

5. 1-30-22

Sermon- What Is the Reason for Our Unbelief?

Scripture- Luke 4:21-30, Psalm 71:1-6

Hymns- 457, 139, 237

Theme- After reading this passage, we must ask the question, "Why do people not believe in Jesus as the Messiah and personal Savior" particularly when they know the facts and choose not to believe?

This is sort of what happened in today's gospel reading, the Jewish people were unreceptive to Jesus, and were basically out to decry him.

However, we must ask the question, "Why do people not believe in Jesus as the Messiah and personal Savior" particularly when they know the facts and choose not to believe? I hope the gospel message this morning helps to answer that question.

It is a very gripping and powerful scripture because Jesus is the speaker in this passage, and as a continuation from last week's message, we need to see where He went from there.

I. Jesus Talks About the Poor, Blind and Oppressed

The other week we heard how "Jesus came to Nazareth, his home town, and read from the book of Isaiah in his old synagogue, and said "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, and to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

Here Jesus was saying that he, a local lad whom they all knew, was the long awaited Messiah, the Savior of the world, and the son of God. We talked about what their reaction must have been!

A. At First the Focus was on Miracles, not salvation. By now, the word of his preaching was being widely spread; and the Jews of Nazareth were aware of his wonders, miracles and healings.

And this really made me think because nowhere in the New Testament does the Jewish population, even their leaders, question the miracles of Jesus. So we must conclude that all the signs and wonders fall into insignificance compared to the gift of eternal salvation.

Being miraculously healed from a fatal disease like cancer or leprosy is wonderful for that person but still nothing, compared to people having their souls saved from hell.

So you must ask, what exactly what do miracles do, because when Jesus did a miracle, did that prove that He could save sinners for hell?

If Jesus can walk on water, is that proof that He can transfer people from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light; and give life eternal in heaven?

Miracles don't prove that, miracles only re-affirm the faith of those who believe; but it does nothing for those who don't, because to them, it is just another amazing magic trick.

B. Today the Message Focus Changes to Salvation

The Jews knew Jesus performed miracles at Capernaum, and you can't blame them for wanting to see him perform them here in his home town of Nazareth.

So, **that** is the meaning of verse 23, where Jesus said to them "And you will say, 'Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'"

These were quite a skeptical bunch, and Jesus went on to say in verse 24: "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town". Jesus was making it clear that he was no performing seal sent for their entertainment pleasure!

But Jesus did not walk away, Jesus' mission in his home town was the same as it was everywhere else, to preach the gospel of salvation to all; and to do that he had to in order for them to listen.

Any good teacher has to do this every day in school, and when you get an unruly class you have to be forceful to pin them down

and make them listen. The politically correct term is “create an atmosphere for learning”; and this is what Jesus did.

But to do this he descends his teaching and enrages the congregation by focusing on some very controversial scripture; to introduce the new topic of salvation to all who would receive; to explain that salvation with God was at hand, and through him and only him, would that salvation be available for all. There was no gentle way of doing this.

II. Jesus Reminds them of the Vengeance of the Lord

That is why Jesus ended verse 18 with “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”. Now this sounds strange at first, but it is actually the quote from **Isaiah 61:2**, which they would have been aware of: that verse from Isaiah went on to say, **“and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn”**.

A. Put that together and we have “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn”.

The Jews knew this scripture, and must have wondered why Jesus stopped reading there, leaving the vengeance out?

The answer however with hindsight is rather simple, because the Jews were eager for Messiah's coming, particularly to wreak vengeance on their Gentile enemies, they hated the Romans for their oppressive rule. Even John the Baptist had said, "When the Messiah comes He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with **fire**".

This was the unquenchable fire of judgment, and yet John too was greatly perplexed because soon after his ministry began, he was taken prisoner by the vile Herod: in fact John was also wondering when Jesus was going to bring the vengeance of God, and open his prison doors and let him go free.

But Jesus had no intention of overturning the power of Herod or the Romans, to Jesus this was the time of salvation, and nothing was more important. To him the day of vengeance would come after the day of salvation.

B. Jesus was there for salvation; salvation for everyone, to make them acceptable to God, and also to make God approachable to them. The Jews then understood that Jesus was not playing ball, and they were not happy, because all Jesus could talk about was salvation for everyone, and in particular how salvation could only be received through the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed.

You see, the Jews knew they were Gods chosen people, and they knew they were to be saved, but they did not know that they had to stoop to receive this salvation; they had to confess their spiritual shortcomings first.

And that was the last thing they were about to do! After all, they were proud and self-righteous because they worshiped the true and living God. They went to the synagogue, they gave their tithes, they fasted, and they tried to do everything the scriptures had repeatedly told them to do.

To them, they were THE people of God.

III. Jesus Reminds Them That He came to save the Marginalized of Society.

A. To move on with the lesson, Jesus promoted the gentiles, and to Jews, this must have been a great insult.

Verse 25 says " But the truth is, there were many **widows** in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land".

Here Jesus is quoting **1 Kings 16**, a very painful time in Jewish history when God punished King Ahab through Elijah, by passing a judgment of a three and a half year drought which produced a severe famine where people started to die; and many widows were left in the land; including Jewish widows.

King Ahab had become so bad that, **1 Kings 16:33** says, "He did more to anger God than all the kings of Israel before him". King Ahab turned the Jewish people into Baal worshipers, with the help of his wife Jezebel.

Furthermore, Verse 26 says "And Elijah was sent to none of them", none of these Jewish widows. God had rejected them; and the Jews did not like it Jesus bringing this up; and the story gets worse because God did send Elijah to help only one widow, gentile widow from the unholy area of Sidon.

B. Jesus even adds a Syrian leper named Naaman

You can see the Jews getting angrier and angrier here, but Jesus wasn't finished as he went on to say in verse 27, "There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian".

Elisha was the prophet, who took over from Elijah, but the people were still worshiping Baal, they were still turning their backs on the true and living God; so God judged them with leprosy in its many forms.

And again God let this judgement run, and many suffered and died in pain. Elisha the prophet was only sent by God to help one man, and he was called **Naaman**; ... and you have guessed it, he was a **gentile, Leper from Syria**.

The Jews hated this story also; Jesus was really letting them have it, because Naaman was known to them. Naaman was the commander-in-chief, the big time soldier who constantly and brutally raided Israel; terrorizing and plundered its people, and hauling the prisoners back to Syria.

Naaman was a Gentile, but he too became a leper which made him unclean. Naaman to the Jews was totally despicable on every count. Yet God sent Elisha in **2 Kings 5:10** to "wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shall be clean".

You know the story; Naaman bathed seven times, and became a true believer; a believer, just like the gentile widow from Sidon.

C. So you can see where Jesus is coming from, he is saying that to receive salvation you have to be broken, you have to be in a state where you are ready to accept God, ... and to do that, you have to become nothing at all.

These Jews were nowhere near that state; in fact the opposite. They were proud and arrogant and they demanded salvation, because they felt they had earned it; they felt they were above everybody else; they kept the Law, and so they felt they deserved it.

But as I keep telling you in every sermon, it is not about us, it is about what Jesus did for us on the cross.

We have to get on our knees to receive. We are nothing, but through Jesus, we are everything and entitled to receive everything.

IV. And So, The Conclusion

A. Confession and Submission is What We All Have To Do. These Jews, like most people today just did not understand this message of the New Testament that Jesus was trying to teach them; that salvation or help is only available to those who confess their sinful nature, or inabilities; without that admission, there is nothing to receive.

It is totally impossible. If you can do it yourself, you do not need God; and God is not going to help anyone who can help themselves. He certainly is not going to help anyone who refuses to acknowledge that he is Lord.

We must confess in our heart of hearts that Jesus is Lord, and approach God in a humble broken manner so that we can actually feel him forgiving our sins; and giving him the opportunity to help us along the way. **1 John 4:15** says "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God".

The Jews rather than humbling themselves before Jesus, tried to run him out of town and kill him; but they somehow failed.

B. Philippians 2:9 says "God exalted Jesus, and gave him a name which is above every name". If you can name something, anything, then Jesus is above it; but Jesus can only save or help the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed; Jesus can only help those who kneel before him, and call him Lord. Jesus can only help those who can say "Father I place into your hands, the things I cannot do"

Amen? Let us pray.

Father, we thank you for Jesus, we thank you that he died on that cross instead of us, that through him we are loved and made acceptable to you.

Father this was a very powerful message you revealed to us this morning that made us appreciate salvation more, and miracles less.

And so as brothers and sisters of Jesus, we come to you like your word says, neither unashamed nor afraid, but we admit to you, that we at times are poor, or captive, or blind or oppressed; sometimes we are all of these, sometimes we are nothing at all.

The world can be very hard on us Father, and so, we have our problems that only you can resolve. Help us Father, help us please.

We come to you with our failings; ... our sinful nature, when we let everyone down, including you. Father, we are often rejected; ... for both being good and bad and we are not always in good health.

Many times too our purses are empty, in debt to others. Father we are ashamed of our past; and we also have a fear for the future, sometimes we also have a fear for the present.

Father, you are the alpha and omega, and into your hands, we place all that we cannot handle; we place everything on you that you can intervene, and make us the people that you want us to be. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.