

**THE FIRST REACTIONS TO THE SON OF MAN**  
**LUKE 4:22-30**

First impressions are not always accurate impressions. And first evaluations are not always true. I have experienced those truisms many times in my life, but one of the first times was when I was about seven years old.

Mom and Dad were going on a date and had arranged with our neighbors to watch my brother and me; a couple of days before the event, the husband saw me in the yard and said something like, “We’ll have a great time — we’re going to have pizza!” To which I replied, “I don’t like pizza.” (I still had something to learn about gracious responses as well!) The neighbor was incredulous — “What!? You don’t like pizza?? Have you ever had pizza?” “No.” “Well, how do you know you don’t like it?” Exactly.

So, we went to the neighbor’s home and had pizza — and well, I liked (and like) pizza!

In the ministry of Jesus, the Son of Man, we find a similar (though opposite) evaluation of Jesus. The first public ministry of Jesus in Luke (though it had been about a year since He began His ministry in Jerusalem) seemed to be well-received — and in His hometown of Nazareth. But was it?

It took only minutes, maybe even moments, for the initial positive response to turn to questions and then to anger about Jesus. And this vacillation about Jesus served as a picture of the varied responses people would have to Jesus. From Jesus’ teaching in the Nazareth synagogue (Lk. 4:22-30) we observe...

**DESPITE THE SON OF MAN’S MESSAGE OF SALVATION, BOTH HE AND HIS MESSAGE ARE OFTEN REJECTED.**

Given the story of His advent that we remember this month, and what we know of Him, *that seems incredible*. This section immediately followed Jesus’ teaching in the synagogue where He proclaimed Himself as the Messiah, fulfilling the promise of Isaiah 61 — and also calling the people to humble faith in Him. “Other teachers had spoken of a future fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, but Jesus told them that they were witnessing its fulfillment before their eyes. Salvation had come; the messianic era had begun; the Messiah was present that day in the synagogue in the person of Jesus, a man from that very village.” [MacArthur] *But they had to humbly believe in Him*. What would they do? This passage is the rest of the story...

This passage reveals **four reactions** to the nature and teaching of Christ, the Son of Man...

1. **Jesus *May Be* Accepted as a Wise and Gracious TEACHER (v. 22a)**
2. **Jesus is *Not* Accepted Because of His ORIGIN in Humility (vv. 22b-24)**
3. **Jesus is *Not* Accepted Because of His TEACHING of Humility (vv. 25-27)**
  - ✓ Israel has a history of rejecting God
  - ✓ God has a history of redeeming Gentiles
4. **Jesus is *Not* Accepted — But He is Not DETERRED (vv. 28-30)**

## 1. Jesus May Be Accepted as a Wise and Gracious **TEACHER** (v. 22a)

- While Jesus likely said more in interpreting the OT reading from Isaiah 61, Luke records the poignant part of His sermon — **today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing** (v. 21).
- The response from the crowd of worshippers is immediate: **all were speaking well of Him...**
  - ✓ Literally, they were “testifying” to what He said — they were affirming and agreeing with Him.
  - ✓ And there is a vividness to what they were saying about Him — repeated affirmations.
  - ✓ And notice that Luke notes that **all** were speaking well of Him — they were overwhelmingly affirming Him and His message.
- What captivated (or interested) them? Luke notes that they were **wondering at the gracious words...**
  - ✓ The word **wonder** is a word that is often used about the disciples and crowds as they hear and observe Christ (e.g., 2:18, 33; 8:25; 9:43).
  - ✓ It seems to be a word that would precede faith and love and following. But when this word is used about the crowds, though, it is often immediately followed by rejection of Christ (11:14-15).
  - ✓ And that will be the case in this passage as well — they are impressed by what He said but it did not lead to transformation. So, the sense of the word is more likely something like “amazed” — they were amazed at His ability to speak (the rhetoric), but were unimpressed by the message.
  - ✓ And Luke notes that they were amazed by **the gracious words** —
    - That could refer to “words of grace,” meaning the message about grace/salvation (Acts 14:3)
    - Or it could refer to the compelling way in which he spoke, but denying the message. Given the ultimate rejection of Christ by this crowd (v. 28), this seems more likely.
- What we have in this opening first response is what sounds like acceptance of Christ. But it’s not genuine acceptance; it doesn’t lead to saving faith.
  - ✓ The Israelites that day were like so many that have lived in subsequent centuries.
  - ✓ They are more than content to accept Jesus as a teacher and moralist. But they will not have Him as Lord, Savior, and Sovereign. They are unwilling to humble themselves as poverty stricken, blind, or enslaved sinners. They are willing to have Jesus as a good teacher, as long as they can remain the kings and authorities of their own lives.
  - ✓ This is something Jesus will not be —

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall

at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” [C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.]

- ✓ So, in one way, the people seemed to accept Jesus, but in failing to accept Him in fullness, they rejected Him, which is what Jesus reveals in the subsequent verses (which become instructive to us for why people don’t want Jesus and why they reject Him)...

## 2. Jesus is *Not* Accepted Because of His ORIGIN in Humility (vv. 22b-24)

- Even while the crowd (remember the word **all**) is saying good things about Jesus, another comment begins circulating...***Is this not Joseph’s son?...*** (v. 22b).
  - ✓ The way they ask the question anticipates a positive response — “Yes, it is!”
  - ✓ And the sense is something like, “Can you believe that Joseph’s son is making these claims? How can this neighbor boy make these claims? He’s just a common child of a common man...”
  - ✓ Apparently, as they observed Joseph and Jesus there did not seem to be anything remarkable in them that would lead anyone to anticipate that anyone remarkable could come from that home. In their minds, there was an incongruity between the words and the speaker. They couldn’t reconcile the differences. “He’s just the carpenter’s son...” (cf. **Mt. 13:54-55**).
- The objection from the crowd was that Jesus was so unremarkable and had such a humble origin.
  - ✓ When they said that Jesus was ***Joseph’s son***, it was not necessarily an affirmation of his fatherhood.
  - ✓ The Nazareans were well aware that Jesus was born to Mary; they knew the story of the miraculous birth, but there was always a stigma about it (**Jn. 8:41** — “we are not born of fornication”). So, when they said “Joseph’s son” there was probably a wink, grin, and nudge that went with it — “Who is this illegitimate boy to make a claim like this...we know His story...”
  - ✓ They may have been impressed by His words, but they immediately questioned His legitimacy because “we know His background — we know who He really is.”
- Yet there is irony in the statement, isn’t there?
  - ✓ They knew the backstory to His birth — but they ignored the full backstory (chs. 1-2, angels...).
  - ✓ But they also knew His life; they had watched Him for 30 years — from infancy, to childhood, to young adulthood, to manhood, and to caring for His likely widowed mother.
  - ✓ And they never had seen Him sin. Never. Not once. They never saw Him gravitate towards ungodliness. He never lied to any adult. He faithfully obeyed everything Joseph and Mary told Him to do. He never coveted anything belonging to another child. He never complained or whined.
  - ✓ You know the neighbors had to talk about Him in His childhood (because we do about remarkable children of others) — “have you seen Joseph and Mary’s boy? I wonder what is ahead for Him...He is so remarkable — He’s such a faithful son...” *His reputation was perfect.*

- ✓ And in a further irony, the only story we have from Jesus' childhood affirms His uniqueness — even as a 12-year-old boy (the Jews recognized adulthood at 13), He demonstrated wisdom and insight far beyond the most trained scholars (2:47-48a).
- ✓ And now, when He is revealing the fullness of His advent, they dismiss everything they know about Him and say, “[Wink, wink] that’s just Joseph’s boy...He’s from our town...He can’t be important...”
- So, Jesus begins exposing their faulty thinking in vv. 23-24.
  - ✓ First, He says that they would undoubtedly quote a cultural proverb to Him (perhaps He heard it being whispered already, or He knew that they were thinking it) — ***physician, heal yourself...***
    - It’s a way of asking for proof that He is the Messiah (“do the miracles of the Messiah”).
    - Just like a physician would prove that he can heal patients by “healing himself,” so Jesus should show that He is the Messiah by doing the miracles of the Messiah.
    - These kinds of requests would be made throughout Jesus’ ministry (e.g., 11:16, 29; 22:64; 23:8).
    - A similar taunt would be made one last time when He hung on the cross, paying the debt for sinners (Mt. 27:40, 42)
  - ✓ They wanted Him to do in Nazareth what He had already ***done in Capernaum***. We don’t know with certainty what event(s) they might have referred to, but Jesus is simply exposing their ungodly desires. They weren’t interested in the Messiah and forgiveness; they wanted the “wow” factor of Jesus without being transformed into the likeness of Christ. (That desire still hasn’t gone away.)
  - ✓ Jesus critiques and comments on that desire by saying in v. 24 — ***truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown.***
    - There is no respect for Jesus among His own people. “Familiarity breeds contempt.”
    - It has been said that “the better you think you know a person, the more difficult it is to accept that person as being out of the ordinary.” Yup. That’s what happened to Jesus in Nazareth.
    - The lack of respect for Jesus is even more profound. Remember in v. 19 Jesus said in quoting from Isaiah 61 that He was bringing in the ***favorable year of the Lord***? That word “favorable” is the same word “welcome” in this verse. While was bringing in the “acceptable” year/season of MK, He was not accepted by His people (Jn. 1:11).
    - The Nazareans were a microcosm of Israel’s historical rejection of God — and of the rejection that would come later when the crowds would rather have Barabbas than Jesus and when they gawked and jeered as He hung on the cross. They were just unconvinced about Jesus as Messiah.
- Israel wanted a “great” King — a king like the nations; they rejected a humble King, a donkey-riding King, a servant King. There is a warning in their rejection for us — don’t be so familiar with Jesus and His teaching and work that you lose the wonder of His nature — He is the humble son of Joseph and Mary, heir to a carpenter shop in Nazareth, *and* the Son of Man, who is heir of all things (Dan. 7:13-14).

### 3. Jesus is *Not* Accepted Because of His TEACHING of Humility (vv. 25-27)

- To demonstrate the folly of their questioning of His character, Jesus provided two illustrations from Israel's history and how they rejected God's message/messengers and what happened. He uses these stories to expose the hearts of the Nazareans, which they clearly understand (v. 28).
- **Israel has a history of rejecting God** — the two stories of two other key prophets make this point...
  - ✓ The story of **Elijah** is told in **vv. 25-26**.
    - In Elijah's day there were **many widows** — many who were humble, dependent, and needy — and Israel was responsible to meet their need (Dt. 24:17-21).
    - These women fit the category of Is. 61, quoted in v. 18.
    - They were needy because **the sky was shut up** (no rain, dictated by God's sovereign hand).
    - These women who were already in precarious positions had even greater needs because of the famine. The leaders who were required to care for them didn't.
    - The king and leaders didn't provide for them because they were too busy pursuing their own idolatrous desires. You may remember that the king at that time was Ahab, one of the most wicked of Israel's kings who was exceedingly rebellious (**1 K. 16:33-34**).
    - The rain that would have provided for the widows was withheld because of Ahab's sin (**1 K 17:1**).
  - ✓ There is a second illustration of their unbelief and rejection. The story of **Elisha** is told in **v. 27**.
    - Just as there were many widows in Israel, so there were many **lepers**.
    - Biblical leprosy was a skin disease that could be moderate like scabies or psoriasis, or severe like Hansen's disease in which the sufferer loses feeling in the infected areas and suffers severe damage (being susceptible to injuries like punctures and burns, leading to infections and loss of limbs and organs).
    - In the Bible, however, lepers were not only sufferers (like the widows), but they were ceremonially unclean and unable to worship in the community of believers (**Lev. 13:7-8ff**; Mt. 8:1-4). The widow might be able to remarry, but unless healed (and he was incapable of healing himself), the leper was perpetually unclean. *Being a leper was a more needful position.*
    - And of all the lepers in Israel, **none was cleansed...** (v. 27). Jesus is inferring that they were not cleansed because they didn't humble themselves and go to God for the help they needed.
  - ✓ Both illustrations are intended to reveal to the Nazareans that while they were asking for signs, they had been given signs. And just like ancient Israel, they were rejecting what they had been given.
  - ✓ The Nazareans rejected these signs because they didn't like what they meant —
- **God has a history of redeeming Gentiles**
  - ✓ God's intent to save Gentiles was explicit in His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:3), and it was an explicit part of the story of Elijah that Jesus told —

- God sent Elijah to a **widow in Zarephath** in **Sidon** (Phoenician territory). Elijah goes to a widow, but a *Gentile* widow (who was evidently a follower of God; 1 K. 17:12, 15, 24).
- And Elijah provided (miraculously) for her by providing an unending supply of flour and oil for food (1 K. 17:14-16) and then by raising her son from the dead (1 K. 17:21-22). He did that because she recognized her dependence and inability to do anything for herself (17:12).
- Don't just read that and shrug your shoulders and say, "Oh yeah, I see that..." This was outrageous to the Jews. How dare Jesus emphasize that they needed to be humbled (they were Jews!) and that God would be compassionate toward a Gentile widow (woman)!
- The Nazareans wanted signs — they had plenty of signs in Christ, but like Israel of old, they rejected what had been given to them. "...in their own eyes they were not poor. They were the good, respectable, synagogue-attending, family-oriented, solid citizens of Nazareth." [Hughes] And as long as they maintained that position, they would not be helped by the Messiah.
- ✓ The provision of God for Gentiles was also in Elisha's story —
  - No Israelite had been healed of leprosy.
  - But *someone* was healed — **Naaman** — a prominent soldier in the Aramean army (descendants from Shem, who were NE of Israel, generally centered around Damascus). A *Gentile* was healed.
  - The important part of his story is to notice *why* he was healed — because he did what Elisha said to do — in faith he went to the Jordan River and washed himself seven times (2 K. 5:10, 14). He was healed because he fumbled himself to do something menial (which is the point of 2 Kings 5).
- ✓ These stories of the widow and Naaman evidence that He would do what He read (v. 18) from Is. 61.
- ✓ Jesus was making the point that the Nazareans could be saved and have Messianic blessing, *but* they would have to humble themselves — acknowledge they are poverty-stricken, blind, and enslaved.
- ✓ And if the Nazareans reject Him, He would go elsewhere (v. 31; 24:47).
- Israel has a history of rejecting God and His grace, but that does not inhibit God's salvation plan. Israel will still be saved (Rom. 11:25); and the nations (Gentiles) will also receive His grace gift of salvation.
- The Son of Man came to save sinners; the rejection of some (even many) did not stop Him — which is the final truth to be seen in this account...

#### 4. Jesus is *Not* Accepted — But He is Not **DETERRED** (vv. 28-30)

- The beginning of this account is so encouraging and hopeful — ***all were speaking well of Him*** (v. 22). How quickly things changed. Within minutes, ***all the people...were filled with rage***.
- ✓ Everyone was "for Him" and then suddenly *everyone* was against Him. The shift was total.
- ✓ And they were filled with ***rage***. This rage is intense, immediate, and explosive anger. "BOOM!" It is loud, belligerent, unreasonable, and generally "temporary" (but not here).

- ✓ What led to the rage? It came about **as they heard these things**. They were being accused of unbelief — just like the ancient Israelites — and they became consumed with rage.
- ✓ Why were they so out of control? Because Christ had said grace was withheld from Israel in Elijah and Elisha's day and was given to Gentiles, and was inferring the same would be true of them.
- ✓ And they exploded because they were convinced of their superiority and self-righteousness. They were superior to Joseph and his Son and they were certainly superior to the Gentiles. So, "BOOM!" [This is a reminder that anger is one of the things we do when we want to keep our idols when they are exposed. When we are angry we can ask, "what am I wanting so badly that I believe anger is right?"]
- And these "worshippers" were **filled** — dominated and totally under the control of their anger. How full?
  - ✓ **They got up and drove Him out of the city**. Luke doesn't say it explicitly, but they likely put their hands forcibly on the Son of Man and physically took Him out of the synagogue and out of the city.
  - ✓ Because Nazareth was small, the trip out of town would have been short.
  - ✓ And they led Him to **the brow of the hill** to throw Him down. We don't know the location — because Nazareth was hilly, it could have been any number of hills. What is significant is not where they took Him, but *that* they took Him to attempt to murder Him. Their rejection is full.
  - ✓ Do you remember Satan's temptation (4:9-11)? What Satan was unable to entice Christ to do to Himself in Jerusalem, the people now attempt to do to Him in Nazareth (which makes one wonder if this rage was also instigated by the devil — it would seem so).
  - ✓ So, the first division over Jesus that was predicted in 2:34-35 is coming to fruition. Jesus is the dividing point of all people — all will stand or fall on the basis of what they believe about Him.
- There is a great irony in the story. It's in the last verse (v. 30).
  - ✓ They are enraged. They are going to murder Him. They drag Him to the fill to throw Him down it. And then? He's gone. They are holding Him and then they are not. He is there and then He isn't. Isn't that one of those scenes that you would have loved to see?!!
  - ✓ Luke simply says, **passing through their midst He went on His way**. He went where He wanted and not where the crowd wanted. He would die, but not this way. So it was no difficulty for Him to extract Himself from the situation until the time was right. He would give His life; He would not have His life taken from Him. So He left.
  - ✓ There is some question about whether this was a miracle (like His vanishing from the disciples from the road to Emmaus, 24:31), or just Him making His way through the crowd. I believe we are meant to see this as a miraculous departure (cf. Jn. 7:30; 8:59; 10:39). They asked for a Messianic miracle, and now they have one.
- One translation of this section uses this heading to describe the paragraph: "Jesus rejected at Nazareth." That's true. But it's even more true that we can say the passage teaches, "Jesus rejects



Nazareth.” We know that not only because of what Jesus infers about going to others with His message of salvation, but also because this is the last time in Luke’s gospel that He will be in Nazareth (He may have returned later, Mk. 6:6). They saw His life for 30 years, heard His declaration of His messianic authority, and they rejected Him. And He rejected them and they never repented and believed. Tragic.

### What we learn from the rejection of Christ —

- ✓ **If you are rejecting Christ, your rejection is not final or determinative.** It is not your evaluation of Christ that matters; it is His evaluation of you. that matters.
  - And His evaluation is that you are a humble sinner who cannot save yourself (v. 18).
  - But if you turn away from your sin and believe in Him, He will save you.
  - If you are like the Nazareans and pridefully believing you are ok, I urge you to give up your self-righteousness and believe that He was and is righteous for you and ask Him to forgive you of all your sins and enable you to live for Him (today and eternally).
- ✓ **If you have loved ones who are rejecting Christ, these may be some of the reasons they don’t believe in Him.** They are unimpressed with His nature and they are too impressed with their own nature. In pride they diminish His position and authority and in pride they elevate their “authority.” The Proverb says “pride goes before destruction” (16:18). That was true in Nazareth and its true today.
- ✓ **Even when people reject Christ, He is accomplishing His salvation purposes.**
  - Don’t be despondent about those you love who are rejecting. Their story is not yet finished. Where they are spiritually today is not the end of the story. There is hope for repentance yet (remember the Sidonian widow, Naaman, and your own story). Don’t give up.
  - And don’t be despondent over the world that is rejecting Him. They *will* reject Him. And He *will* be King of the earth and will sit on His throne. The cross had to come for Him (it was *His* plan), but the resurrection also had to come — and so did the ascension. And just as He beside His Father on the Heavenly throne, so one day soon He will be on His earthly, Davidic throne.
  - He is accomplishing His salvation purposes.

**BENEDICTION:** **Luke 2:29-32**