

Luke 4:14 – 44

^{4:14} And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through all the surrounding district. ¹⁵ And he began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. ¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ ‘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 oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.’ ²⁰ And he closed the book, 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 were speaking well of him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from his lips; and they were saying, ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’ ²³ And he said to them, ‘No doubt you will quote this proverb to me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’’ ²⁴ And he said, ‘Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. ²⁵ But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; ²⁶ and yet 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 Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.’ ²⁸ And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; ²⁹ and they got up and drove him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went his way.

^{4:31} And he came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and he was teaching them on the Sabbath; ³² and they were amazed at his teaching, for his message was with authority. ³³ In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴ ‘Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!’ ³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm. ³⁶ And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, ‘What is this message? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they come out.’ ³⁷ And the report about him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district. ³⁸ Then he got up and left the synagogue, and entered Simon’s home. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him to help her. ³⁹ And standing over her, he rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them. ⁴⁰ While the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and laying his hands on each one of them, he was healing them. ⁴¹ Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But rebuking them, he would not allow them to speak, because they knew him to be the Christ [i.e. Messianic King]. ⁴² When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for him, and came to him and tried to keep him from going away from them. ⁴³ But he said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.’ ⁴⁴ So he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Cultural Background

- At this time, the Roman Empire ruled over Israel. Revolutionary guerrilla fighters were very common during this time. Hostilities were high. There was a Roman garrison in Nazareth, which the Nazareth residents hated.
- Jesus in Luke 4:18 – 19 refers to Isaiah 42:1 – 7 and Isaiah 61:1 – 2. The Jews thought their Messiah would be military and slay the Romans, as if the line between good and evil lay between the Jews and the Romans. Isaiah envisioned a Messiah who would slay sin itself (Isaiah 53), since the line between good and evil passed through the human heart.
- Jesus in Luke 4:25 – 27 refers to Gentiles (the widow of Zarephath from 1 Kings 17 and Naaman the Syrian from 2 Kings 5) as the beneficiaries of God’s favor.

Questions

1. State: There are two communities that Jesus goes to, and both of them reject him. This makes Jesus recruit new followers starting in Luke 5:1 – 11. But for now, it's important to understand why many people have rejected Jesus.
2. Nazareth
 - a. What do you think it was like to be a conquered, occupied, and oppressed people like Israel under the Romans?
 - b. What might they have expected Jesus to say about the Romans soldiers occupying Nazareth? What kind of Messiah were they expecting?
 - c. Who did the Jews at Nazareth think 'the poor' and 'the oppressed' were?
 - d. Who do you expect Jesus to say 'the poor' and 'the oppressed' are?
 - e. So who is Jesus restoring? Who are the poor, the captives, the oppressed, the blind? How does that differ or agree with the Jews in the Nazareth synagogue in their interpretation of Isaiah 61?
 - f. Why was this so offensive? Who was the widow of Zarephath? Who was Naaman the Syrian? Why demonstrate God's grace going to Gentile enemies? It would be like saying God loves the people you hate.
 - g. What was Jesus trying to accomplish vs. what were they concerned about? (Salvation to all humanity, bringing them together in one body vs. their ethnocentric nationalism)
 - h. If Jesus were to stand before you and say that he was sharing God's blessing with someone else, is there someone that Jesus can mention that would get you really mad at him? Your dad? Mom? Fellow student in the group who never pulls his own share of the work? Your ex?
 - i. Why would you be angry in that situation? Can you give your anger over to Jesus?
3. Capernaum
 - a. What is the attitude of the people at Capernaum towards Jesus? They seem to want Jesus to just stay there and not go anywhere else. So that if they got sick or needed a miracle, he would be right there.
 - b. Do you think it's unkind of Jesus to leave Capernaum? Or is it unkind of them to hog him all to himself?
 - c. Jesus does want us to have friends and community on the human level. But he also recognizes that one of the biggest problems we have is our inability to extend community to other people. Jesus wants to reach not just our little Capernaums. And he wants to do more than just provide us some nice benefits, help us find a nice Christian person to marry, and have a stable life. He wants to carry us with him wherever he goes, to love and serve people.
4. Do you want to continue next week? Or do you find yourself in one of these two synagogues, rejecting Jesus already?