

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] This morning we are returning once again to the Gospel of Luke. We have just spent the last four weeks in Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament. And much of Malachi was pointing towards the coming of Jesus and John the Baptist. As a reminder of where we have been or catch you up if you are visiting. We have already covered most of the first four chapters of Luke. Jesus has been miraculously born of the virgin, baptized by John the Baptist, and He has just finished resisting the temptations of the devil in the desert. But now Jesus emerges from that temptation to begin His public ministry. For the next several weeks we will study the first acts of Jesus' ministry. Because each of these acts show us something significant about the mission of Jesus. But the first story, the one we will study this morning is about Jesus' first public appearance in His hometown. But instead of a wonderful homecoming it ends with the crowd trying to kill Jesus.
2. [Need] The story is not just about how they don't appreciate Jesus. Instead this story is trying to tell us something significant about the gospel. It tells us who the gospel is for.
3. [Subject] When we started I said that I believe the message of the gospel of Luke is Jesus is the promised King who came to preach and enact His kingdom, which is for all people, through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Today we will see Jesus begin to enact that Kingdom for all. And we will see how much He is opposed.
4. [Text] Luke 4:14-30

Point number 1 if you are taking notes in your bulletin. **Jesus came for the insignificant. Jesus came for the insignificant.**

This is the crux of this passage is all about.

When Jesus begins His public ministry, He wants to make this clear.

He has come for those who have been left out and left behind.

Verse 14, **"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee,"**

Jesus emerges from the wilderness having defeated the devil, in power.

"And a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. 15 and He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all."

Jesus appears to have begun His ministry.

He goes all throughout Galilee teaching.

We will see later in verse 23 that He has been working miracles and healing as well.

As a result of the powerful ministry of Jesus, people are talking.

Every time Synagogue gets out all the people begin to chat about how wonderful that Jesus was.

We need to have this as the context in the back of our minds.

All of the local gossip is about this new Rabbi.

It is all anyone can talk about at lunch, or with friends and family.

So when Jesus returns home everyone is excited.

Look at verse 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."**

This new prophet has come to His hometown.

You have to believe the Synagogue was packed that day.

Even those who don't always show up would be there.

I bet even the people who haven't been in years, were there that Sabbath.

Because Jesus was here.

You also notice that Jesus was an observant and perfectly obedient Jew.

He attended the Synagogue each Sabbath.

And services at the Synagogue had a regular liturgy, or order of service.

We don't know all of the details of their service, but we know it had lots of Scripture reading.

They probably began by reading the Shema, or Deuteronomy 6:4-9

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one..."

They would pray and read from different sections of Scripture.

Someone would be chosen to read from the prophets.
That person would read and then explain everything that had been read.
Today, Jesus gets to pick the prophet and to teach the assembly.

Verse 17, **"And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,"**

Isaiah is its own scroll that has to be unrolled.

And the scroll does not have chapters and verses like ours.

In order to find what you are looking for you would really need to know the book of Isaiah.

And it is one of the longest books of the Bible!

Yet, Jesus unrolls it and finds exactly what He is looking for.

Because Jesus knows the Scriptures.

He reads it then verse 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."**

Everyone is paying attention.

No one has drifted off to sleep.

They are all looking and ready to see what the great teacher will say.

And Jesus gives a very short sermon.

Some of you might wish I preached this short.

It's only one sentence.

Verse 21, **"And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."**

He tells them the promises of Isaiah are being fulfilled right now.

He is the answer to all of their questions.

And the heart of what Jesus fulfills in Isaiah is that He has come for the overlooked.

Let's go back and look at what Jesus read.

Verse 18, **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor."**

Jesus does have the Spirit of the Lord upon Him.

Because Jesus is the Spirit of God incarnate.

He is God Himself.

And Jesus was anointed at His baptism as the Son of God.

Jesus comes to proclaim the good news of the gospel.

Look to who He proclaims it.

"to the poor."

Jesus has come for the beggar on the side of the road.

The person who most of us try to avoid eye contact with.

Jesus comes to them.

He comes to all who are poor in spirit.

Those who are spiritually broken and know they are lost.

"He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives"

Jesus comes to set free the prisoners of war.

Those who have been taken captive by sin.

Those dead in their sins and trespasses.

Those who cannot escape their addictions no matter how hard they try.

Jesus comes to bring liberty and freedom.

"and recovering of sight to the blind,"

Jesus comes to help the blind see.

Repeatedly we will see Jesus heal the blind.

Not just people from their physical blindness,

But He will help people recover their spiritual sight.

He will open the eyes of their heart that they may see God.

"to set at liberty those who are oppressed,"

His freedom will come to all those who are oppressed.

Oppressed is a bit of a buzz word these days.

But biblically it means anyone who is being crushed by the powerful.

That would be most of Israel.

They are being oppressed by their Roman occupiers.

And Jesus is coming to bring freedom to them.
He is also bringing freedom to those who are being spiritually oppressed.
Those being crushed by demons and the power of sin.
Jesus brings true liberty.

"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

This is referring to a very specific year.
And the context of these verses,
Which over and over refer to freedom and liberty help us see it.
This is none other than the year of Jubilee.
We talk about the year of Jubilee when we discussed the 4th
commandment on Wednesday night.
The year every 7th 7 of years that all the captives are set free.
The year that all bondage is cast off.
The year all debts are forgiven.
The year all slaves are freed.
That year is here because Jesus is here.

Jesus tells them He is here for everyone who has been overlooked.
And He brings blessings beyond their wildest dreams.
It is the year of Jesus and Jubilee.

Verse 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?"

They are blown away and overjoyed.
They recognized the graciousness of God.
He has not come for the most important and righteous people.
Jesus comes for the insignificant.

This has always been the wonder and glory of the gospel.
And we will see this over and over in Jesus' ministry.
He will let women be His disciples, something no other Rabbi would do.

He will hold all of the little babies, even when His disciples want him to hobnob with the more important.
Jesus will eat and drink with prostitutes and tax collectors.
Jesus will touch the leper and the unclean.
Everyone who feels far away and overlooked will be sought out by Jesus.
Because He came for those the world deems insignificant.

This focus of Christianity has always bewildered the world.
The philosophers of Rome could never understand why Christians cared about the overlooked.
One such philosopher during the 3rd century was named Celsus.
And he said that Christians wanted to make converts of "foolish and low individuals, and persons devoid of perception, and slaves, and women, and children."
To which we reply amen.
Because all are welcome at the table with Jesus.

This was what Jesus wanted to make clear at the beginning of His ministry.
He came for those no one wanted.
He came for those who are in need.
He came for you.
He came me.
Jesus came for all of us.

Our world is obsessed with significance.
We honor and highlight the impressive and successful things of the world.
We long to have lives filled with significance and achievement.

Maybe you are here this morning and you feel insignificant.
You look at your life and there isn't anything that would impress a crowd.
I want you to read this passage,
Hear this sermon from Jesus.
And know that Jesus came for you.
He did not come to reach the most important people in Israel.

He came for the poor, blind, oppressed, and captive.

He came for the insignificant.

Take heart because it is the year of God's favor for the insignificant.

[transition] Jesus comes for the insignificant. And the people are excited and amazed. But there is a problem.

Point number 2: **The significant get no special access to Jesus (v. 23-27).**

The significant get no special access to Jesus (v. 23-27).

There is a flip side to Jesus' mission to the significant.

Those who have it all together.

Those who are rich.

Those who are powerful and influential.

Those who are well and don't need a doctor.

Those who have accomplished great things.

Those who have the crowds begging to get in their circles.

Those who are celebrities.

They will not get any special access to Jesus.

And when Jesus makes this clear it infuriates people.

This is why the people go from speaking well of Jesus in verse 22 to trying to kill him in verse 29.

And Jesus knows this.

So, He wants them to understand right away that just because they are His hometown, they will not get any special treatment.

They will not have special access to Jesus.

In the worldly kingdoms, the rich get richer.

It's the good ol' boys club.

It's all about who you know, and if you are known.

The Kingdom of Jesus is utterly unlike the kingdoms of the world.

Jesus' kingdom does not give VIP status to the rich.

The celebrities and powerful don't get special one on one time with God.

Jesus does not heal those who have enough money.
He heals nobodies and the forgotten.

Verse 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."**

Jesus reads their minds.

He knows what they will say.

And the proverb **"Physician, heal yourself."**

As the Doctor should use his skills on his own body, So Jesus should do for His own people what He has done for others.

They want the hometown to get some of the blessing.

Theologian Justo Gonzalez gave a great illustration that helped make this clear for me, so I wanted to adapt it.

He said that this is like a hometown athlete finally making it big.

Picture someone who grew up in Norman.

They finish high school as a top rated football recruit.

Then they decide to play for the Sooners.

They win a championship and a Heisman.

They end up getting drafted as the number 1 pick in the NFL.

They play incredible for a few years and are going to get the biggest contract ever.

To top it off they are a devoted Christian from a good family.

And they have been talking about how much they want to donate to charities and give back to the community.

So they turn up back at home at Norman.

They are going to have a massive press conference so everyone wants to be there.

The kids are out of school for the day.

All the news stations show up and everyone wants to know what they'll say.

The announcement is going to be the start of their charitable foundation.
And they are going to announce it in their hometown.

The day comes and everyone is there.
They get up on the stage and announce everything they will give away.
Tens of millions on dollars to the university.
The crowd cheers, everyone is excited.
Until they say that the school he is donating to is the University of Texas.
Furthermore they say that Norman is not going to get a single dime.
And they will never get a dime because it's all going to Longhorns
And maybe they will even give a few million to another school in Stillwater.
How well is that going to go over?
How quickly is that crowd going to turn from joy into boos?

This is basically what Jesus does.
He tells His hometown that they will not get any special treatment.
They do not have any special access to Jesus.

This is radical, insulting, and spiritually significant.
Jesus is making it clear that He is not like any other Rabbi.
And Jesus is not like any other celebrity.
When people know someone famous they might think it gives them
special privilege.
They might think that they can come and get something from this person.

They tell you that if you ever win the lottery, tell no one!
Because everyone from your hometown will want special access to your
new winnings.

Well, Nazareth feels like they have won the lottery.
Jesus should stop this traveling ministry and spend time here.
It will help the economy of the town.
Maybe the synagogue will get better attendance and giving.

I am willing to bet people had all sorts of plans for Jesus.
Or at the very least they wanted a show and to be entertained.
But Jesus tells them no.

Jesus gives them two Biblical stories to remind them of this fact.
First he reminds them of the story of Elijah and a widow.

Verse 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."**

Three years and six days there was no rain.
In that day and age it would be devastating.
They were not able to irrigate like we are.
Three years of no harvests.
Three years of farmers losing everything.
Three years of ranchers losing their cattle because they couldn't water them.
Three years of shepherds having to slowly eat their sheep.

Thousands of people would have starved to death.
Those who were poor would have been hit the hardest.
Widows would have been the most vulnerable.
They'd have no income and no job to support them.

And Jesus says, **"There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah"**

There were tens of thousands of widows.
There were probably new widows every day.
But Elijah did not help all of them.
There is only one that God sends him to.

Verse 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."**

You may wonder, where is Sidon located in Israel?

The answer is, it is not in Israel.
It is a Canaanite city.
Sidon was actually Canaan's firstborn son.
The Canaanites were one of Israel's oldest enemies.
So while Israelites are dying all over, Elijah goes to Sidon.

You can read about the story in 1 Kings 17.
God Himself actually commands Elijah to go there.
And Elijah finds the widow as she is about to make her last meal for her
and her son.
But God works a miracle
And their flour and oil do not run out until the famine is over.
Even when the woman's son dies from a sickness,
Elijah brings him back to life.
And this Canaanite woman expresses her faith in the God of Israel.

Jesus reminds them of another story.
This time from the prophet Elisha.
Verse 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."**

We can read about this story in 2 Kings 5.
Leprosy is an infectious disease and there are lepers all throughout Israel.
Yet Elisha heals one leper.
He heals a Syrian.

And in the story you will see that the King of Israel has no faith in the prophet, while the Syrian Naaman does.
Elisha tells Naaman to wash in the dirty Jordan river.
And even though Naaman struggles with doubt, he does so.
And because of his faith, God heals him.

What do these stories have in common?

Two incredible prophets.

Two miracles.

Both worked for Gentiles.

Worked for insignificant and overlooked people in the Jews eyes.

Because even though they were given strange requests,
the Gentiles obeyed and had faith.

While Israelites are ignored.

Jesus tells them these stories as reasons why they will see no miracles.

This is not Jesus forgetting where He came from.

It is not Him being ungrateful.

There is deep spiritual significance to what Jesus does.

He is trying to teach Nazareth, Israel, and us that there are no VIP's in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is not the Old Boy's club.

There is no nepotism in the kingdom of heaven.

You cannot get inside based on who you know or who your parents are.

There is no special access to Jesus.

There is no special access because everyone can come to Jesus.

The only way to get to Jesus is by faith.

Faith alone is the only door.

It is the only ticket in the kingdom.

I am a second generation preacher.

Three out of four of my grandparents are faithful believers.

My great grandparents were believers.

I can trace some of my family back to the Anabaptists in the 13th century.

But none of that gives me any extra credit with Jesus.

I still needed to put my faith in Jesus.

Because the only way into the Kingdom is faith.

You cannot buy your way into the Kingdom with your heritage.
You cannot buy your way into the Kingdom with money or influence.
You cannot buy your way into the Kingdom with your works.

You could even be born today to a Christian family in Nazareth.
You could grow up playing in Jerusalem and walking where Jesus walked.
It would not give you any special access to Jesus.
You still need to have faith.

This is what Nazareth needed to understand.
The Kingdom is not for the well connected.
The Kingdom is for the poor in spirit.
The Kingdom is for the Gentiles.
The Kingdom is for anyone who comes by faith.

Point number 3: **Jesus' coming is opposed (v. 28-30). Jesus' coming is opposed (v. 28-30).**

Right from the beginning of Jesus' ministry He is opposed.
It does not happen just in Jerusalem before Calvary, it happens now.

This is the first Sunday of Lent.
It is the time in the Christian calendar when we prepare ourselves for Easter.
It is not about deciding if you will or won't fast.
It is about preparing your heart.
It is about meditating on the life and death of Jesus.

Sometimes I hear people wonder how the crowd could celebrate Jesus at the triumphant entry and then kill him on Friday.
Well, that isn't new.
It happens right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

People leave the synagogue telling him "great sermon Rabbi."
And after the service they try to kill him.
That's only a couple hours of turnaround.

Verse 28, **"When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath."**

When they realize that Jesus will not perform for them.
When they will not get special blessings for being His hometown.
They are incredibly angry.

Verse 29, **"And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff."**

Jesus is not just opposed, he is violently resisted.
They try to throw him off of a cliff.
Not because they believe he is a heretic.
But because His words have made them so angry.
Because Jesus is not the kind of Messiah that they expected.

One of the reasons that this happens is to show the opposition Jesus will face.

It is not new.

It is not a later invention.

Right at the very beginning there are people who oppose Jesus.

There are scholars who try to talk about Jesus as if He was simply a nice moral teacher.

They will tell you that Jesus just tried to get people to love one another.
Or maybe they will tell you he was opposed because He resisted the Romans.

That Jesus pushed for justice and a new kingdom which angered everyone.

Jesus was and has always been opposed.
From His very first sermon people did not want to hear what Jesus had to say.
The message of the kingdom is offensive.
This is not new.
It is not because the world has gotten so evil today.
Wherever the gospel has been preached, there is opposition.
It makes people angry and it tears communities apart.

The story comes now at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
The opposition and death threats come at the beginning.
Because Jesus came to die.
This story happens now to foreshadow what will happen at the end.
Jesus will be grabbed by the crowd.
But they won't throw Him off the cliff to a quick death.
He will be tortured.
They will flog His back beyond recognition.
They will nail Him to a tree.
He will slowly suffocate to death as His lungs fill with blood.
But all of this is Jesus' plan.

I love verse 30.
Look at what happens.
Verse 30, **"But passing through their midst, he went away."**
Picture this moment if you can.
The crowd grabs Jesus and takes Him outside.
People are screaming with rage.
It has quickly turned into a lynch mob.
Someone yells that they should throw him off a cliff.

So, this whole crowd slowly marches that way.
And when they get there they start changing to toss him off.
But they look around and realize they aren't carrying him anymore.
And no one can find him.

So, they have to calm down and quietly go back about their day.
Because somehow, miraculously, Jesus just passes through their midst.
He slips out of their fingers.
He wades through the crowd and watches it march towards the cliff
without Him.

This morning at breakfast, I told this story to my 4yo son.
And he laughed and said, "Is this a silly story?"
And it really is in one sense.
All that anger and power, and Jesus just disappears.

Why does it mention this?
It isn't just a weird thing that happens.
It is not a mere anecdote.
There is theological significance.

Jesus is opposed and they try to kill Him.
But Jesus passes through their midst unharmed.
Because Jesus is in control.
He cannot be killed until it is time.
He will not let Himself die until the appointed time.
The world can scream and rant all it wants.
It can scheme and plot, but Jesus holds it in His power.
And all of the crowds strength has no hold on Jesus.

Jesus passes through the midst of any opposition He wants.
At the cross they murdered Christ.
The spiritual leaders celebrated because they thought they won.
They believed it was finally over.
Satan thought He had won.
Death thought it had trapped the Son of God.
But He was just passing through.
Jesus passed through the fingers of Romans, Jews, Satan, and death itself.
He emerged in resurrection victory.

This is a reminder to us of the beauty of the gospel.
People can oppose Jesus all that they want.
People can oppose God's Word.
People can oppose the Bride of Christ, the church.

The Enemy may even seem to win.
Churches may close their doors.
Truth and righteousness may seem to have failed.
But Jesus passed through their midst.
And because of Jesus, all of those in are in Christ,
All who have placed our hope and all that we are in the resurrected Savior,
We will pass through the midst.
We will pass through any opposition this world can throw our way.
We will pass through the fingers of death itself.
When Jesus returns to bring resurrection.

CONCLUSION

1. [Summary] Jesus came for the insignificant. The significant do not get special access to Jesus. Jesus' coming is opposed.
2. [Challenge] People can oppose Jesus and His people all that they want. But our Savior wins. Take heart beloved. No matter what you face in this life. No matter how insignificant you feel. Jesus came for you. No matter how strong the opposition to the Kingdom of God seems. Jesus will help us pass through any suffering or opposition this world can bring. Let us pray.