

“The Rejection of Christ”

(Luke 4:14-30)

Introduction

- In our contemporary society, Christianity is often vilified for its exclusivity. That is, people disparage Christianity’s teaching that there is only “one way” to God, only “one way” to be saved. And it is true. The Bible clearly and repeatedly (and unapologetically) declares that Jesus Christ is the only way to God – the only way to heaven, the only means of forgiveness. The Gospel declares that salvation comes only by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

John 3:18 ~ “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

John 3:36 ~ “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

John 14:6 ~ “Jesus said ... ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

Matt 12:30 ~ Jesus said: “Whoever is not with me is against me ...”

Acts 4:12 ~ The apostle Peter said: “... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

1 John 5:11-12 ~ The apostle John declared: “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

- In our culture, “inclusivity” and “tolerance” have become the new morality – although, when pressed, we quickly find out that this dogma is neither really inclusive nor tolerant. For example, those who promote inclusivity often exclude those who do not, and those who scream for tolerance are often intolerant of those who disagree (and those who state emphatically that there is no absolute truth, emphatically believe that is an objective truth). Both of these secular standards (inclusiveness and tolerance) are nothing more than a façade, an attempt to hide idolatry under the guise of (Christless) virtue and decency.

The truth is that every major religion is inherently narrow and exclusive. Every major religion has “a line” that must be crossed in order to be saved: for Muslims it is the Koran, their god Allah, and Muhammad; for Mormons it is their god and religious works; for Buddhists it is Buddha and a spiritual “Enlightenment”; for Evolutionists it is nature, “science” and rejecting God; for Roman Catholics it is God, the Pope, Mary, and good works; for Hinduism it is good behavior reincarnates into good karma; for Seventh Day Adventists, it is “Sabbath” worship and good works; for Jehovah’s Witnesses it is good works within their religion.

- One main truth that separates Christianity from every other major religion is that Christianity alone teaches a salvation apart from any merit or works (Rom.3:20; Gal.2:16; Eph.2:5, 8-10; Tit.3:5; 2Tim.1:9). Salvation is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Christianity is not a religion of “human achievement” but of “divine accomplishment.”

This is truly a major point of contention. As humans, we naturally want to take pride in our own goodness or good works. We want to boast in our accomplishments and even take (at least some) credit for our “salvation.”

But the Bible teaches that there is no one who is righteous (other than Jesus Christ), no one who is without sin, and therefore no one who deserves God’s forgiveness or warrants God’s salvation (see Rom.3:10-12, 23). Christians do not boast in their righteousness or salvation (1Cor.1:29; Eph.2:9) – we “boast in the Lord” (1Cor.1:31) and we “boast ... in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal.6:14).

- The Scriptural passage before us this morning, vividly illustrates the sovereign love and saving grace of God. It also vividly illustrates the hostile and sinful rejection of Jesus Christ as the one and only Son of God and the one and only Savior from God.

Luke 4:14-30 ~ “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷And 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, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’* ²⁰And 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. ²¹And he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

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.”

- From Luke’s account (and the other synoptic Gospels of Matthew and Mark), it can seem as though this event happened immediately following Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. From John’s Gospel (ch.1-4), however, we learn that Jesus’ “Galilean ministry” occurred about a year into His three-year public ministry. So, as we turn to Luke 4:14-30 (which only appears in Luke’s Gospel), it is important to note that Jesus is already becoming a person of renown – the people were amazed by Him, and the religious leaders were increasingly envious of Him.
- This passage can easily be divided into two geographical scenes (Galilee and, more specifically, Nazareth). Within these scenes, we discover much about Jesus Christ, much about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and much about those who reject of Jesus Christ.

A. Jesus’ return to Galilee (vs.14-15)

- From Luke’s account (and the other synoptic Gospels of Matthew and Mark), it can seem as though this event happened immediately following Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. From John’s Gospel (ch.1-4), however, we learn that Jesus’ “Galilean ministry” occurred about a year into His three-year public ministry. So, as we turn to Luke 4:14-30 (which only appears in Luke’s Gospel), it is important to note that Jesus (approximately thirty years old) is already becoming a person of renown – the people were increasingly amazed by Him, and the religious leaders were increasingly envious of Him.
- In verse fourteen, we read that “*Jesus returned ... to Galilee*” – the northern region of Palestine, where Joseph and Mary were from and where Jesus was raised (Lk.1:26; 2:4, 39). Jesus ministered a lot in the region of Galilee. Specifically, in and around His hometown of Nazareth, and on and around the Sea of Galilee. This represents a major portion of Jesus’ (three-year) public ministry.

Luke 4:14-15 ~ “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.”

➤ In just these two verses, we can identify four important characteristics of Jesus’ Galilean ministry.

1. His power (vs.14)

➤ First we read that Jesus “*returned in the power of the Spirit*” (vs.14). As we will see, this was not some bizarre spiritual or charismatic experience (He did not break out in “holy laughter” or “holy barking”, or roll uncontrollably on the ground, or speak in unintelligible gibberish – all of which are unbiblical). To be “*in the power of the Spirit*” (vs.14) is to be under the Spirit’s influence and control.

The Greek word translated “*power*” (*dynamis*) can literally be translated “ability.” Jesus was always filled with, and under the influence of, the Holy Spirit of God. The “*Spirit descended on Him*” at His baptism (Lk.3:22), and continued to fill and to lead Jesus throughout His life.

Luke 4:1 ~ “And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness” (see Lk.4:18)

➤ As Christians, we are called to emulate Jesus’ life. Specifically, we are called to always walk in and be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. This must not be relegated to spiritual, mystical, or emotional experiences. Rather, it is to be under the Spirit influence and instruction.

Eph 5:18-21 ~ “And do not get drunk [imper., vb.] with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled [imper., vb.] with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing [vb. part.] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing [vb. part.] and making melody [vb. part.] to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰giving thanks [vb. part.] always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting [vb. part.] to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Gal 5:16, 22-24 ~ “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ...

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

➤ Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus was able to live according to the will of God, effectively teach and proclaim the Word of God, and perform miracles in the name of God (see Acts 10:36-38).

2. His popularity (vs.14)

➤ Secondly, we see that Jesus became very popular among the people. Through His teaching and preaching, and the miracles He performed, became a bit of “rockstar”: “*a report about him went out through all the surrounding country*” (vs.14). This does not mean that the masses believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but that they flocked to Him to hear Him and witness His miracles.

Luke 5:15-16 ~ “But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. ¹⁶But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.”

Matt 4:23-25 ~ “And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.”

Mark 1:28 ~ “And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.”

3. His teaching (vs.15)

- Jesus was not merely a miracle-worker. He did not set up “healing crusades” or charge admission to see Him perform miracles. In verse fifteen, we read that “*he taught in their synagogues*” (vs.15). This was the foundation of Jesus’ ministry.
- ✓ Illust: “The priority for Jesus was teaching God’s Word (cf. Mark 1:38), and throughout Luke’s gospel He is constantly portrayed as a teacher of God’s truth (cf. 4:31; 5:3, 17; 6:6; 11:1; 13:10, 22; 19:47; 20:1; 21:37; 23:5). He is also frequently referred to as the Teacher (7:40; 8:49; 9:38; 10:25; 11:45; 12:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21, 28, 39; 21:7; 22:11)” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke*; 4:14-15).
- People were not saved merely because Jesus performed miracles. In fact, as we will see this morning, many people rejected Jesus in spite of the miracles they witnessed.

Luke 16:27-31 ~ “And [the rich man] said, ‘Then I beg you, father [Abraham], to send him [Lazarus] to my father’s house – ²⁸for I have five brothers – so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ ²⁹But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

John 12:9-11 ~ “When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.”

- Simply put, the “*synagogues*” (vs.15) were places of worship for the Jews (similar to local churches today). Synagogues enabled the Jews to worship God as an alternative to the temple in Jerusalem. On the Sabbath, Jews would gather for prayer, singing, Scripture reading, and teaching or preaching. Even though He was not officially recognized as part of the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus (who was often referred to as “Rabbi”, which means Teacher; e.g., Jn.1:38, 49; 3:2) went from synagogue to synagogue teaching and preaching the Word of God (as He did in our passage this morning). Jesus was effectively on a preaching tour.

4. His praise (vs.15)

- Fourthly, we note the praise Jesus received. In verse fifteen, we read that He was “*glorified by all*” (vs.15). The Greek word translated “*glorified*” (*doxazō*) could also be translated “praise” or “honor.” Here is praise is directly in response to His teaching (not His miracles). Jesus’ teaching and preaching was powerful – authoritative (out of His own divine authority) and convicting (as His preached “*in the power of the Spirit*” the truth of God’s Word). He was not known for His humorous or politically correct messages. His messages were not theatrical, entertaining, or performative. Those who heard Him, marveled at His message and were convicted by it – leading them to receive or reject Him.

Luke 4:22 ~ “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?’”

Luke 4:31-32 ~ “And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, ³²and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority.”

Luke 19:47-48 ~ “And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, ⁴⁸but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.”

Luke 24:32 ~ “They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’”

Matt 7:28-29 ~ “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”

John 7:14-15 ~ “About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵The Jews therefore marveled, saying, ‘How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?’”

John 7:45-46 ~ “The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why did you not bring him?’ ⁴⁶The officers answered, ‘No one ever spoke like this man!’”

➤ Without question, Jesus was the greatest Bible teacher/preacher who has ever lived or will ever live. He did not preach self-help or politically charged messages. He did not preach secular psychology or worldly philosophies. He was not theatrical or dramatic. Being Spirit-filled and Spirit-led, Jesus preached the truth of God’s Word.

1 Cor 2:3-5 ~ “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. ³And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, ⁴and my word and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith would not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (LSB)

2 Tim 4:1-2 ~ “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”

B. Jesus’ return to Nazareth (vs.16-30)

➤ Jesus then *“came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up”* (vs.16). The city of Nazareth was in the region of Galilee, southwest of the Sea of Galilee (about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea). Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem (as the prophets declared; Mic.5:2), Nazareth was His hometown. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Jesus was well-known to the people there and that those in the synagogue not only knew of Him but also knew Him personally. It is also likely that this particular day the synagogue was packed with those who wanted to hear what Jesus would say to those in His hometown. Throughout Jesus’ ministry, and life, He was known as “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Luke 4:33-34 ~ “And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴‘Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God.’”

Luke 18:35-38 ~ “As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. ³⁷They told him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.’ ³⁸And he cried out, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’”

Luke 24:18-20 ~ “Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?’ ¹⁹And he said to them, ‘What things?’ And they said to him, ‘Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.’”

John 1:45-46 ~ “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”

➤ As He did throughout Judea and Galilee, *“as was his custom”* (vs.16), Jesus *“went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day”* (vs.16). And, as He did so many times, Jesus took a prominent role in the worship service as *“he stood up to read”* (vs.16). These verses can be outlined with four headings.

1. The proclamation (vs.16-21)

- The synagogue where Jesus had attended as a child was now the synagogue where He would preach as the Messiah. Those who had seen Him grow up would now be able to listen to Him read from the Scriptures and teach and preach as He had done throughout the whole countryside.
- He was given *“the scroll of the prophet Isaiah”* (vs.17), from which He intentionally chose to read the following Messianic verses: *“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, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”* (vs.18-19). These verses declared the Messiah to be the Savior – and Jesus described this using four metaphors for the sinner: *“the poor”* (vs.18), *“the captives”* (vs.18), *“the blind”* (vs.18), and the *“oppressed”* (vs.18). This was the proclamation of the Gospel (“good news”) of Jesus Christ, that *“the year of the Lord’s favor”* (vs.19) had come in the person of Jesus (see Lk.20:1; Matt.4:23; Mk.1:14-15).

Isa 61:1-2 ~ “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ²to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn” (see also Is.58:6)

- When He finished reading, *“he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant”* (vs.20), who was responsible for returning the scroll to the ark where it was kept. Jesus then *“sat down”* (vs.20), which was the customary posture for teaching. In verse twenty we read that *“the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him”* (vs.20). This would have been an incredibly dramatic moment. What would Jesus say? What teaching would He give? How would He explain this passage?

Jesus began His sermon by saying, *“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”* (vs.21). This was no longer a future prophecy. Jesus declared that this prophecy is fulfilled in Him; that the Messianic era had begun; that the Messiah was in their midst.

Luke 24:27 ~ “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Luke 24:44 ~ “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’”

John 5:39 ~ “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me”

John 5:46 ~ “For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.”

John 1:45 ~ “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’”

- The Bible is not merely an inspirational or instructional book; it is not primarily about a moral code or religious order; it is not your personal guide to a secret spiritual life, or your supernatural source of healing power. The Bible is primarily about Jesus Christ. That is, God’s sovereign plan to redeem sinful humanity through the life, death, and resurrection of His one and only Son – Jesus Christ.

2. The admiration (vs.22)

- What did Jesus’ hometown crowd do once they heard Him declare Himself to be the Messiah? Did they humbly fall down to the ground and worship Him? Did they shout for joy that the Savior had come and was standing in their midst? Did they stand in holy awe before the Son of the Living God? No. It seems as though they failed to understand what He was truly saying. Instead, we read that they *“all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth”* (vs.22). They marveled at His speaking abilities.

And yet, they asked, *“Is not this Joseph’s son?”* (vs.22). This could be in reference to His oratory skills – impressed that Jesus grew up to be such a capable public speaker. But this also could be in reference to His claim to be the Messiah. In essence they were asking, “Who does this Jesus think He is ... the Son of God? No. He is the son of Joseph!”

- It is important to remember that most (if not all) of them knew Jesus or at least knew of Him. He had grown up there, and His parents presumably still lived there. As the saying goes, “Familiarity breeds contempt.” They could only see Jesus as “the carpenter’s son.”

3. The explanation (vs.23-27)

- Jesus, of course, not only understood their words but He also knew their thoughts. He pre-empted their doubting and questions: *“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’”* (vs.23-24). Jesus knew they wanted Him to prove His Messianic claims by performing miracles. The familiar proverb: *“Physician, heal yourself”* (vs.23), simply refers to the notion that a person should be able to back his claims. If you are a doctor, you should be well; if you are a physical trainer, you should be in shape; if you are a mechanic, you should be able to fix your own cars; if you claim to be God’s Messiah, you should be able to perform miracles.

But miracles were never intended to convince someone to believe against their will. Miracles revealed Jesus as the Messiah (or as a messenger of God) and affirmed His claims to those who would believe (see Jn.10:25, 37-38; 14:11-12; 15:24).

Luke 6:10-11 ~ “And after looking around at them all he said to him, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.”

Luke 11:29 ~ “When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, ‘This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.’”

Luke 16: 31 ~ “[Abraham] said to [the rich man], ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

John 12:10 ~ “So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well”

Matt 13:57-58 ~ “And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.’” ⁵⁸And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”

- Jesus then gave two examples from the Old Testament, when God bypassed the Israelites (who rejected Him, i.e., His prophet), showed grace to the Gentiles: *“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, 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”* (vs.25-27).

1) Elijah ~ Jesus first tells the story of Elijah and the widow in Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-16). This widow lived during a time of severe drought and famine. Elijah, the prophet, was instructed to go to Zarephath and find the widow who was to give him food. When Elijah found the widow she was *“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”* (1Kng.17:12). She was so impoverished and so helpless and hopeless that she was literally preparing their last meal. What did Elijah do? He asked her for some water and some bread that he could drink and eat. But then he tells her not to be afraid, because after she has *first* made him some bread then she would be able to have enough to make herself and her son some bread as well. Why? Because he tells her that God has said, *“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”

(1Kng.17:14). This widow is on the brink of starvation. Does she ask Elijah for proof? Does she demand him to perform the miracle first and then she will believe and obey? Does she doubt him to be a man of God? No. *“She went and did as Elijah said”* (1Kng.17:15). Then she received God’s promised miracle.

- 2) **Elisha** ~ If Jesus’ first story made them mad this second story put them over the edge. Jesus told them about the story of Elisha and Naaman (2 Kings 5). Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army and was sent by the king of Syria to Elisha to be cured of leprosy. While the Israelites and Syrians were at war with one another, Naaman went to the prophet Elisha and asked to be cured of his leprosy. Elisha then told him to go wash seven times in the Jordan and he would be cleansed (2Kng.5:10). At first, Naaman was angry and said, *“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”* (2Kng.5:11). But Naaman’s servants said, *“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’?”* (2Kng.5:13). In other words, if Elisha had asked you to do something that was honorable you would have done it, but are you not going to humble yourself in order to be made well? Naaman thought about his desperate condition, humbled himself and trusted Elisha’s words. Then he was cleansed of his leprosy and said, *“I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel”* (2Kng.5:15).

- These serve as illustrations of God’s sovereignty over salvation, and His saving grace to all who truly believe – apart from any merit or work – whether Jew or Gentile (Rom.1:16; Gal.2:16; 3:27-29).

4. The indignation (vs.28-30)

- The crowd seemingly had no humility, and no faith. They refused to believe that they were *“the poor”* (vs.18), *“the captives”* (vs.18), *“the blind”* (vs.18), and the *“oppressed”* (vs.18). They were repulsed and incensed by the notion that God would bring salvation to Gentiles (over them). They believed that they were entitled to God’s saving grace, that they had earned their salvation.

Matt 20:11-15 ~ “And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, ¹²saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’”

- These stories had infuriated them to the point of violent rage. What did these two stories have in common? Both the widow and Naaman were Gentiles, both lived during a time when Israel was unfaithful to God, both had realized they were hopelessly and helplessly in need, both were social outcasts because of their deplorable condition, and both believed *before* they witnessed a miracle from God (Matt.22:2-10). In addition, both stories highlight God’s sovereignty in salvation.
- The people of Nazareth had heard enough – in fact, they didn’t even finish the service. *“When 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”* (vs.28-30). They were so incensed at Jesus’ message they, with a blood-thirsty crazed mob-like mentality, wanted to kill Jesus as soon as possible. They were not about to give Him “his day in court.” They would not attempt to turn Him over to the authorities. They wanted to shut Him up and silence His message forever (just like the prophets before Him; Lk.6:22-23 [Matt.5:12]; 11:45-54; Matt.23:31).

Jesus had offended their spiritual pride. He upended their self-righteous religion. He downplayed their nationalistic patriotism. He called them to humility and faith, and they vehemently (violently) refused.

John 1:11-13 ~ “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Rom 1:16 ~ “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

Gal 3:28-29 ~ “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

- As it was not yet time for Christ to die, and this not the way that He was to die, Jesus miraculously “[passed] through their midst” and went on His way (vs.30). Ironically, a miracle they were looking for but never saw.

Conclusion

- Pride is still the number one reason why people reject Jesus Christ – and the Gospel of Jesus Christ – today! Unrepentant sinners refuse to see themselves as spiritually “poor, captive, blind, or oppressed” apart from Christ. They reject Jesus Christ as the one and only Son of God, and one and only Savior from God, because they reject the very notion that they are justly condemned by God as sinners (Jn.3:18, 36). And even when they do recognize God’s just condemnation, unbelievers often try to earn or secure God’s saving grace by doing “good” works or being a “good” person (see Is.64:6; Rom.3:10-12; Gal.2:16; Eph.2:5, 8-10).

Rev 3:16-20 [to the church in Laodicea] ~ “So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. ¹⁹Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”

- Unrepentant sinners, sometimes vehemently, refuse to see themselves as sinners in desperate need of God’s mercy and grace. So, they attempt to clothe themselves with cultural/political morality, or bathe themselves in (false) religion and religious works, or surround themselves with things and people that feed their insatiable ego and protect their fragile self-esteem.

Luke 5:32 ~ “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 18:9-14 ~ “He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.’”

- God calls us to humble ourselves before Him – confessing and repenting of our sins, receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and (only) Savior – knowing that His grace and mercy alone can save. True salvation comes only by God’s grace through faith in Christ!