



Week of January 24-30, 2022

Sermon Series

Shining Forth: Seeing Jesus in a New Light

This Week's Big Idea

Who Said Anything About Safe?

Introduction:

Jesus had not even called his first disciples in the Gospel of Luke before members of his hometown try to throw him off a cliff. Literally. It did not take any time at all for his ministry and prophetic message to ruffle so many feathers, and to be so threatening to the powers that be that it almost cost Jesus his life. Luke reminds readers very early on in his Gospel that to walk in the way of Jesus, and to proclaim his gospel of liberation and love, will be very costly.

Luke 4:21-30 NRSV

²¹ Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" ²³ He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" ²⁴ And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. ²⁵ But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶ yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷ There were also many lepers^[a] in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸ When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Bible Conversation

What is Jesus claiming about himself when he says, "today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"? And why is that important?

In this passage, Jesus says, "no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown." Do you agree or disagree? And why?

Why do you think Jesus mentions the stories about Elijah and Elisha?

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Reflection by Jen Gruendler

We're only four chapters into The Gospel of Luke, and the author already gives us a "spoiler alert" of what is to come for Jesus in his ministry (and presumably those that follow him). And well, "spoiler alert," it's not great news... it will cost him his life.

In Luke's account of the rejection of Jesus from his hometown Nazareth, people get so angry at Jesus' words and/or actions that they try to kick him off a cliff. What exactly made them so angry? Truthfully, we don't exactly know. Was it that Jesus refused to do any healings and miracles in Nazareth? Maybe. Was it that Jesus was just the "hometown boy" that was never given the chance by those who taught him scripture as a kid, chased him home at dusk, and complained to Mary about his teenage shenanigans? Possibly. Was it offensive to them that Jesus identified himself as the fulfillment of the prophecy given by Isaiah? Perhaps. Was it Jesus' nod to God's inclusion of gentiles? Could be. All of it? Something else? We don't exactly know.

But what we do know... is the author of the Gospel of Luke has a deep affinity for Jesus' liberating and radical ministry with and for the oppressed, the marginalized, the outsider, and the powerless. It's the Gospel that includes Mary's Magnificat and the shepherds at Jesus' birth. It's the Gospel that tells more stories of Jesus' encounters with women than any other, and introduces us to the faith of guys like Zacchaeus, a tax collector. It's the Gospel in which Jesus teaches us to welcome home the prodigal, and to go and rescue the one lost sheep at any cost.

Why is all this important? From the very start of this Gospel, Luke tells us that Jesus' mission and ministry of justice, love, and inclusion (a message God has been painting with prophets throughout time- Jesus points out in this passage) will be threatening to the most powerful and privileged. It will threaten oppressive empires and principalities, and it will (by God's own very Spirit) lead us to a truth that will turn the world upside down (or right side up, again --as some point out). Following "the way of Jesus" will not always feel comfortable. It will push us to the margins, and we will see things we cannot unsee. It even likely will get us kicked out of places that are too familiar, too haughty, and/or are too safe. And oh, by the way, according to Luke, it might very well also cost us our very own life.

Reflection Conversation

Why do you think "all in the synagogue were filled with rage"?

Have you ever felt rejected (or been rejected) by a community that claims you as their own? Share about the experience and how you responded.

How does it feel that Jesus' message and ministry might/should push us to places of discomfort and will unsettle our lives? Are you comfortable with that message and call of Jesus?

The 1 Question:

Jesus comes to set the oppressed free, to be good news for the poor, to forgive every debt, and to proclaim the power of God's inclusive love. Perhaps, Luke is arguing, as followers of Jesus, we're called to that same liberating work. Share about a situation or current issue that lights some holy fire in you, and that perhaps God's Spirit might be calling you to join Jesus in his redemption, resurrection, and justice work in the world. What is the next faithful step you need to take in starting or continuing this prophetic work?

Closing Prayer

Holy One, following you isn't always easy or predictable or without cost, but it is good. Open our ears and eyes to your way, your truth, and your life; so that we can bear your love and grace to the whole world. Amen.

Next Week's Bible Theme and Text:

Sermon Series: Shining Forth: Seeing Jesus in a New Light
Text: Luke 5:1-11

1 week.
1 story.
1 message.

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