

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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The Words, Works, and Person of Christ

The Gospel of Luke

The Free Gift that Costs
Everything (Pt 5)

October 16, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 4:14-30

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-14

We consider once again this morning another selection from the Gospel of Luke under the topic heading, “The Free Gift that Costs Everything.” In this 4th chapter, after Luke’s account of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness and following an unknown period of ministry in places like Capernaum, Luke gives us this record of what happened when Jesus returned to his home

town of Nazareth. [Note: if you go to Youtube and search under RC Sproul Gospel of Luke you will find two sermons by him on this same text which are very profitable to listen to].

Follow along then as I read God’s Word and let’s be certain that we are receiving it as such:

Luk 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. (15) And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

(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.

Empowered by the fullness of the Holy Spirit, Jesus had begun His ministry in Galilee and the news about Him spread very rapidly and widely. He taught in the synagogues and, as Luke puts it, “was being glorified by all.” This does not mean that everyone was receiving Him as Messiah – Jesus would rebuke Capernaum for their unbelief. This “glorifying by all” was no doubt more of an excitement about a new celebrity rabbi who had come on the scene. Something like today when some new TV series rockets to popularity and the word spreads – “you just have to see this!” That was all Jesus was to the vast majority of these crowds.

(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.

I suppose this would be something similar to a home boy who had gone out and become famous returning to his hometown where he is invited to speak in the church

he was raised in. In this case, the synagogue. Everyone basking in what they thought was his fame and glory. “Oh yes, I know Jesus. His parents Joseph and Mary lived right down the street from me and I have been in their carpenter shop many times.”

2Co 5:16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

The people of Nazareth didn’t get it. He was still Jesus, the boy who they watched grow up and who had now brought them some praise.

And so Jesus is the guest speaker that sabbath. He stands up, He is given the scroll rolled open to Isaiah (what we call chapter 61), and He reads:

(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.”

This passage in Isaiah – in fact the entire section of Isaiah in which it is found – is about the Messiah. And the Jews knew it. The portion Jesus read describes the Messiah's ministry when He would appear:

- He is anointed by God's Spirit
- He would proclaim good news to the poor
- He would proclaim liberty to the captives
- He would restore sight to the blind
- He would set at liberty those who are oppressed
- And all of this was, as Messiah would announce, the nature of the time of the Lord's favor.

Now, of course as was typical of them, the Jews applied and limited

these blessings to themselves. The Messiah was about Israel, no one else. When Messiah comes – this is how they took this scripture – He would have good news for the poor in Israel, He would announce that the days of their captivity to Rome were over, He would heal their infirmities, He would deliver from all kinds of oppression – it would be the year of the Lord's favor *to the Jews*. Israel would once more be great and prosperous and all the nations would envy them. [Note: the theology of many evangelicals today is very similar – Messiah's kingdom is fundamentally about the Jews].

And so Jesus read that text, rolled up the scroll, and sat down. As we know, when a rabbi had read the Scripture and sat down, he was not done. Now he was about to deliver the sermon and explain the Scripture just read. And here then is Jesus' sermon (one of the shortest in history, as Sproul put it!) –

....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.”

The people knew exactly what Jesus was saying. He was not merely claiming that the Messianic era which Isaiah prophesied had begun. No, he also said “has been fulfilled *in your hearing.*” In your ears. In your midst. “*I am announcing what Isaiah said the Messiah would announce.*” And they all understood him – *this Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, this boy who they watched grow up and who they knew, was claiming to be the Messiah!!*

Well, you have heard the old saying, “familiarity breeds contempt.” And so that contempt evidences itself now:

(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?”

Listen to Mark's account where some details are added to help us

sort out this duplicity in the people's response:

Mar 6:2-3 And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? (3) Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

They were astonished because of His insight and wisdom in the Scriptures and because of the miracles they had received reports about. But at the same time they “took offense.” Why?

Their response evidences a seething unbelief toward Jesus which had been present all those years before. A resentment. Think about it. The Son of God grew up right in their midst. There were the accounts of his virgin birth. Rejected. There was the account of

him at 12 years of age astonishing the rabbis in Jerusalem. Rejected. And there had to be many other indications as Jesus grew up right in front of them which showed this was no ordinary boy. But it was all rejected. Even by his own siblings.

And therefore, underneath all of this so-called “glorifying” of Jesus – the home-town boy – lay this wicked sin of unbelief, of hatred toward the perfect Son of God. They were darkness and He was Light and they had sensed it from the beginning.

It only took a few more words from Jesus to open up that vileness in their hearts. Glorifying turns to murderous raging. Jesus is about to do what He always did when faced with the false flatteries of evil men. He exposed the evil:

(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 told people elsewhere that seeking a sign is evil. Demanding proof from God is evil. And that is exactly what these people of Nazareth were doing. They had heard of the miracles Jesus had done elsewhere and now they are insisting He do miracles before their eyes. They actually hold him in contempt. And He is going to bring that contempt right out where it could be seen. This is how He did it:

Luk 4:24-27 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.”

Take careful note of verse 24 - *no prophet is acceptable in his hometown*. When the Lord saves a person, regenerates them and makes them a new creation in Christ, the ones who detest and reject them the most are the ones who have known them – family, friends, schoolmates, small town acquaintances, even spouses and children. They insist that you must always be who you were. The new birth is a threat. Darkness has become light and the darkness around does not like it.

Num 16:3 They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?”

Jesus then continues to use the Scriptures – their own Scriptures! – to expose the evil in them. He reminds them of two accounts – one in the ministry of Elijah and the

other in connection with Elisha. In each case, God chose to send His prophet to *Gentiles and not to widows or lepers in Israel*. Why?

- God is sovereign. He does what He does according to His good pleasure, not because man deserves.
- The Jews in those times were under God’s judgment.

And so it was at Nazareth. God does not owe these people anything and in fact, as judgment for their unbelief, He is not going to bless them. He will go elsewhere. Even to the Gentiles. The blessings of the Messiah that Isaiah wrote of would not be for Nazareth.

And the result? Murderous rage that was there all the time broke out:

(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.

How quickly things change. But really, there was no actual change – their praise of Jesus had only been superficial and false. These home town people actually hated God. They twisted the Scriptures to suit their own evil, selfish desires and manufactured a “messiah” in their own image and liking.

What must his all have looked like? Imagine a church service where God’s Word is faithfully preached and applied and at the start everyone just seemed so happy to be there. They just knew they would hear about how God loves them all unconditionally and would then leave feeling quite good about themselves.

And so the sermon begins. A scripture is read and the smiles still remain on the faces. But then comes a turning point in the sermon as the Scripture is explained and applied. “Most probably numbers of you here right now are dead in your sins and on the path to hell. You are Christians

in name only, your religion is a counterfeit, and Christ does not know you. His curse, not His blessing, is upon you.”

What would it be like? Well, something similar to what happened at Nazareth that Sabbath day. They laid hold of Jesus – how DARE He talk to them this way, this one who was surely no better than they – they lead/drag him to a mountain where there is a precipice with the intent to throwing him off a cliff to his death. This is what the world does with Christ and with all who are in Him.

Mount Precipice - also known as Mount of Precipitation, Mount of the Leap of the Lord and Mount Kedumim is located just outside the southern edge of Nazareth, 2.0 km southwest of the modern city center.

It is believed by some to be the site of the Rejection of Jesus described in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 4:29-30). According to the story, the people of Nazareth, not

accepting Jesus as Messiah tried to push him from the mountain, but "he passed through the midst of them and went away." [Wikipedia]



Mount Precipice

It is no mere coincidence that this event is recorded by Luke right after another very similar attempt on the life of Jesus:

Luk 4:9-11 And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, (10) for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' (11) and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

I think by this, Luke is telling us what, or rather who, lay behind this raging mob in Nazareth. Satan. These people, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker, the cheesemaker, the blacksmith, the rabbi – all these people who Jesus grew up around, were in fact servants of the evil one. And it was the presence and words of Jesus that exposed them.

Finally, we have this very brief yet amazing verse:

Luk 4:30 But passing through their midst, he went away.

They wanted a miracle? Here it was. They couldn't touch Him because His time was not yet come. He must go to the cross.

I don't know what significance there is to this fact, but I suspect there is an important reason – *Jesus is called Jesus of Nazareth at least 18 times in the New Testament.* Matthew tells us that Jesus being from Nazareth was a fulfillment of "the prophets." [Matt 2:23]. Whatever the reasons for this title,

we can be sure of this – the sin of these people of Nazareth was great. Jesus had grown up among them, He had returned and preached to them, and they tried to kill Him.

How often has Jesus of Nazareth come to you, and brought His Word to you? What has been your response to Him when He told you things about yourself that you really did not want to hear? Did you humbly believe Him, or did you rage and try to do away with Him by just writing off His Word as the errant opinion of the messenger? All through the history of the church, Christ's messengers in this world have been hated, disbelieved, and even murdered by people just like these hometown Nazareth folks.

The cost of following Christ, the cost of the free gift of salvation, is receiving Christ's Word even when that Word shows us to be sinners in desperate need of a Savior.