



Unit .21

Session .02

Jesus Reveals His Mission

Scripture



Luke 4:16-31

16 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. **17** And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, **18** “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, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” **20** 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. **21** And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” **22** 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?” **23** 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.” **24** And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. **25** 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, **26** and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. **27** 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.” **28** When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. **29** 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. **30** But passing through their midst, he went away. **31** And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath,

Intro Options



Main Point:
Jesus' mission wasn't
without opposition—
and neither will ours be.

Option 1

Many stories are centered around a hero who fulfills an ancient prophecy, a “chosen one” who saves the world as someone predicted they would long ago. For example, in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis, the four protagonists, Lucy, Edmund, Susan, and Peter, are predicted to fulfill a prophecy. Their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, tell the four siblings that there is a prophecy that says when two sons of Adam and two daughters of Eve sit on the four thrones of Cair Paravel, then the reign of the White Witch will be over and evil will be defeated.¹ Such stories are compelling to us. The characters surely face a lot of opposition along the way, but they stick to their purpose and persevere in their quest as they fulfill the prophecies foretold about them.

▪ What real-life prophecies have been foretold about believers in Christ?

Jesus is the real-life version of such a story. He is the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy. And although Jesus faced rejection from the family and friends He grew up with, He continued to press on along the difficult path to which He was called.

In the previous session we discussed Jesus' ministry in Capernaum and how He revealed His power, purpose, and compassion. In today's session, we will look more closely at Jesus' mission and how He revealed it to the people.

Option 2

There is something about stories of people who overcame seasons of failure or moments of rejection before they discovered success.

When he was just twenty-two, Walt Disney was fired from the newspaper he worked for because he was not creative enough to deliver good ideas. Another, Albert Einstein, was one of the greatest scientific minds humanity has ever known. Yet, he began talking late, was described as dull, and he did not do well academically throughout his early years.


In addition to inspiring stories like these, Christians throughout the centuries have overcome various forms of opposition through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who demonstrates Jesus' glory through believers' suffering. Because of their courage and confidence, Christians from all over the world have been able to overcome some of the most severe forms of persecution on account of the power of the Holy Spirit at work within them—the same Spirit who was at work in the life of Jesus Himself when He experienced rejection and opposition.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 4:16-22.



The prophet Isaiah, who lived long before Jesus lived on the earth, prophesied about a coming Messiah, someone who would come to save Israel. Imagine the Jews in the synagogue, who recognized the verses Jesus read, hearing Jesus declare that He is the promised Messiah. How incredible it must have been for this carpenter's son they had known from His youth to declare He was the One coming to save their people!

That Jesus would claim to fulfill even one of over three hundred Old Testament prophecies about the Christ is bold, but He did so because He is who He said He is—the Son of God, the Messiah who came to set the captives free from their sins. Only an all-knowing and all-powerful God could have predicted the Messiah's life with such accuracy hundreds of years before the events even came to pass. The knowledge of God is perfect and extends to all things past, present, and future. We serve a God of complete knowledge, a timeless God who is worthy of our trust. 

- **In what ways could the proof of Jesus as the Messiah supported by prophecies impact your life today?**

The passage Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2, with an insertion from 58:6, reveals that the Messiah's mission was, in summary, to proclaim good news to the poor. Isaiah's prophesy provided hope and freedom to Jewish exiles in Babylon that they would one day be free from their oppressors, but Jesus' ministry was aimed at the ultimate fulfillment of this passage—freedom from sin for the whole world.

By declaring Himself to be the Messiah, Jesus would later offend many, but this didn't shift who He was. As the Messiah, He still acted in accordance with His identity and accomplished the things the Messiah was prophesied to accomplish. The people responded positively to His words at first, but that affirmation was short-lived.

- **What are some ways the good news of Jesus addresses the suffering the world experiences today?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 96, DDG)

The World Opposed to God

There are times in Scripture where the term “world” refers to more than the physical planet Earth or the collective human population. In many instances, the term refers to an active and evil spiritual force that is in direct conflict with God and His kingdom. This evil world force operates under Satan's control (Eph. 2:2; John 14:30), displaying the same self-centeredness and deceit that is found within his character. Christians are called to overcome this world of spiritual evil by faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:4-5).

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Luke 4


14-22. Luke 4:14-28 places Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee. Through His teaching and miracles, Jesus demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit. The news about His ministry spread, and people began to praise Him for the good work He did. But the scene shifted as Luke showed the contrast between Jesus' reception in Galilee and His rejection in Nazareth, the place where He grew up.

It was customary for the Jewish people in Jesus' day to spend time in the synagogue where leaders would read and comment on the ancient Scriptures. When Jesus went into the synagogue, as was the custom, He stood up to read a passage of Scripture. The reading for that day was part of a prophecy from Isaiah that spoke of the coming Messiah.

In a dramatic moment that likely shocked the people in the synagogue, Jesus read a passage that described the ministry of the Messiah, and then He sat down. "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled," He said (v. 21, *CSB*). The moment was shocking for a couple of reasons. First, Jesus implied that He was the Messiah upon whom the Spirit rested. He was saying, in effect, "I'm the guy Isaiah was talking about."

Second, Jesus' words were shocking because of what He didn't read. He stopped reading the text at the line where Isaiah spoke of the year of Jubilee and freedom for the captives. The next line spoke about the God's judgment coming upon people. Jesus deliberately ended the reading at the declaration of grace, not judgment. Why? Because the Day of Judgment was to come later. In that particular moment, Jesus declared freedom and grace.

In Defense (p. 98, DDG)



The odds that Jesus could have fulfilled all the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament by chance are astronomical. Peter W. Stoner, once the Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College, authored *Science Speaks* in the 1950s, which examines the accuracy of prophecy and of the Bible using scientific methods. In chapter three, Stoner walks through the statistical likelihood that a man could have fulfilled prophecies about the Messiah, including birthplace and death by crucifixion. He concludes that an extremely conservative estimate of the chances of a man fulfilling just eight messianic prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} . Stoner used the following illustration to help readers grasp this number.

"Suppose that we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom."²


TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 4:23-27.



Have you ever heard the saying, “A prophet is without honor in his hometown”? It comes from what Jesus said. The idea behind the phrase is that the people in Jesus’ hometown did not see Him as special or unique; they saw Him as ordinary. What’s more, they didn’t care for His message, even though they wanted to see His miracles.

Sometimes, it’s difficult to notice the growth of people who are closest to us. You know what it’s like. You don’t see the day-to-day growth of your siblings or everyday friends, but you notice immediately when you visit friends or family you haven’t seen in awhile. Distance can give us perspective on people.

In a similar way, the people in Nazareth saw Jesus grow up before their eyes. But they could not reconcile that this prophet who was before them was the young boy who had grown up in their midst. They would not accept the truth of Jesus’ words as He read the scroll of Isaiah. 

- **How difficult do you think it was for Jesus, who came to rescue His people, to experience rejection?**


Jesus responded to the people of Nazareth by referring them to two Old Testament stories, one with Elijah and one with Elisha (both of whom were mighty prophets of God). In both accounts, God did something miraculous for people who were not part of Israel. God sent these prophets into Gentile territory because Israel would not receive the Word of God through their ministry. In rejecting Jesus, the Jews would be rejecting God’s blessing, just as their ancestors had. And just as Elijah and Elisha had continued their ministry in serving the Gentiles, so would Jesus leave Nazareth and continue His ministry elsewhere, and through His disciples, His message of good news will reach the ends of the earth.

- **What are some ways we can minister and serve the people on the margins of our community?**

Read Luke 4:28-31.



Once again, the events following Jesus’ sermon at Nazareth foreshadowed the events that would come to pass at Jerusalem. The people, angered by His message that the Gentiles had a place in God’s salvation story, attempted to throw Him off a cliff in order to kill Him, just like when Jesus would be brought to Pilate and the angry crowds would shout, “Crucify Him!” But Jesus was not to die before His appointed time in Jerusalem; so in Nazareth, He passed through the crowd and left unharmed.

The Nazarenes drove Jesus out of His hometown, foreshadowing the rejection of Christ by the world. Yet Jesus’ ultimate rejection at the cross paved the way for all who believe in Him to be accepted rather than rejected by God. Although we deserve to be rejected because of our sins, Christ bore our rejection and paid the debt we owe. Through Him we find salvation. 

- **How are you challenged or convicted because Jesus took our rejection upon Himself so we could be accepted by God?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Luke 4

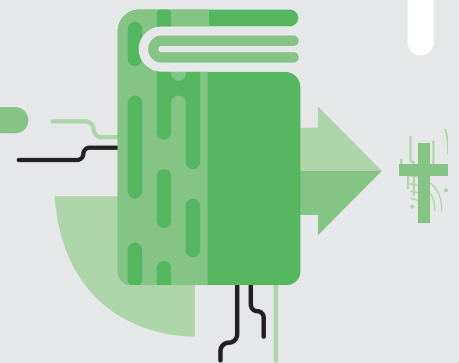
23. Jesus, being the divine Son of God, possessed a knowledge of others' thoughts, so He knew those in Nazareth doubted Him. The proverb "Doctor, heal yourself" would be an expression of doubt that Jesus really had performed the miracles they heard He did in Capernaum. Jesus preempted their taunts by predicting they would reject Him, just like the prophets were rejected throughout Israel's history.

24-27. In His declaration about the people's coming rejection of Himself, Jesus referenced Elijah and Elisha, recalling one of the worst periods of apostasy in Israel's history. Elijah and Elisha were prophets to Israel, yet their work often addressed those outside of the nation. When the Israelites rejected God's blessings, those blessings were extended to the Gentiles even though they were outside of God's chosen people.

- During a famine, Elijah went not to the widows of Israel but to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon—a Gentile (1 Kings 17:8-24).
- Likewise, Elisha went not to the many Israelite lepers but instead cleansed only Naaman the Syrian—also a Gentile (2 Kings 5:1-19).

(p. 97, DDG) Christ Connection

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote of God's plan to send someone to bring good news and redeem His captive people. Jesus proclaimed that He is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy—the promised Messiah. Jesus was rejected by the people, but it was through that very rejection—the cross—that He provided redemption from sin.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What does this account teach us about the cost of following Jesus?

How does this differ from what you have previously thought concerning the life of a Christian?

Heart



How should Christians respond to persecution and rejection?

In what ways does our endurance in the midst of rejection or opposition strengthen our witness and mission?

Hands



How have you experienced rejection for your faith in Christ?

What encouraging words would you offer to a young believer facing rejection because of their belief in Jesus?

Main Point: Jesus' mission wasn't without opposition—and neither will ours be.



Head

We learn from this account that the kingdoms of God and the kingdom of this world are at odds with each other. Standing firm in our faith and in obedience to the commands of God through Jesus makes us easy targets for the world, its people, and its powers, so much so that Jesus even warned in Matthew 10:34-39 that following Him will bring division into earthly relationships.

Often we can have a elevated view of what it means to follow Jesus. We might even think becoming a Christian is a ticket to an easy earthly life. But while Jesus preached the peace of His kingdom, the very fact that the kingdom of God is invading earthly spaces means that Christians will face opposition, both spiritual and physical, as the time draws closer for Christ to return in His fullness.



Heart

As God's people endure persecution and suffering, they can rejoice to be counted among believers who faced rejection just like Jesus. In times of rejection, we remember the words of the apostle Paul: As God comforted us during times of suffering and affliction, we are then able to walk alongside and comfort other believers who are suffering through various trials (2 Cor. 1:3-7). This is the tangible expression of God the Spirit's ministry through our lives, benefiting those inside the body of Christ.



Hands

Rejection and opposition shouldn't prevent the Christian from pressing on in pursuing Christ and sharing His gospel with the world. Sure, sometimes this rejection will come from our closest family and friends, which will be painful and difficult but not hopeless. In these times, we must cling to the truth of the gospel and continue to love those who disagree with us as we share the gospel with them. Christ is our example of how to live in the face of rejection; we must remain faithful to the gospel mission. Fortunately, He does not leave us all alone on this path. He is with us every step of the way and His Spirit guides us. No matter how difficult the situation, we must take heart and persevere in our mission.