



“The Messiah”  
Luke 4:14-30

**Idea:** Jesus is the Messiah who enters the brokenness of people’s lives with the promise of rescue and deliverance.

**Intro:** An immaculately dressed father was lying down on the floor. He had on a uniform coat and a tie. He was holding his little boy in his arms, playing with him, talking to him like a father would, rolling around, wrestling, laughing, and tickling. He put the little boy on his back and let him ride him like he was a horse. Then that father took the little boy and sat him down on the floor, but the little boy jumped back up wanting to play some more. The father turned and walked toward a set of French doors. As he grabbed hold of the handles and pulled the doors open, that young boy, right behind his father later said of that moment, “I could hear a thousand, thousand heels click together and a thousand, thousand hands slap against their sides. I peered over the balcony, and I saw thousands of men standing at attention, saluting my father. It was in that moment, I realized that he was more than my dad.”

The little boy’s name was David. He was named after his father Dwight David Eisenhower. Little David Eisenhower said, “I realized in that moment he was more than my dad. I realized that he was the supreme Allied commander who would send hundreds of thousands of men into battle to die for the freedom of the Western world.”

Before that moment, David had never thought about his father’s identity. He had never wondered about what he did vocationally. He had not concerned himself with anything outside of what could be seen right in front of him in their home. In one sense, David was too close to his father to recognize anything else about him. The people in Nazareth were in a similar situation with Jesus. He was the hometown boy who had become famous throughout Galilee. Their familiarity with Him, however, prevented them from recognizing Jesus as the Messiah.

Read Luke 4:14-30.

**Inquiry:** This incident in Nazareth, although placed first in Jesus’ ministry by Luke, was not first chronologically. Rather, its placement served Luke’s “orderly” purpose. One thing we need to remember when reading the Gospels is that chronology was not necessarily important in the Hebrew mind. The message was most important. More than likely, the miracles in Capernaum that Jesus referred to (4:31-37; 7:1-10) were performed before coming to Nazareth. This understanding also helps us understand why Jesus would have been invited to read and comment on the Scripture in the synagogue. His ministry of preaching and healing provided a platform to also teach in the synagogues.

Luke indicates in verses 14-15 that Jesus was popular in Galilee and His fame was spreading. When He came to Nazareth, Jesus worshiped in the synagogue on the Sabbath just as He did in every town. Synagogues were houses of prayer and the reading of Scripture. We learn from the *Mishnah's* Megillah IV details about synagogue worship. The service would have begun with singing from Psalms 145-150, followed by the recitation of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4-9). Next, the Eighteen Benedictions, known as the *Tefillah*, were also recited aloud in succession. Then came the reading of Scripture. An officer took out the Torah scroll, removed its cloth covering, opened it to its designated place, and placed it on the table to be read from various attenders. The Torah was then returned to its place, and a portion from the prophets, the *Haftarah*, was read. This was followed by a sermon. The service was closed with the Aaronic benediction, with the people pronouncing "Amen" at each of its divisions. "The Lord bless you and keep you" (Amen), "The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you" (Amen), "The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Amen).

Luke explains that worshiping in the synagogue "was His custom" (4:16). I believe it is important to point out that Jesus regularly, weekly worshiped with the people of God. Therefore, if it was important for the Son of God to worship with the people of God every Sabbath, then it ought to be important for Christians to worship with the Church every Sunday.

Jesus' miracles and ministry opened the door for ministry in the synagogues. On this day, it is very likely He was asked by the synagogue leader to read the *Haftarah*, and Jesus requested that it be a scroll of Isaiah. He unrolled it and read. The reading was a combination of Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6 with a couple lines left out, one of which was the final half of the last line, which adds "and the day of vengeance of our God." By omitting that last line, Jesus got the people's attention. As He sat down, every eye was fixed on Him, and He declared, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus was saying two things. First, the consolation of Israel promised long before Isaiah found its ultimate expression in Jesus and His message. And second, while "the day of vengeance of our God" would come, it was not fulfilled on that day. What was being fulfilled was "the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke informs us that all the people spoke well of Jesus. It is quite possible He said more than what Luke recorded because the people marveled at His gracious words. Perhaps, He gave an exposition of the four classes of people who would benefit from His ministry: the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. The *poor* (πτωχός) can refer to every kind of poverty, but the emphasis here is on a conscious moral and spiritual poverty. Jesus used this same word in the first beatitude (Matt 5:3). *Captives* (αίχμάλωτος) technically means prisoners of war. Here it refers broadly to the many forms of spiritual bondage. The *blind* (τυφλός) speaks of darkness, spiritual darkness. And *oppressed* (τεθροισμένος) literally means "broken in pieces," "shattered," or "crushed." Jesus was saying that He comes to those squashed by life's circumstances, who see no way out, who find living itself an oppression, and He gives them freedom.

Wow! The congregation was enthralled by Jesus' words. They marveled over His insight, logic, and command of language. They were captivated by the grace and charm of His words. Their marveling, however, did not go any further. They asked one another, "Is not this Joseph's son?" I do not believe they asked this derogatorily, but they did express some level of cynicism. He was the hometown boy. They had watched Jesus grow up. They knew Him. The people of Nazareth admired the words of Jesus, but they were completely unmoved and unaffected by their meaning because they failed to see themselves in the metaphors.

It is interesting that Jesus chose to not claim the people's marveling over His words as success. Instead, Jesus did the exact opposite of what most preachers would do. Acting in true prophetic fashion, He intentionally offended the people. He knew they did not see Him for who He was. They did not see Him as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. In fact, they refused to believe without a miraculous sign. Jesus understood their blindness was due to their spiritual self-sufficiency and pride, which He portrayed through two Old Testament examples.

The first example involved the prophet Elijah and a starving widow (1 Kings 17:7-16). The prophet found her gathering sticks for a fire upon which the final meal would be cooked for she and her son before dying. They were suffering from the famine in the land and had no more food. Elijah instructed her to make a little cake for him first and then make something for her and the boy. She obeyed the prophet, and God provided for her and the boy. Why did God do that for a Gentile woman when He was not giving food for the women of Israel? The reason was because the Gentile woman recognized her poverty before God and the Jews did not. This comparison was an incredible insult to the people of Nazareth.

The second example brought even more insult to them. Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army (2 Kings 5). He came to Elisha to be healed from leprosy. The prophet instructed him to go and wash in the Jordan seven times to be healed. This “cure” seemed ridiculous to the commander. He expected to see something grand take place. The idea of washing in the Jordan River made no sense. There were many better rivers in Syria if washing was the cure. His servants, however, worked to change Naaman’s mind. They convinced him to do this humiliating thing to be cured.

The people of Nazareth were enraged at this comparison. They interrupted the service and drove Jesus out of town to the top of the hill. They intended to throw Him down the cliff and onto the rocks below. Why had their emotions gone from marvel and praise to wrath and murder? It was because Jesus had cut through their comfortable religious façade. In response, they were going to kill Him – on the Sabbath too! He would have been thrown down the cliff, but there at the top, Jesus passed “*through their midst*” and went away. As the Son of God, Jesus was in control of the entire situation.

Luke placed this story at the outset of Jesus’ public ministry and following His baptism and temptations to show to Theophilus and all future readers that Jesus is the Messiah who enters the brokenness of people’s lives with the promise of rescue and deliverance. As the Messiah, Jesus receives various kinds of reception. Not everyone accepts Him as the Messiah. In fact, not everyone who says they believe, actually believe. Jesus’ sermon seems to be aimed at nominal believers, at people who assume they are God’s people but have no living, saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Three thoughts for nominal believers:

**1. You can be entertained without being transformed.**

The people of Nazareth enjoyed the sermon, but they were not moved by it. They most likely knew the passage Jesus read from that day. It caught their attention, but it did not grab their heart.

Does this happen today? You bet it does. How many times have you said something like:

- What wonderful and lovely music!
- Wow, we worshiped today!
- That was such a great sermon pastor.
- I wish so-and-so could have heard that sermon.

How many times have you had a tingling sensation in church? How many times have you left feeling good and encouraged?

I hope your answer to each question is “weekly.” It is good to feel blessed and equipped. Jesus’ point, though, was to show that there is so much more He wants to do. He has no desire to entertain people. He wants to transform them. He does not want your faith to be surface level and in name only. Jesus wants to overhaul and transform your life. He wants to make you new (2 Cor 5:17).

**2. You can be familiar without recognizing.**

Those in Nazareth enjoyed Jesus' sermon. They thought He was a nice preacher, but they were too familiar with Him to recognize He was more than Joseph's son. Again, they knew the passage Jesus read from that day. They were familiar with the Torah and the Prophets. Their familiarity, however, was the reason for their inability to recognize Jesus.

Familiarity can be dangerous and even deadly. Did you know that most car accidents happen within a few miles of the driver's home? The driver gets close to home and assumes everything is as it has always been, so he or she does not see the unusual thing going on with the other driver. Familiarity is why most home accidents happen in the bathroom. You do not see the wet floor before it is too late.

Familiarity, likewise, is why a lot of people do not recognize Jesus as their Savior. In America, there are still many people who have just enough Bible knowledge to make them think they know, so they are not looking any deeper. They know some of the Bible stories. They attend church a few times a year (Easter/Christmas). They heard some preaching on the television on radio. Other people have grown up in church. They are saturated with the stories and teachings of the Bible. Their family and friends are believers. They are close and familiar with the things of God. As a result, they have never considered recognizing Jesus for themselves.

Jesus wants you to not just be familiar with Him. He wants you to know Him as Lord and Savior, and He wants to know you as a son or daughter.

### **3. You can admire with honoring.**

The people admired Jesus' preaching that day. Luke says they all spoke well of Him and marveled at His gracious words. They were proud of their young preacher-boy, but they failed to honor Him as their Lord and Savior.

Many people admired Jesus during His life and ministry. In Luke 9, Jesus asked His disciples what the crowds thought about Him. They responded by indicating that some saw Jesus as John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. They admired but did not honor Him. He then asked the disciples what they thought of Him. Peter responded, "The Christ of God." Peter honored Jesus for He was.

It is dishonoring to call Jesus something less than He really is. Muslims say they honor Jesus as a great prophet, but they dishonor Him by denying He is the Son of God. Hindus say they honor Jesus by worshipping Him alongside their 300 million other gods, but they dishonor Him by not seeing that He is the only true God. Some people try to honor Jesus by referring to Him as a good moral teacher, but they dishonor Him by refusing to see that He is Lord and Savior of the world.

To honor Jesus, you must receive Him as He really is: The Messiah and Son of God who alone rescues sinners from God's wrath and makes them righteous in God's sight. Honoring Jesus means you cannot be merely nominal in your belief.

Two sobering truths:

#### **1) Jesus always sees you regardless if you see Him.**

In this passage, Jesus anticipates what the people are thinking. He does this because He sees them even though they cannot see Him. He knows their hearts, even though they cannot see His. He sees their sin even though they cannot see their need for a Savior.

Today, your eyes might be opening to the reality that Jesus sees you and has always seen you. For many years, you have lived your life day-in-and-day-out without any thought of God, His Word, or your sin. You have been living in rebellion against the God who created you for Himself. Your sin has blinded

your eyes to the real need in your life, but it never blinded God's eyes. He has watched over you. He has pursued you, calling you to Himself. Today, He is doing just that. Jesus sees you in your sin, and He confronts you with the truth about sin to reveal your need of Him and His cross.

This is great news! Jesus sees you today.

## 2) Some rejections are final.

Jesus preached a marvelous sermon in Nazareth. He saw and understood their spiritual need. He knew they were merely nominal in their belief and that there was no depth to their spiritual lives. They were dead in their sin, and this was proved by their attempt to kill Him. The people of Nazareth rejected Jesus as their Lord and Savior that day. We have no record in the Gospels of Jesus ever returning to Nazareth. This argument from silence seems to indicate that their rejection of Him was final. They were not given another opportunity.

People have the tendency to think they will always have another opportunity to put their faith in Jesus. They fail to remember that God's Spirit is the one who calls to people. No one is promised another opportunity to believe on Jesus.

**Conclusion:** David Eisenhower loved playing and wrestling with his father. It never occurred to him that his father held any other position other than dad in the Eisenhower house. His familiarity prevented him from recognizing anything else about his dad's life and role.

Familiarity can be dangerous and even deadly. Like the people of Nazareth, you can grow up around the things of God and miss God completely. You can know the stories of the Bible, be able to quote Scripture, and even act the part of a Christian without coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ. You can believe Jesus is who He says He is without being a believer. The demons believe in Jesus as we will see next Sunday.

Jesus calls sinners to believe on Him for salvation. He comes to those squashed by life's circumstances, who see no way out, who find living itself an oppression, and He offers them freedom. Are you a believer? Has Jesus transformed your life? If not, I have news for you to hear.

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Have you received forgiveness in Christ? What would keep you from embracing the truth and believing on Jesus today? Do you need to follow the Lord in believer's baptism?