

Luke 4:14-30 – Jesus' preaching at Nazareth

Luke is now telling us about the beginning of Jesus' preaching, up in Galilee, in the north of Israel. In the gospel of John we can read more of what happened in Judea and Jerusalem (in the south; where Jesus had been when he was baptised and then tempted). What did Jesus preach? How did people respond? How will you respond?

1. Jesus the Messiah (v14-22)

Jesus preached each Sabbath in the synagogues, and became well known. Verse 16 says that worshipping there was his custom. To gather with others to worship God each week is a duty for all people and should not be missed. The place may not be perfect (like this synagogue was not); but if it is not heretical, we should seek to worship God where we best can. Jesus was invited to read from the Scriptures; he read Isaiah 61:1-2. Those verses spoke clearly about the Messiah; the anointed one and his work. He had come to bring salvation to the humble. Those who were oppressed by sin, he would set free, bringing God's mercy to those who deserved judgment. That's what Jesus came to do, through his death on the cross. Jesus then told the people that he was the Messiah; this prophecy was about him. Every true preacher must preach Jesus, not himself. Jesus preached himself in humility even though he was the Son of God; how very wrong it is when a human preacher proudly lifts up himself instead of lifting up Jesus!

2. Jesus the Divider (v23-27)

Jesus knew that there was a danger for people in Nazareth, his home town. They had known him in an outward way, and known his family. He had not showed himself openly before, and so they had not known him truly. Often, “familiarity breeds contempt”, and it is hard for people to admit that they do not know something as they thought they did. Because he had been amongst them for many years, they were tempted to think he was only one of them. He warned them about this. He knew their thoughts; they were refusing to believe until he performed miracles for them (v23). He warned them that many times before, God had sent servants but passed by those who were nearest to bless people far away. God passes by the proud and visits the humble. Are we in danger? If Jesus has been preached to us, why have we not yet trusted in him? Do we have the same pride?

3. Jesus the Rejected (v28-30)

When people are challenged strongly about their pride, there are normally two possible responses. They can humble themselves and repent, or become angry. These people became so angry they wanted to kill Jesus. They showed just how evil their hearts truly were! So, Jesus was rejected by his own town – just as later he would be rejected by his own nation, and indeed by both Jew and Gentile. Even more, on the cross, God cut off his face from him (Mark 15:34). Jesus came to be rejected – in our place, for our sins, suffering the rejection we deserve. His rejection means that we can be accepted by God forever. In all this, Jesus was in perfect control. God's purposes went forward. He was not surprised by his rejection; it was planned, and meant he could go and preach to others – like us.