculously provided food – not just for Elijah, but also for the widow and her household
 - i. So just think about what was happening
 1. Elijah spent days, maybe even weeks, walking across all of the land of Israel
 - a. And on this journey, Elijah bypassed countless numbers of people
 - i. And not one of them had a never-ending jar of flour or a never-ending jug of oil
 - b. WHY??
 - i. Because they were ALL under God's judgment for the wickedness of their hearts
- iv. The implications of what Jesus was teaching here were not lost on the people in that synagogue
 1. Elijah, the great prophet of God, whom God's people held in great awe and reverence in Jesus' day, passed right on by ALL the people of Israel
 - a. And he saved a Gentile widow instead
 - i. For the hearts of THE ISRAELITES were FULL of wickedness and idolatry
 2. And now Jesus, who just claimed to be a prophet, drew an unmistakable parallel between the people of Israel in Elijah's day, and the people in Nazareth on that day
 - a. Certainly, they understood what Jesus was implying
 - i. But Jesus wasn't done...
- v. In verse 27, Jesus said, "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."
 1. For this story, let's look at 2 Kings, chapter 5
 - a. This story again happens in the northern Kingdom of Israel
 - i. But now we are in the days of Elisha, the prophet who followed after Elijah

5. 2 Kings 5:1-14 (Naaman the Leper)

- a. *¹Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. ²Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." ⁵And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. ⁶And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." ⁷And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his*

clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me." ⁸But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." ¹¹But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. ¹²Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. ¹³But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

- b. Again, the context of what is going on in this story is VERY important to note
 - i. 2 Kings chapter 3 tells us that Israel was once again in a time of great famine
 1. They were now under the rule of Ahab's son, Jehoram
 - a. And they had apparently not learned their lesson yet
 2. Not only were they in a time of famine, they were also at war
 - a. Moab had rebelled against Israel in chapter 3
 - b. And now in chapter 5 we see Syria rising up against Israel as well
 - i. But look at what the writer of 2 Kings says in verse 1
 1. Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man... a mighty man of valor
 - a. And he was held in high favor because GOD had given victory to Syria
 - i. Just as the drought and famine in 1 Kings was God's judgement against Israel
 - ii. So also was Naaman's conquests over Israel God's judgment upon them
 3. But this same Naaman was also a leper
 - a. And as we read, God providentially led this leper back to Samaria, where Elisha – the great prophet of the JEWISH people – prophesied Naaman's healing
 - i. Naaman... the commander of the Syrian army
 - ii. Naaman... the GENTILE
 - b. As Jesus said, there were MANY lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha
 - i. Yet NONE OF THEM were healed
- ii. Friends, the people in Nazareth on that day knew EXACTLY what Jesus was saying
 1. Elisha the prophet brought NO healing to Israel in those days
 - a. But instead, healing was granted to the leader of the army that was oppressing Israel
 2. And just like Elisha, Jesus the prophet was saying that he would provide no healing for Israel either, but instead for their enemies
 - a. For the people of Israel were full of wickedness in their hearts
 - i. The good news Jesus had just proclaimed from Isaiah would not be for them, but for the Gentiles
 1. Like the widow in Zarephath, the freedom Jesus proclaimed would not be for Israel, but for those OUTSIDE of Israel

2. Like Naaman the Syrian commander, the healing Jesus proclaimed would not be for Israel, but for those OUTSIDE of Israel
3. The year of the Lord's favor had indeed arrived
 - a. But it had arrived... for the Gentiles
- b. For Jesus knew what was in the hearts of his people
 - i. He knew the wickedness that was hidden under their outward attempts at worshiping his Father
 - ii. He knew the depravity that they covered over with a few coats of paint, like a bunch of whitewashed tombs
 - iii. He knew the rebellion that went deep into the darkest places of their souls
 1. A rebellion that would eventually lead them to cry out for his crucifixion
- c. He knew what was in the hearts of Israel, so he did not entrust himself to them
 - i. And we see the evidence that he was ABSOLUTELY correct in the following verses...
 1. When the people heard these things, ALL in the synagogue were filled with wrath
 2. 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
3. Those who he had grown up with for the past THREE DECADES, now wanted to dash him against the rocks at the foot of the cliff
 - a. But Jesus' hour had not yet arrived
 - i. He still had MUCH work left to do before the cross
 - ii. So Luke writes in an incredibly anti-climactic way... "But passing through their midst, he went away"
- c. Friends, this would be the story for the remainder of Jesus' earthly ministry
 - i. Yes, there were certainly some from among the Jews who truly did believe that he was the Christ, the Son of God
 1. But for the most part, as Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:7-8, Jesus was *"the stone that the builders rejected"*
 - a. He was *"a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense"*
 2. As Peter preached to the Jews in Acts 3:13-15,
 - a. *¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.*
 - ii. And ALL of this was absolutely necessary in order for him to purchase OUR salvation
 1. This was Paul's point in Ephesians 2, verses 11-22, as he reminded the Ephesian believers of who they ONCE were
 - a. They ONCE were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel
 - b. They ONCE were strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world

- c. They ONCE were strangers and aliens OUTSIDE of the household of God
- 2. BUT NOW...
 - a. WE who were once strangers and aliens have been made fellow citizens with the saints of the Kingdom of God
 - b. WE who were once far off have been brought near by THE BLOOD of Christ
 - i. Without Christ shedding his blood upon the cross, we would have no part in the family of God
 - ii. Without the hardening of the hearts of the Jews, Christ's blood would not have been shed
 - iii. Without Christ bringing up stories like the widow in Zarephath and the healing of Naaman, the fire of Israel's anger would not have been kindled
 - c. Yes, Jesus certainly provoked the wrath of the people of his hometown on that day
 - i. But don't miss the fact that Jesus also said in Luke 13:34
 - 1. ³⁴O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, yet you were not willing!
 - iii. Jesus knew that he must be rejected by his own people in order to accomplish the greater purposes of his Father
 - 1. And it caused him great sorrow
 - a. Yet, for the JOY set before him, Christ endured the cross
 - iv. The Apostle Paul understood the conflicting emotions of his Savior
 - 1. In Romans 11, as he is speaking about the wonders of the adoption of the Gentiles into the people of God, he reminds us to remain humble in our adoption
 - a. He writes in verses 17-24
 - i. *¹⁷But if some of the branches [the Jews] were broken off, and you [the Gentiles], although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree [which is Christ], ¹⁸do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. ¹⁹Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. ²²Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. ²³And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.*
- v. My friends, there will come a day when the hearts of the Jewish people will once again turn to their God
 - 1. The foolishness of the cross will become to them a message of joy-filled salvation
 - a. And those who were cut off from Christ, will be grafted back in
 - 2. But until that day, Christ remains hated... by them, and by all the rest of the world

- a. And so will we also be hated as we follow after him
- vi. In the days of the Old Testament sacrifices, the blood of a bull was needed for a sin offering before the Lord
 - 1. The bull was slaughtered, the blood was sprinkled on the holy things in the Tabernacle, and the fat was burned up on the altar
 - 2. But the skin and the flesh, the entrails and the dung...
 - a. All of this was taken outside the camp
 - i. Rejected... despised... useless to those who lived under the Law
- 6. But in Hebrews 13:10-15, we read this striking analogy...
 - a. *¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹²So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. ¹⁵Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.*
 - i. Jesus suffered “outside the gate”
 - ii. He was rejected and despised by those under the Law
 - 1. But in his rejection, WE have been made holy
 - a. So let us go to him OUTSIDE the camp
 - b. Let us bear the reproach that HE endured
 - c. Let us remember that this world is not our home... that we seek the city that is to come
 - d. And let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God
 - i. For, like the widow in Zarephath, and like Naaman the Syrian, we who were once not a people, are now GOD’s people
 - ii. We who once had no mercy, now have received GOD’s mercy, through the precious blood of His Son, Jesus Christ