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“Lessons from Nazareth”

Luke 4:16–30

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Jesus grew up in Nazareth and returned there at the beginning of his ministry to teach in the synagogue. When he read the Messianic passage from the book of Isaiah and then said that it applied to himself, the people were *“filled with wrath”* and tried to kill him. Why was their reaction so violent to what Jesus had said? In this message, Pastor Gary shares three points from the reaction and response of the people that will help us in our lives today.

1. Nazareth

- a. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but he grew up in Nazareth, which today is the largest of the cities in the northern district of Israel.
- b. The population today is about seventy-eight thousand people, most of whom are Arab citizens of Israel.
- c. The religious affiliation of the Arab people living in Nazareth is approximately 70 percent Muslim and 30 percent Christian.
- d. In Jesus’ day Nazareth had a population of approximately one hundred to no more than five hundred people.
- e. The town was only about sixty acres in size, and it was on what we might say was the road to nowhere.
- f. Nazareth was so insignificant that it’s not mentioned in the Old Testament, the Jewish Mishnah or Talmud, nor was it mentioned by Josephus, a well-known first century historian.
- g. [John 1:45–46a](#) – *“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.’ And Nathanael said to him, ‘**Can anything good come out of Nazareth?**’ ”* (Emphasis added)
- h. There is no record in the New Testament of Jesus ever returning to Nazareth.

- i. There were 207 villages or towns in the region of Galilee according to Josephus, and each had a population of approximately ten thousand people.
- j. Today, there are only about 500,000 people living in this region, which is a big difference from the approximately two million or more in Jesus' day.

2. Jesus taught in the synagogue

- a. Jesus unrolled the scroll to what we know as [Isaiah 61:1-2](#).
 - i. [Isaiah 61:1-2](#) - *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor [in spirit]; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD..."*
 - 1. What's interesting to note is that Jesus stopped midsentence because *"the day of vengeance of our God"* will happen at Jesus' second coming.
 - 2. Jesus' first coming was to proclaim, *"the acceptable year of the LORD."*
 - ii. We are living in what is known as the age of grace, but there will come a day when Jesus will return not as Savior but judge.
 - iii. When Jesus finished reading from Isaiah he sat down, which was the posture rabbis assumed when they started to teach.
 - iv. [Luke 4:21-22](#) - *"And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.' So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?'"*
 - v. Jesus was declaring that he was the Messiah, and Jesus' hearers in the synagogue would no doubt have been familiar with the Messianic passage Jesus read, which is what riled them up into a mob whose chief goal was to throw Jesus off a cliff!

3. Jesus is the Son of God, not the son of Joseph

- a. Pastor Gary said, "You see, if Jesus was just the son of Joseph, then he was just an ordinary man numbered among great teachers or prophets who ever lived. The truth is that in Jesus' day that's the way Jews saw him: just a great teacher, perhaps a prophet, a worker of miracles, but an ordinary man. The truth is that that's how many Jews today still see him. Now, the good news is that many Jews are coming to faith in Jesus... Today, Muslims believe the same things about Jesus... This is the way a lot of people [see] Jesus today: that he was an historic figure, a great teacher, perhaps a prophet, a worker of miracles. ... He was not the son of Joseph, only to the extent that Joseph gave legal covering because Joseph was the legal guardian of Jesus, he was the adoptive [father] of Jesus; but he was not the biological father of Jesus."

- b. What does it mean to say that Jesus was the Son of God?
 - i. God does not have children in the human sense that a father would have a human son.
 - c. Jesus is God made manifest in human form
 - i. [John 1:1, 14](#) - *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*
 - ii. [Hebrews 1:3](#) - *"... who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person..."*
 - iii. [Luke 3:23](#) - *"Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (**as was supposed**) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli." (Emphasis added)*
 - iv. [Luke 3:22](#) - *"And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.' "*
 - v. [Luke 2:49a](#) - *"And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' "*
 - vi. [Luke 1:35](#) - *"... therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."*
4. The people you are able to influence the least are often those who are familiar with you the most
- a. The people who knew Jesus best accepted him least.
 - i. [Luke 4:23-24](#) - *"He said to them, 'You will surely say this proverb to Me, "Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country." Then He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.' "*
 - b. Pastor Gary said, "Sometimes the most difficult people to witness to, if you haven't already noticed this, are your close family members and friends. They will judge you for your faults, they will remind you of your shortcomings, [and] they will dismiss you because they don't take you seriously. [These people] didn't take [Jesus] seriously. [To them], he was just the hometown boy from Nazareth; he was Joseph's son."
5. Be careful not to write off certain people; Jesus came for all that all might be saved
- a. [Luke 4:25-27](#) - *"But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."*

- i. Jesus spoke of how Elijah went beyond the border of Israel, bypassing all of the starving Jewish widows, to minister to a widow from a pagan nation.
 - ii. Jesus spoke of how Elisha went beyond the border of Israel to minister to Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, concerning his leprosy.
 - iii. Sidon is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in what is modern day Lebanon.
- b. Pastor Gary said, “[The people had a] violent reaction to the examples Jesus gave of God’s grace that God extended to people during the days of Elijah the prophet and Elisha the prophet. ... At this point people [were] irate! They [were] furious! Why [were] they so angry? [The first of two reasons why] God sent them outside of Israel to help people who needed God’s favor [was] because [Elijah and Elisha] were rejected just like they were rejecting [Jesus]. The second thing that ticked them off and probably went even deeper [and] touched a nerve was the fact that the two examples he gave of the widow in Zarephath and the Syrian were both Gentiles. They were not Jews, they were Gentiles! God’s grace and favor was poured out on a couple of Gentiles, and at this the people [were] furious. Why? Because the Jews in the day thought that Gentiles were God-forsaken people, [and] they were not loved by God [or] part of the plan of God. In fact, the Jews of the day believed that Gentiles were created by God for one purpose: as fodder for the fires of hell. [Jesus spoke of Gentiles] as a wonderful example of God’s grace and favor... These people [were] angry because [Jesus] had highlighted Gentiles as examples, and their own prejudice and their own dislike of the Gentiles rose to the surface... What we have to remember is that Jesus came for all, that all might be saved.”
 - i. In [Acts 10](#), Peter learned that Jesus came for all when he was sent to Cornelius, the Gentile centurion.
 - ii. In [Luke 9:51-56](#), the disciples learned that Jesus came for all when they were on their way to Jerusalem, and they tried to find lodging in a Samaritan village.

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Luke 4:16-30](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.

3. Provide an overview of Nazareth and consider the geographical size and population in Jesus' day, and what that might have been like for those who questioned or denied who he was. (See #1a through #1j above)
4. Read [Luke 4:21-22](#) and allow the people in your group to share what their response to Jesus might have been if they had lived in that day. (See #2a-iv above)
5. Allow the people in your group to share thoughts about what might be similar or different, between that day and today, when people respond about who Jesus is.
6. Spend some time talking about God's mercy and patience in extending an age of grace. (See #2a-ii above)
7. Read Pastor Gary's first point about what it means that Jesus is the Son of God and allow the people in your group to share personal experiences they've had explaining to someone that Jesus is the Son of God. (See #3a through #3vi above)
8. Read Pastor Gary's second point about people who knew Jesus best accepted him least and allow the people in your group to share personal experiences they've had with close family and friends who don't take them seriously. (See #4a through #4b above)
9. Allow people in your group to share about when they didn't take Jesus seriously and what changed that for them.
10. Discuss Pastor Gary's question, "Why is it the people who know you best, treat you worst?"
11. Discuss the old saying "Familiarity breeds contempt."
12. Consider things in the current culture that have become familiar but breeds contempt of God.
13. Read Pastor Gary's third point that Jesus came for all that all might be saved and allow the people in your group to share how Jesus came to them that they might be saved. (See #5a through #5b above)
14. Allow the people in your group to share ways they have either written people off or ways they reached out to share the Gospel.
15. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)