

Unseen By His Own

Luke 4:16—30

Introduction

The theme for Epiphany and the season after is that Christ is made known to the world as the Son of God. Today, we look at a negative example of this, where people don't see Jesus as He is revealed. Geoffrey Chaucer, in his 1386 book, *The Tale of Malibee*, coined the phrase *familiarity breeds contempt*. This means that, over time, people become familiar with the flaws of other people and things and stop respecting them. This is what's happening in our lesson from **Luke 4** today.

But He Had No Flaws

You say, "But Jesus is flawless. How can they find fault in Him?" Yes, He is, but being flawless has its drawbacks. Since we are flawed, it makes us uncomfortable to be around someone who is perfect. It also seems too good to be true. But one "flaw" in their minds was that Jesus didn't meet their messianic expectations.

His Gracious Words

They marveled at the gracious words that were coming from His mouth (v. 22). What was so amazing was that He applied them to Himself. There are three things to notice about the words of Isaiah as they apply to Jesus.

1) *The Spirit of the Lord*

The Spirit of the Lord was upon Jesus (v. 18) in an unusual way. Samson had received the Spirit of strength. Solomon the Spirit of wisdom. The prophets and apostles the Spirit of understanding and knowledge. But Jesus, and He alone, received the fullness of the Spirit.

2) *The Gospel*

Jesus came *to proclaim the good news (v. 18)*, or Gospel to the *poor*, the *captive*, the *blind*, and the *oppressed*. The Gospel is not preached to those who are comfortable in their sin, only to those afflicted by it.

3) *The Spiritual Year of Jubilee*

The year of the Lord's favor (v. 19) was known as the Year of Jubilee, when, every fifty years, all debts were cancelled, all those sold into slavery to pay off debts were released, and all land, sold to pay off debts was returned to its original owners. Jesus proclaims the spiritual Year of Jubilee, when our debt of sin is cancelled, we are set free from its bondage, and returned to our original "owner," God.

His "Origins"

The main problem His hometown folks had with Jesus was they thought they knew who He was, the *son of Joseph (v. 22)*. Because of that, they heard the words, but didn't take them in. They marveled with their mouths, but not with their hearts. They are offended by His lowly status, and so, His doctrine and office. In short, His gracious words had little to no impact on them.

Challenging Their Faith

Then, Jesus challenged their faith by voicing what they were already thinking, that He could prove who He was by performing miracles like He had in other towns. Like we said, signs strengthen our faith, but *we are not to test God (Matthew 4:7)* by asking Him to prove Himself by a sign or miracle, though He may *choose* to reveal Himself that way.

Ashamed of Their History

Then, Jesus reminded them how, during a severe famine, God sent Elijah to live with a widow in Zarephath (**1 Kings 17:8—16**), not an Israelite; and how Elisha cured a Syrian general, an enemy of Israel, of Leprosy (**2 Kings 5:1—14**). These were embarrassing times in their history. God reached out to foreigners who were “unclean” instead of helping His own people.

Rejection

The upshot was they rejected Jesus and tried to kill Him. They took Him to the brow of a hill and tried to push Him off. So, Jesus did what they wanted. He performed a miracle. He walked right *through their midst and went on His way. (v. 30)*. That’s what God does. If we reject Him, He’ll do what we want and leave us alone. You see, God is a Gentleman. Some people ask how a loving God could send people to hell. He doesn’t. He just doesn’t force anyone to go to heaven. If you don’t want anything to do with Him, He’ll leave you alone for eternity.

Do We Become Too Familiar?

So, the question is, “Do we become too familiar to see Jesus for who He is?” I’ve heard of LCMS theologians teaching false doctrines that were settled in the **Formula of Concord** because they were so familiar with the Bible and the Lutheran confessions, they started looking elsewhere for answers. I’ve heard of people raised in the LCMS who joined an ELCA church because of programs they liked; the content of their teaching didn’t matter. That’s why I teach my confirmands to know why they believe what they believe. So, when the lambs grow up, they’ll know where to graze and keep their eyes on Jesus. So, He won’t be **UNSEEN BY HIS OWN**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
