

Message #17

Luke 4:14-30

Years ago, there was a group of religious people who were quite impressive:

- 1) They met together at least once a week.
- 2) They enjoyed each other's company.
- 3) They were people of prayer - prayer was very important.
- 4) They were people with a high regard for the Word of God - they loved to hear it taught.
- 5) They were giving people - almost everyone gave at least 10%.
- 6) They were very evangelistic.
- 7) They sang hymns - singing was an important part of their worship.
- 8) They believed in plurality of leadership - they had elders who led them and protected them.
- 9) They stressed the importance of obeying the Scriptures.
- 10) They were willing to die for their faith.
- 11) They were people who always looked to the future and rewards.

Who are these people? **These were the people who wanted to kill Jesus Christ.** These were first century Jews who were totally dedicated to a legalistic Judaism. Every Sabbath Day they met in their synagogue and they followed their religious rules to the letter.

But the fatal mistake they made is they equated all of their religious activity with being right with God. Instead of recognizing and admitting their own spiritual lack, they actually believed they had arrived at a superior, acceptable level of piety that was truly impressing God. They were getting along fine until Christ showed up and started expounding the Scriptures accurately. That is when you really saw the truth. These people were not interested in truth.

Whenever the Word of God is accurately taught, explosive things will happen. The Word of God cuts into souls and for those religious people who think they have arrived in their relationship with God, but really haven't, their colors will show.

PROPER TEACHING OF GOD'S WORD CAUSES SELF-RIGHTEOUS, RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TO BECOME HOSTILE AND HATEFUL AND THEY WILL REBEL AGAINST THE TRUTH AND THE ONE TEACHING IT.

Keep in mind that the people in this passage are not heathens. These were very religious people. These were very self-righteous people who faithfully went to their place of worship. They had their traditions and their rules. They listened to Bible messages, sang hymns, gave their money and they wanted to kill Jesus Christ.

As we look at this text, there are two responses to Jesus' teaching that these religious people had:

RESPONSE #1 – The self-righteous religious people initially liked the teaching of Jesus Christ.
4:14-22

This is a very important point to see. People, who are not really right with God, go to services, hear the teaching and appear to like it. They will especially be drawn to it if God's power is actually in it.

There are three facts that Luke gives us about Jesus Christ:

Fact #1 - Jesus Christ was praised by all for being a powerful teacher. **4:14-15**

Jesus Christ returned to Galilee after the temptation and everything He did and said had the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, His reputation spread. **This Galilean ministry will be Luke's focal point from Luke 4:14-Luke 9:50.** Christ spent a lot of time in Galilee. There is no question that He performed some miracles, **but the thing that really stood out to people was His ability to teach.** Do not overlook this point. **Jesus is functioning in the power of the Holy Spirit and that power is evidenced through teaching.**

Galilee was a highly populated area located in the upper part of the land of Palestine. It was a state-like region about 35 miles long and 25 miles wide. Josephus claims that there were 240 cities and villages in Galilee, and all of them were heavily populated. It has been estimated that there was a city or village every 4 miles.

It must have been something to hear Jesus Christ teach the Scriptures. He was the second member of the Godhead teaching with a power from the third member of the Godhead. When He taught, the people realized that there is something very different about the way He opens up the Word of God. The Bible came to life. There was a dynamic power about His teaching and the people loved it and He was praised by all. **The thing that initially made Jesus Christ famous was His teaching ability.**

Notice Christ's reputation spread, not for being a singer, or a promoter or a miracle worker, or for being good with the teens or the elderly; His fame spread for being a teacher of God's Word. Wherever He went, people were drawn to Him and wanted to hear Him expound God's Word.

Perhaps the greatest Christ-like attribute that can ever be given to any minister is that he is a powerful teacher of God's Word. That is the reputation Jesus Christ had. He was "praised by all."

Fact #2 - Jesus Christ's customary habit was to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. **4:16**

The Greek word "custom" is one that refers to one's customary habit. Christ's habit was to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. In fact, Luke records six Sabbath Day passages (4:16-30; 4:31-37; 6:1-5; 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6). Christ was no religious rebel who stayed home on the Sabbath, He went to services.

He did this when He was away from His home (**v. 15**) and when He was back in His home town, Nazareth (**v. 16**), which is where this happened. Honoring the Sabbath was part of the O.T. law, which He was fulfilling so He could nail it to His cross.

It must have been a major letdown for Jesus Christ to attend some of these services; yet He did it anyway. He regularly went to the place of worship to worship God.

Fact #3 - Jesus Christ systematically read and expounded the Word of God. **4:17-22**

Now a typical synagogue service included reciting the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9), prayer, reading the law, reading the prophets, some instruction and a benediction.

Verse 16 says that when Jesus entered the synagogue, He “stood up to read.” The verb is third person singular meaning Christ stood to read. That may mean one of four things:

- 1) He stood because all other people were standing as the Scripture was read.
- 2) He stood because He wanted to read the text.
- 3) He stood because He had been asked to read the text.
- 4) He stood because He knew the meaning of the text to be read.

More than likely, since Christ’s reputation as a teacher had spread, they asked Him to read the Scripture. It is clear from **verse 17** that when Jesus entered the synagogue, people recognized Him and handed Him the Scriptures to expound.

According to **verse 17**, Christ was handed a scroll of Isaiah. Now Isaiah was a long scroll to unroll and Jesus unrolls it to a specific text, which is late in the scroll, Isaiah 61:1-2. Now keep in mind that there are no chapter and verse numbers, so to know exactly where a specific text was in a book like Isaiah, you would have to be very familiar with it, which Christ was.

Christ opened the scroll and He read it (**vs. 18-19**), then closed the book and handed it back to the attendant and sat down (**v. 20**).

I have examined the Hebrew Masoretic text and the Greek Septuagint text and it appears to me that Jesus is reading from the Hebrew text, which would ultimately become the Hebrew Masoretic text. There are times when Jesus quotes out of the Septuagint, but I am convinced in this case, He was given a copy of the Hebrew text of Isaiah and read from it.

After He was done reading, He closed the book, handed it back to the attendant and sat down and **verse 20** says that “the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.”

These people were riveted on Jesus Christ. They wanted to hear Him preach and teach. Now His first words that He said are seen in **verse 21**, “today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” In other words, the Messianic and salvific program of God is currently available to you right here, right now through Me. It is right here in this synagogue.

The people loved that and “all were speaking well of Him.” They did not quite know what He meant, but His words were pleasing and gracious to their ears.

It is important to see that when Jesus Christ stopped reading Isaiah 61, He stopped in the middle of Isaiah 61:2. He did this intentionally because it would not be this first coming that would carry out the “day of vengeance.” He would fulfill that at His second coming.

When Christ says this has been fulfilled in your hearing, what He means is your Messiah and Savior is now here and you are listening to Him and you have an invitation to be spiritually healed right now and right here.

According to **verse 22**, the people recognized the gracious words that were falling from His lips. Here was the one who could set captives free. Here was the one who could save the lost. This was the most favorable year these Galileans would ever have, Jesus Christ was there personally inviting them to believe the gospel. W. H. Griffith Thomas said the problem with these people in Nazareth is that they did not consider themselves to be the people of **verse 18**.

RESPONSE #2 – The self-righteous religious people eventually want to kill Jesus Christ.
4:23-30

It didn't take long for the trouble to start. It didn't take long for these fickle religious people to show their true colors. When Jesus started teaching, there were six reactions:

Reaction #1 - The people questioned His identity and authority. **4:22b**

Now the crowd started to think, how can this son of Joseph possibly be the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah? How could Jesus, who grew up in this very town of Nazareth, sit in our synagogue and claim He is our Savior and say He is the Messiah?

How can this son of Joseph be such a powerful teacher? How could He heal the brokenhearted and free those who are captive? This is Joseph's son. He has not had any Rabbinical education that we know of. O we know He loves to be taught the Scriptures. He had that love at age 12, but after all, this is a son of a carpenter. How can He sit here and challenge us?

Those who are greatly used by God often have their authority challenged. Charles Spurgeon learned from his grandfather. He had no formal education and yet he became such a powerful preacher of God's Word, he was called the “prince of preachers.” He was often criticized and challenged about his credentials. Made no difference because the power of God was with him.

Reaction #2 - Jesus said the people would question His credibility. **4:23**

Jesus knew this group would reject Him. He knew there would come a time when they would demand that He heal himself. Many literally did demand this when He was hanging on the cross (Matt. 27:40-43). Christ had been ministering in various parts of Galilee, prior to coming to his home town Nazareth and Capernaum was a city in Galilee (Luke 4:14-15, 31).

Apparently, while in Capernaum, He had done some miraculous things. They wanted Him to do those kinds of things in His hometown of Nazareth. They wanted some proof of His credibility. People with hard hearts want more proof than just Bible teaching. The Word of God is never enough for the self-righteous Pharisee crowd.

Reaction #3 - Jesus said the people would reject Him and His Word. **4:24-27**

Jesus made a powerful statement when He said, “no prophet is welcome in his hometown.” Israelites had a history of rejecting true prophets of God. Self-righteous people have a history of refusing to listen to someone who confronts them with truth.

Jesus gave two illustrations to prove His point:

(Illustration #1) - The illustration of Elijah. **4:25-26 (I Kings 17:1-24)**

Elijah revealed that there would be a great drought and famine in Palestine because of the rebellious sin of Israel. The drought would last 42 months or 3 ½ years (James 5:17). During that time the prophet ministered to a widow woman who lived in a Gentile city that was hated by the Jews. The city was Sidon. Of all of the places and people to whom God could have sent His prophet, He selected a down and out widow from a Gentile city. That is exactly what God was going to do. He was going to send a spiritual drought to Israel and His grace offer would reach out to down and out Gentile individuals. Jesus was right there in Nazareth and yet they would not receive Him.

(Illustration #2) - The illustration of Elisha. **4:27 (II Kings 5:14)**

At the time of Elisha, the Syrians were bitter rivals of Israel. Naaman was captain of the Syrian army (II Kings 5:1). The reason Israel was being dominated by the Syrians was because of her rebellion against the truth of God.

Christ’s point is during this era of history, the prophet Elisha did not cleanse any leper in Israel, but only Naaman, the Syrian. There were many lepers in Israel, who needed Elisha to heal them, but he did not do it; he healed a Syrian military leader.

Christ’s point is Israel’s proud, self-righteous rejection of the truth prompted God to send His man elsewhere to those who would accept it and respond to it.

Jesus is saying look, God has sent Me here to you Galilean outcasts, but He is warning these people that their rejection will mean God’s program will leave them and go elsewhere just like Elijah and Elisha.

Reaction #4 - The people were angered by His true teaching. **4:28**

When Christ got done teaching, the people were “filled with rage.” They were filled with hot wrath and anger. They did not like the truth. They could not handle the truth and the truth made them angry.

Self-righteous people are not tenderhearted to the truth of God. They are angered by it. Those who are spiritually right with God love the truth and they love the reproof that comes from the truth (Prov. 9:8-9; 19:25; 28:23). People right with God love to hear the truth and they love the one telling them the truth. These people hated Jesus.

Reaction #5 - The people want Jesus Christ to leave. **4:29a**

Verse 29 says they got up and drove Him out of the city. They literally wanted to throw Him out of the city. As long as Jesus was telling them what they wanted to hear, they loved Him, but the moment He presented truth that convicted them, they wanted Him to leave.

Reaction #6 - The people want Jesus Christ dead. **4:29b**

Nazareth spreads out over the eastern face of Mt. Tabor. There is a perpendicular wall of rock which stands approximately 40-50 feet high. The people were so angry they wanted to throw Christ off the mountain and kill Him.

Keep in mind this was a response to teaching at what we could call a religious *synagogue-church* service. These people appeared to want to be taught the Word of God and when it was accurately taught, the people's attitude changed from projected elation and edification to attempted execution.

Verse 30 says Christ just slipped through their midst and "He went His way." They were not going His way. They were not going the way of God. They were religious. They loved their religious denomination, but they hated truth.

These people wanted to see a miracle. Well they saw one. He slipped right through their midst and left them.

Do you want to know what caused this? A true accurate exposition and application of a text in Isaiah.

Practical Application:

- 1) Being in a church service does not mean one is right with God.**
- 2) God's Word, when accurately taught, will anger self-righteous Pharisees.**
- 3) God's Word is to be accurately taught and not altered to appease or pacify anyone.**
- 4) When God's true message and messenger are rejected, God will take him elsewhere and leave the rejecters in a bankrupt condition.**
- 5) You are offered grace salvation today by the One who can save you and make you free. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today and you will be saved.**