

An Unwelcome Homecoming Luke 4:14-30

Every city, town and village has a name by which it is known. My hometown of Fairview is known as the turkey capital of Michigan (and not because of the people who live there). Some are known for historical facts like the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln in Hodgenville, KY or St. Louis known as the Gateway to the west.

Some names make famous or infamous headlines such as the day an Illinois paper reported that a Normal boy married an Oblong girl. In case you are wondering Normal and Oblong are towns.

Tarzan, TX honors the fictional character that lived among the apes. Tarzana, CA. is where Edgar Rice Burroughs lived when he wrote his jungle adventures.

The rural community named Ding Dong, TX began when two cousins named Bell opened a store there. A local man hired to paint the store's sign designed a pictorial pun with a bell on each end of the sign with the words "Ding Dong" in between. Ding Dong is located in Bell County.

Magnet, TX was named in the hope that it would attract people.

Sunrise, FL was originally named 'Sunset' and was planned as a retirement community. The developers found out quickly that retirees don't like to be reminded that they are in the 'sunset' of their lives, so a more optimistic name was chosen.

Peculiar, MO was named by the Postmaster after the town's fathers told him, "We don't care what you name it as long as it's sort of peculiar."

Half way between Pine and Cornucopia, Oregon is the town of Halfway.

Gripe, AZ was named by the employees of the agricultural inspection station located there.

Maybe the town you grew up in was famous or infamous for something.

I have not been to Israel so I don't know if there is a sign outside Nazareth that says "Home of Jesus." Aside from the few years they lived in Egypt because the angel warned Joseph to flee there to escape the murderous plot of Herod, Nazareth was the town where Jesus grew up. As we discovered earlier, Nazareth was a nothing town, a town of no consequence. It was insignificant. There wasn't a trade route that passed through it. The town was situated down in a basin so that if someone was scanning the horizon it sat below the line of sight. It was also a town with some corruption. That's why Nathanael would ask **"can any good thing can come from Nazareth"** (John 15:46-47). As a title of contempt, some referred to Jesus as Jesus of Nazareth. It was meant to ridicule. They meant it in disrespect. It was meant to be cutting and condescending. For those who used it, they meant Jesus' words weren't worth consideration. But Nazareth is the location of our passage where I invite you to turn to this morning in **Luke 4:14-30**.

Before we get into this passage at length, I want to mention three things.

The first is this: There is a gap of about one year between His baptism which launched His ministry and this event. His ministry began in Galilee. Remember that we said Israel or Palestine was divided into three regions: Judea was the lower portion and included Jerusalem; Samaria was the middle region where John the Baptist was baptizing; and then the northern region of Galilee where Jesus was born in Nazareth.

According to **John 2:1** the nearby town of Cana is where Jesus performed His first miracle. He then traveled to Capernaum, located at the northern part

of the Sea of Galilee. From there He traveled to Jerusalem to attend the Passover and performed the first cleansing of the Temple when He threw out the money changers. He would do this again the week of His crucifixion.

The second is this: In this passage Luke gives a summary of Jesus' entire ministry.

He declared Himself to be the Messiah.

The Jews continued to prove themselves to be unworthy of God's blessings as they rejected Him. With their rejection, the Gospel was also for the Gentiles.

Multiple times people sought to kill Him.

Finally, I want to point out that when it comes to God and God's Word, in every age you find three types of people. We will see them here.

There are those who are amazed at His teaching.

There are those who are angered at His testimony.

There are those who attempt His murder. Now while Jesus was only physically alive for 33 years, still there are those who attempt to silence Him by putting to death His followers.

As we look at this passage, let's discuss these three groups.

They were amazed at His teaching

They were angered by His testimony

They attempted His termination

I. THEY WERE AMAZED AT HIS TEACHING – v. 14-19

Once again our text reminds us of the power in which Jesus ministered. He **“returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.”** I can't say enough about how important it was for Jesus to be under the control of the Holy Spirit and the need for us to follow His example. He wasn't a free spirit out doing His own thing, going where He wanted to go and doing what He wanted to do. He allowed His life to be under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit. What a lesson for us: to live under the

control of the Spirit in everything we do, to be led by the Spirit in daily decisions, and to be empowered by the Spirit for the work we have been called to do.

Exodus 31:1-5

And I want to make it clear that the empowerment of the Spirit isn't just for ministry responsibilities in the church. It is for everyday activities and responsibilities. I think if we allow the Spirit to control us in whatever we are doing we will be an entirely different employee or boss, we'll be an entirely different husband or wife or son or daughter, we'll be an entirely different student, we'll be an entirely different customer at the gas station or the department store or the restaurant. When the Spirit controls us and His fruit is being developed in us then we can't help but be different. Let's learn the lesson from Jesus and live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was empowered by the Spirit for ministry and reading through the first several chapters of John we see the kinds of miracles and teaching He did that amazed people. He turned the water into wine. He spoke to the Samaritan woman about her need of salvation. He talked with Nicodemus about man's great need and God's great love – salvation.

It was while in Jerusalem where the majority of religious leaders, the Pharisees, rejected His message that He left for Galilee, to return back to the area of His upbringing. As He traveled the news about Him spread. The whole countryside became aware of Jesus. They heard about His teaching and His miracles. The initial response of people to His message was favorable. For example, when Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount we read that **“the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”**

Jesus taught in many of the towns of Galilee. The Jewish historian Josephus estimates that at the time

of Jesus there were some 240 towns and villages in that region. When He would enter a town He would teach in their synagogue. The synagogue was an important part of the Jewish culture. When Nebuchadnezzar came into Jerusalem one of the things he did was destroy their center of worship. Because worship was such an integral part of daily life for people of that day, he knew that he would have to destroy their worship to engrain them in a new culture, so he tore down the Temple and then dispersed many of them throughout the Babylonian empire as a way of changing them. The Temple was the focus of Jewish life. It was where they sacrificed and gathered for their annual festivals.

With the Temple destroyed and the inability of many Jews to return to Jerusalem during the appointed times because it was logistically too far to travel, they developed synagogues. It became the place the Jews met to hold worship services, receive instruction on Scripture, but it was never considered a replacement for the Temple which remained the heart and soul of Jewish worship. Under Ezra the Temple was rebuilt then it was destroyed later, but was once again rebuilt under Herod the Great. Even so, the local synagogues remained a place to gather regularly. According to their established law, there had to be at least 10 Jewish men to start a synagogue and depending on the size of the town or city, there could be more than one. The Talmud describes Jerusalem as having 480 synagogues. That's why many scholars don't believe there was a synagogue in Philippi when Paul arrived there because he went to the outskirts of town to a river where a prayer meeting was being held by some women.

Although they couldn't sacrifice at the synagogue, it still became a local place for religious worship and instruction. During the week the synagogue also served as a school and at times a court.

Everywhere Jesus went people had general admiration for Him and what He taught. It is while

He is in the region of Galilee that He stopped at His home town of Nazareth. It has been about a year since He has been to the place where He grew up. It was a place He knew well and a place that knew Him. I imagine little changed in that year of His absence. I'd like to think that as Jesus walked along the streets of the town He pointed out to His disciples things about the town. I do that with David. As we travel up north to visit Dad, I point out the school where I taught swimming lessons. He knows where I went to school and the woods where I ran cross country and the other woods where I worked gathering sap for a farmer to make Maple syrup. Little has changed there.

I think that's the way it was for Jesus as He walked through town with His disciples. He knew where people lived. He knew who grew the most delicious vegetables or raised the best sheep and who made the best bread. Maybe they strolled by the old carpenter's shop where He and Joseph spent many days around sawdust and wood shavings.

We aren't told how long He was there, but we are told that He was there on the Sabbath. Our text tells us that it was His custom to attend the synagogue on that day. What a great example Jesus gives to have the habit of attending service, even when you aren't at home. Make it a priority as He did. Yes, it can be a real pain to let your fingers do the walking when you are in a different town and not near our church, but find one and go. Here's the thing I find remarkable about Jesus. He knew the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, He knew that they had made worship burdensome, but still He went. He could have argued that the religious system was corrupt, but still He went and we find that when He went, He participated in it.

The typical service began with an invocation or prayer for God's blessings on them. Next was the recitation of the Hebrew confession of faith from **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**. That was followed by a reading from the Law in Hebrew and then translated

into Aramaic, which was the common language of the people. Then there was reading from one of the prophets. One of the men or a visiting Rabbi would give a brief sermon on the reading. Anyone approved by the synagogue leader could teach. Finally there was a closing benediction.

Jesus was in Nazareth on the Sabbath. He went to the synagogue as was His habit. We assume He was asked to read the Scriptures. He stood to read and was given the scroll containing the writings of Isaiah. He unrolled it to a section from **61:1-2** and read. Follow along from **Luke 4:18-19** as I read from Isaiah 61 and notice the difference. **“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.”**

Did you notice the difference? Jesus left off the last portion of verse 2. **So why did He do that?** The answer is simply this: The passage in Isaiah is a Messianic passage and covers both His first and second coming. The work He came to do the first time is entirely different than His second coming. His second coming is about vengeance and judgment, but that was not the purpose of the first time He came to earth. He came to seek and save the lost. So He purposely ended His reading where He did because of the lesson He was about to give.

Remember the Jews had been looking for the Messiah, but when He showed up and revealed Himself they didn’t believe Him because they were looking for someone much different, a political Messiah. Somehow the Messianic prophecies had become obscured over time and the intent of His coming had become skewed. Because they were Jewish, because they had the Temple, because they

had the Law, they thought they were already in favor with God.

Jesus uses this prophetic Messianic passage to speak about His present ministry and He mentions five aspects of His ministry.

1. To preach good news to the poor.
2. To proclaim freedom for the prisoners.
3. To provide sight for the blind.
4. To provide release the oppressed.
5. To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

Did Jesus proclaim good news to the poor?

Absolutely. His message was not a prosperity gospel as some proclaim today: believe and you’ll prosper materially. Yes, His message is one of hope that if you are in need God knows and can provide, but His message was so much more. It is not a message only to the materially poor of society. It is a message of hope to those who are spiritually bankrupt, a condition we all have in common. Every one of us spiritually deficient in ourselves to receive eternal life. We have nothing of value, the price is unattainable by us. Jesus’ message was that anyone and everyone who recognizes they are spiritually poor can find salvation.

The word for poor here means to cringe or cower, to shrink back. It conveys the idea of a beggar cringing back in the shadows, cowering in shame because of his condition. It is a different word used elsewhere that speaks of the working poor. Jesus is conveying the idea that our spiritual condition has left us in extreme deprivation. An example would be Lazarus who was reduced to begging or like the man who went into the Temple and cried out to God to have mercy on a sinner. In his sin he was even too ashamed to look up to heaven.

The spiritually poor see their poor spiritual condition and recognize that he has nothing worthy to commend to God. He acknowledges his own moral bankruptcy, that he is guilty of committing sins against God’s moral law. He understands that

all his righteousness is just filthy rags (**Isaiah 66:2**).

Like David, the spiritually poor come with an attitude that recognizes “**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart**” (**Psalm 51:7**), but in that moment he recognizes that God welcomes such a heart: “**O God, you will not despise.**” He won’t turn away someone like that.

But the self-righteous don’t see their spiritual depravity. Those who think they can earn their way will be told to depart from Christ’s presence. They are the one’s of whom Jesus spoke when He said that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. They reject the notion that they are spiritually bankrupt or that they have a need to change.

Jesus came to preach good news to the spiritually poor, that they don’t have to stay in that lost condition. The good news of salvation Jesus offers can only come to those who know they are that destitute.

James 2:5 “Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom He promised those who love Him?”

Secondly, the Messiah would come to proclaim freedom for the prisoners.

The unbeliever thinks he is free, free to live any way he or she wants. They believe that Christianity, following the commands of God are restrictive and infringe on their right to enjoy life anyway they please. They don’t even realize that they are captives.

John 8:31-47

Isaiah speaks about God’s Messiah setting us free from the bondage of sin.

Isaiah 42:5-7

Because of sin we are in bondage to Satan. Jesus is saying that He has come to set us free and that freedom comes through His shed blood.

And so it is that we can sing with Charles Wesley that great hymn with these words:

**He breaks the pow’r of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.**

The third thing He spoke of concerning the ministry of the Messiah is that He provides recovery to the blind.

Now we know He did this literally. There was the man born blind who received His sight so that the glory of God might be seen. And there was blind Bartemaus who called out to the Son of David to have mercy on him and restore his sight. But here we note that He is offering spiritual sight to those who are otherwise spiritually blind. That is the condition of unregenerate man. We who have been freed from spiritual blindness sometimes sit in amazement as we talk to others who are unsaved and wonder why they can’t understand what God’s Word says. They don’t understand it because they are still spiritually blind. It would be like taking someone blind and trying to describe what a tree looks like or a sunset and out of frustration we ask them “can’t you see that? It’s right in front of your face.” No, they can’t and never will as long as they live because they are blind.

Somewhere along the road of our life, the illuminating light of God’s Spirit shown in our dark heart so that we were able to see the truth of our sinful condition and our need of a Savior, just as Saul did on the road to Damascus.

As Jesus was talking with Nicodemus about his lost condition, He had these indicting words to say:

“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light

because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” (John 3:19-20)

Jesus would later say that **“I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)**

Let us with urgent and fervent prayer passionately ask the Lord that the hearts of friends and loved ones still bound in darkness might have their blind eyes see Jesus and receive the Light.

The fourth thing cited in the reading from Isaiah is that the Messiah will bring release to the oppressed.

The word release used here is the word for forgiveness. Jesus didn't just come to free us; He also forgives our debt through faith in Him.

Ephesians 1:7 (Colossians 1:14)

Hebrews reminds us that **“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (9:22)**, but it is not the shedding of any blood, it is only the shedding of the blood of Christ, our perfect sacrifice. Jesus as the Messiah, sets prisoners free by paying for our defiance against God's law, His moral standard of which we are all guilty of doing. But praise God, the death of Christ cancels that debt.

Colossians 2:13-14 “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross.”

Those who are spiritually oppressed, the Messiah came to free.

That was the task of the Messiah as He came to earth the first time. It was the task of proclaiming

the year of the Lord's favor. This was a reference to the year of Jubilee. Every 50 years this event brought balance back to the nation. Slaves were set free and returned to their families, property that had been sold reverted back to the original owner, all debts were cancelled and the land rested.

Now Jesus isn't saying that the Messiah would institute the year of Jubilee physically, but in a spiritual sense His coming would be a time of Jubilee. The salvation offered by Messiah would restore sinners from their spiritual slavery. Jesus offers spiritual rest to the heart burdened with sin. It is what Isaiah calls the year of the Lord's favor which speaks of the time when salvation would be proclaimed. That time has come. The writer of Hebrews tells us that today is the accepted day.

They were amazed at His teaching

They were angered by His testimony

II. THEY WERE ANGERED AT HIS TESTIMONY – v. 20-28

Jesus finished His reading, handed the scroll back to the attendant and sat down. Teachers stood to read and sat to teach. Everyone looked at Him wondering what He would say. It was a simple and direct message. While others who read that very passage spoke of a future fulfillment or of another Messiah, Jesus said that He was the one who fulfilled it in every sense. He was the Messiah.

They were amazed at His teaching and yet they were baffled by what He just said about Himself. How could this guy we knew so well growing up, whose father was a poor carpenter, be the Messiah? In spite of hearing or seeing evidence to support His claim, they still didn't want to believe. They not only were angered by it, they were further incensed by what He said next.

He knew they would demand additional proof by performing miracles, but they didn't believe the miracles He had already performed. What made

them think that other miracles would convince them of the truth that He already told them? We will find that Jesus did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

I think that's just it. Unbelief is what keeps people from seeing Christ as who He claims to be. Give us a sign and we'll believe, but Jesus said that a sign has already been given.

Knowing of their opposition Jesus spoke of two Old Testament prophets and actions they took in their day. Remember that prophets generally came on the scene when the nation was apostate, when they had ignored God's law. So God raised up a voice to call attention to their sin and impending judgment without repentance and yet often times they ignored the voice and would not heed the warnings. In both cases, that of Elijah and Elisha, because of the unbelief and rejection of Israel, they went and ministered to the Gentile. In the case of Elijah, he bypassed all the widows of Israel and went to the home of a widow in Zephath, the very region Jezebel was from. In the case of Elisha, there were many lepers in Israel, yet he healed Naaman, captain of the enemies military.

When the congregation in the synagogue heard this they were outraged. They understood the implication. Jesus was saying that the Messiah would give salvation to the Gentiles because the Israelites rejected it. Jews looked with contempt on Gentiles because they weren't of the chosen race. Yet God was showing that in His grace and mercy He would give to them the same gift of salvation offered to the Jews. The same gift of salvation for one is the same given to the other. Both must come through the same gift, the same Savior. While Israel failed to show the Gentiles any grace, God would so that all who call on the name of Jesus, the One who is the Messiah, would be saved.

About this group, St. Augustine said it best: “They love truth when it enlightens them, but hate truth

We see that today unfortunately in many churches. People want their ears tickled so that they can go away feeling good about themselves, but don't want to hear about sin or that they need to change some behavior.

Paul exhorted Timothy **“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” (II Timothy 4:2-4)**

Just as it was when the Jews would not listen to the words of Jesus in His day when He spoke the truth, so it is today that many don't want to hear the truth and they get angry when it is spoken. But remember that those who reject the truth of His Word and deny the day of Lord's favor will one day experience the truth of the words Jesus did not read from Isaiah 61:2. They will experience the vengeance of God.

They were amazed at His teaching
They were angered by His testimony
They attempted His termination

III. THEY ATTEMPTED HIS TERMINATION – v. 29-30

Pride and self-righteousness kept them from accepting God's mercy and grace. They would not acknowledge their bankrupt spiritual condition. Hard hearts wanted to deny their enemy God's grace, but hard hearts also kept them from His grace as well.

Consequently, the crowd turned into a murderous mob, and on the Sabbath no less. They took Jesus out to the edge of town where there was a cliff with the intent to throw Him off the cliff to His death. It wouldn't be the last time someone attempted His termination. But Jesus knew it wasn't His time and He walked right through the middle of the crowd. It was not His time nor was it the way in which He would die.

How about you today? What is your response to the message that Jesus is the Messiah? Have you received Him or do you still reject the notion that He is the Messiah or that you even need a Savior?

He breaks the pow'r of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.