

**ALL OR SOME?**

Ever been in a gathering that turned from good times to bad? Someone did or said something that switches the mood from positive to negative? It happened to Jesus in His own home church in Luke 4:20-30. From the outside, everything looked great in Nazareth that day early in His earthly ministry. But what was going inside the people's hearts? And our hearts today?

Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah, "*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, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" The "age of Messiah" has come!

**1- The Lord Proclaims His Favor.** - For hundreds of years these promises were precious to God's people, as they anticipated the coming of the prophesied Christ. The Anointed One of the Lord would bring grace and release, righting the wrongs of the world against them. "*And Jesus 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.*" Jesus had stood to read and now sat down to teach.

And He began to say to them, "*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. And all spoke well of Him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from His mouth, and they said, 'is this not Joseph's son?'*" When Jesus was twelve years old He amazed the teachers in the temple back in Luke 2. The people in the synagogue thought His remarkable proclamation that "*this very day this very Scripture is fulfilled*" could only mean their hometown boy was going to prove it by doing the great works He had done elsewhere.

The people were elated, congratulating themselves that He was one of them. But Jesus wasn't pandering to community spirit. In fact, the next thing He did offended them greatly, because He was aware of their inner evil thoughts. 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.*" He's one of us, they thought, He knows what we want!

**2- The People Hide Their Dis-Favor.** - Jesus knew the people weren't really interested in His words, which spoke of powerful fulfillment. They wanted action. They wanted Him to amaze them, entertain them with great works and healings, casting out demons. They were thinking, show us your stuff, be our puppet, you owe it to us to do your great works here in your hometown. But Jesus said, "*truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in His hometown.*"

A true prophet of God speaks forth God's Word regardless of how the people will receive it. He speaks uncomfortable truths, not telling itching ears what they want to hear, but what people truly need to hear. Some 70 times in the gospels, Jesus said "*truly*" I say to you, to emphasize the integrity and authority of His words, which were God's own words spoken through Him. Christ sees through their concealed prejudices and community pride.

**3- The Lord Favors All Peoples.** - These people thought some lives mattered more than others. Jesus sets them straight in verse 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 6 months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon to a woman who was a widow.*" The people remembered 1Kings 17, when the poor widow fed Elijah the last of her food, and God made it so that her oil never ran out.

Jesus continues, "*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.*" In this familiar story from 2Kings 5, the general trusted and obeyed God and washed in the the Jordan River to be cleansed of his leprosy, regarded as a great work of God. RC Sproul notes, God anointed Elijah and Elisha, but Jesus calls attention to their acts of mercy outside the land of Israel.

Luke's writing contains more about reaching Gentiles than any other gospel writer. Jesus' hometown realized He was not doing miracles for them. Though poor, blind, oppressed, they would not humble themselves. They rejected Jesus, because God was giving His favor not only to Jews, but also to undeserving "Gentile dogs." What's YOUR reaction to God's grace? □