

1. Context of the Hometown Rejection

- a. Jesus comes down to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit after His victory of faith over the Devil’s temptations to unbelief.
 - i. Again, Luke shows the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Jesus
 - ii. This begins with the conception/birth, through the temptation of Jesus, and is present here in the power of His teaching
 - iii. Luke will connect the HS presence and power at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry with the power and presence of the HS at the beginning of the Church’s ministry post-ascension as well, indicating the continuance of the King’s Divine Initiative
- b. His ministry consists mainly of teaching in the synagogues.
 - i. The synagogue’s beginnings are mysterious, most likely coming out of the exile to Babylon, whereby the Temple could not be used any longer as the center of worship for the nation.
 1. It was a gathering place where men from the community would read and comment on passages from the OT and they would discuss among themselves the commentaries.
 2. Rabbinic teaching took on the same form and was rooted in this synagogue idea.
 - ii. “Synagogue” comes from the compounding of two words “together” and “to bring in” – it has the idea of coming together or uniting together, probably as a very unifying cultural presence in the light of the dispersion of Israel during the captivity.
 1. Thus, synagogues were places to gather together and read Scripture, hear teaching, and discuss its veracity, as well as places where Jewish culture could be protected, maintained, and defended as a unity against the heterodoxy of the pagan culture surround it.
 2. This culturally unifying aspect of the Jewish synagogue may explain why they get so upset when Jesus starts talking about God’s blessing of outsiders in this pericope.
 - iii. Note that Luke’s emphasis here is on Jesus’ teaching, not particularly His healing or exorcising ministry
 1. It is Jesus’ *teaching* in the synagogues that is gaining him popularity and fame
 2. It will also be His teaching that gains Him hatred and disdain
- c. This teaching ministry gains Him much “*φημη*”, or “fame” throughout the entire region.
 - i. They like the new guy and thought His teaching was great.
 - ii. This is the honeymoon period of a new famous person, this mysterious Galilean preacher.
- d. Because of His teaching, He is “glorified” by the people.
 - i. A word used only of God elsewhere, and only here of Jesus.
 - ii. Luke is pointing out that at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, He was widely praised as being wonderful, good, and powerful.

2. Jesus Claims to be the Promised Deliverer of God’s People

- a. Traveling through Galilee Jesus came to His hometown of Nazareth
 - i. The context of this narrative is that Jesus is known here
- b. He goes to the synagogue, as was His custom
 - i. This shows, again, that Jesus is a pious Jew, not a rabble-rouser or uselessly antagonistic toward Jewish authority
 - ii. He “found” the place in the text
 1. This shows that, if there was a regular reading pattern in the synagogues (similar to high-church calendars), that Jesus’ departure from it would have raised eyebrows (fixed their eyes upon him)
 2. It surely shows that He had something particular that He wanted to teach – He is the bringer of the gospel of God
- c. Jesus preaches from Isaiah 61 and 58 and 42
 - i. Luke is most likely summarizing what Jesus read in order to emphasize His point

1. For example, Luke omits the phrase from 61:1 “heal the brokenhearted” and omits the line from v2 about God’s vengeance.
2. He also adds “recovery of sight to the blind” from Isa 42:7 and inserts it to clarify what this freedom means
- ii. Isaiah 61 is a Jubilation motif – Deliverance and Freedom to exiles
 1. It imitates the Year of Jubilee, where all debts were cancelled and slaves went free in the 50th year
 2. It is a picture of forgiveness and spiritual freedom which the Servant of God brings about by the Holy Spirit
- iii. Isaiah 58 is a rebuke to the nation for not exhibiting God’s righteousness towards those in need – for abusing their power and not loving their neighbor
 1. These passages go together in that Jesus is the bringer and the fulfiller of what the nation was supposed to be and He brings in a new age whereby deliverance and freedom would come.
 2. He is the Servant of God – the greater Isaiah – the Messiah
 - a. This is further emphasized by the day of the week – the Sabbath – the weekly jubilee
 - b. It is also evident that the rabbinic literature interpreted these passages to take place in a new eschatological age of the Messiah – thus Jesus is claiming to be the Messiah who was promised to bring deliverance and freedom to the oppressed
 - i. Particularly the poor, the enslaved, and the blind
 - ii. This is primarily spiritual in term, but also must contain a physical/sociological aspect
- d. Jesus claims to be the fulfillment of these prophecies: the promised Messiah who would bring in the age of redemption and hope that was promised
 - i. “Today” – a word used often by Luke (5:26; 12:28; 13:32; 19:5,9; 22:61; 23:43; Acts 4:9; 22:3; 24:21)
 1. Luke emphasizes the importance of the present, of responding to Jesus now
 2. In fact, he leaves us with a choice of whom to side with in this story
 - ii. A greater claim could not be made by a Jewish man
 1. They are left to conclude whether or not Jesus is whom He is claiming to be
 2. At first, they take great hope in the coming of the Redeemer and Restorer
- e. To Whom Did Jesus Fulfill This Prophetic Promise?
 - i. Gospel to the poor
 1. See the link in 6:23
 - a. “poor” are related to the prophets (those who humbled themselves and believed God’s word)
 - b. “rich” are related to the false prophets (proud who rejected God’s word)
 2. The “gospel” is both an announcement of deliverance and an invitation to believe it
 - ii. Liberty to the captives
 1. Luke will go on to show how Jesus’ exorcisms reveal a spiritual authority over all that enslave the human heart
 2. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is setting free those in darkness, primarily in the spiritual sense
 - iii. Sight to the blind
 1. Again, the moving from darkness to light is the metaphor used of Jesus’ power and authority to open the eyes of the heart
 2. This power will be symbolized in His authority to heal the body as well, but always as the precursor of His authority to forgive sins and make wise the simple
 - iv. Year of the LORD’s Favor
 1. “favor” here is the word for “welcome” or “accepted”

2. Jesus' words are full of the grace of the LORD's promise for His people as foretold by Isaiah the prophet
- v. What is NOT included is the final phrase from the Isaiah 61 passage: "and bring judgment upon your enemies."
 1. This may indicate why the people get so upset: Jesus is neglecting to talk about the judgment of their (Nazareth Jews) enemies, most likely the Gentile oppressors
 2. This may also help us understand why Jesus goes so quickly to pointing out God's Word of promise to Gentiles in vv25-27

3. One Must Receive Jesus On His Terms

- a. At first, they marvel at His words of grace and talk amongst themselves of how well He speaks
- b. This initial praise, however, leads to doubts about His claims because of their familiarity with His family
 - i. The idea is that familiarity breeds contempt
 - ii. "He's Joseph's boy! How could he make such audacious claims like this?!"
 - iii. His claims don't match up with their known history, or presumed history, of Joseph's boy
- c. They seem to be wanting evidence beyond what they have heard from Him
 - i. Like the temptation of Jesus, they want Him to prove it.
 - ii. Jesus quotes a parable to them that indicates their desire for Him to prove it, "Physician, heal yourself!"
 1. There may be a note of regional jealousy here, too, for He brings up Capernaum and the miracles that He did there.
 2. Jesus anticipates their true hearts' unbelief
 3. So quickly, the words of grace and the praise linked to them become doubts and reasons to hate Him because He is refusing to accept their terms
- d. In the year of the LORD's "favor" they do not "favor" this Son of God
 - i. "No prophet is *accepted* in his hometown." (*dektos*)
 1. Same word is used to quote Isa 61 "favor" or "accepted"
 2. Jesus is making a strong allusion to this truth: the LORD is opening up His *acceptance* to all who will come to the Son, yet the people will not *accept* the Son as He is
 - ii. Jesus is also clearly marking Himself out as one who speaks the Words of God as a prophet, and the people are treating Him just like they did the prophets

4. Jesus Challenges Our Terms and Confronts Our Pride

- a. Jesus strikes the idolatry of their heart, their nationalistic hometown pride, and confronts them with the Word of God
 - i. He does this elsewhere – see the rich young ruler in Matt 19
- b. Jesus tells them that God has always moved towards the humble from every nation, and He is doing so now
 - i. In fact, He hits them pretty hard: "He was sent to none of them"
- c. When the people rejected the prophets, God brought famine on the land and hope to the humble outsiders
 - i. Elijah was sent to a Gentile widow
 1. Of Sidon, outside of Israel
 2. Widow – powerless and poor, seen as cursed
 3. Yet, she was humble to serve Elijah and believed His word of God's provision
 4. In the time of great need in Israel, God sent hope to a humiliated foreign woman with no power
 - a. The gospel is for the humble of every nation
 - b. Jesus is making a strong statement that outsiders are included by repentant faith in Him, and that they will receive Him in their powerlessness
 - ii. Elisha was sent a Syrian leper
 1. Syrian – Gentile military commander who served in a military that was not Israel

- a. This would have brought strong feelings of Roman occupation in the present moment of the story
 - 2. Leper – outsider, unclean
 - b. Jesus is making another strong statement that God's acceptance is moving toward the unclean, the outsiders
 - c. His miracles toward lepers will indicate the same thing: God is moving toward the humble while the strong continue to reject Him
 - iii. Both of these foreign believers were needy people who accepted the Word of God on God's terms, even though they were asked to do very strange things
 - 1. "Go ask your neighbors for all the stoneware that you can find"
 - 2. "Go bathe in the Jordan seven times...and I don't want your money"
 - d. Rather than the message of vengeance on their enemies, Jesus is showing that God is gracious towards outsiders and that no matter your nationality, your past, or your cleanliness the terms are humble acceptance of Jesus as Savior-King
 - a. This was an important point for all Gentiles to hear (Theophilus)
- 5. There is No Neutral Response to Jesus on His Terms
 - a. When confronted with their pride and rejection of Jesus, the people do not respond with humility or repentance, but with rage
 - i. How quickly respect for Jesus becomes rejection and rage toward Him when His words convict us!
 - b. The people of Nazareth were "filled with wrath" and moved to kill Jesus...on the Sabbath mind you...because:
 - i. They were being told that their rejection of Jesus was really a rejection of God and therefore brought God's rejection of them
 - ii. They were being told that the unclean outsiders, the irreligious Gentiles were accepted and sought out by God in spite of their uncleanness
 - c. When told that the Syrian leper and the Phoenician widow were in and the Nazarenes were outside because they wanted to barter terms with the King pushed them over the edge
 - i. The hardness or pliability of the heart is revealed by the light of God's Word
 - ii. The same sun that melts wax hardens clay
 - iii. The response of the Nazareth synagogue members showed that their hearts were made of stone rather than wax.

Conclusion:

Luke presents us a synopsis of the ministry of Jesus in one brief story. Jesus comes in as the bringer of God's gracious gospel. He is hope for the poor, freedom for the captive, and the light that opens the eyes darkened by sin. When a person knows that he is poor, captive, and blind, then Jesus is a welcome sight. Yet, when a person refuses to see his poverty, enslavement, and blindness, then Jesus becomes a threat and an enemy to be destroyed. Thus the ministry Jesus went, from beginning to end He brought hope to the outcast who knew that he had nothing to make him acceptable to God. The message of God's acceptance by grace was music to his ears. And Jesus' ministry made enemies, and Simeon's prophecy of 2:29ff is already ringing true: "a light of revelation to the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel...appointed for the rising and the fall of many...a sign that is opposed...so that the thoughts from many heart may be revealed."

So, you and I, the readers of Luke's gospel, along with all those Theophilus' out there, the God-lovers, are left with a decision. What will we do with Jesus? Will we receive Him on His terms and His terms alone? Will we humble ourselves and approach the King as the King of our salvation? Or, will we demand that it be done our way, according to our wisdom, only receiving a Jesus that we like and who doesn't confront us at the deepest levels of our identity and our affections? Do we side with Jesus, the leper, and the widow, or will we side with Nazareth?

Today...today is the day of salvation. This King who confronts you is also the King who died for you, humbling Himself to come to serve and to save the humble by dying on the Cross and paying down our debts against God. In Him we are fully accepted by God and freed from all condemnation and the strokes of justice, included in His family with the full rights of sons. Behold your King! Let us come to Him on His terms to receive all that He says in faith, hope, and love.