

Luke 4:16-30

“Christ Centered”

January 24, 2016

The townspeople of Nazareth looked at Jesus and at first they were amazed and proud of their hometown boy. Then Jesus told them that He could not perform the miracles among them that they had heard about. In fact He told them that the parallels could be found in the Old Testament where God through Elijah and Elisha cared for the Gentiles or non-Israelites and allowed His chosen people to suffer. Why? They had turned against God. The people of Nazareth became so angry that they wanted to kill Him. They became angry because Jesus was challenging them to see Him as more than a hometown boy who was making good. He wanted them to see that He was the Messiah sent by God to save them from their sins.

I see the same parallel in our lives. In our families and our hometowns we have the same distractions. We see each other from the perspective of being family or Church. Therefore we are expected to conform to the expectations of those we know and often love. We can become too close to things and we get confused by the expectations of those around us. For example we are raised in a family. Suppose the family does and says some very unchristian like things. We belong to a church and suppose that the church does and says some very unchristian like things. In situations like this, we could be tempted to follow the crowd and do the

unchristian like thing. Or we could also be tempted to say I don't need family, church or Christ if that is what they do and say. We forget that our home and our church are rescue stations for sinners in need of a Savior. I have said it another way. We are a hospital for sinners not a rest home for saints. Don't compromise God, but do stay in contact with even our enemies.

The people of Nazareth had to humble themselves and see their hometown son as the Savior who performed miracles, signs and wonders because He was from God. Likewise we have to look beyond the pastor, the church leaders, the family and its members and see the sinners that Jesus came to save. This requires that we humble ourselves before God and each other and place Christ up on the pedestal and those we respect at His feet in need of His undeserved grace and mercy as much as we are in need of His undeserved grace and mercy.

So how do we separate Christ from the family, the church and from this world? I already started us by calling for us to be humble. Let Christ be God! Let God's Word be our guide! Let the Body of Christ guide us as we make common confession together and encourage each other to be God's church. In Acts fifteen the Council of Elders spoke for God not one man. Paul came to that Council and submitted to its authority. I carry out the responsibility for speaking for God, but I humble myself and make myself responsible to the Synod for what I preach and teach. You and I are models for those around us.

The people of Nazareth are examples in another way. God won't work among them when they are not committed to Him. This congregation cannot thrive when the focus is upon us or the preacher. This congregation cannot head in the direction that God has assigned us when we seek to accomplish our will and go in our direction. This congregation cannot draw God closer to us when we cannot open the Bible and go to the books and passages that we are to read. This congregation cannot draw God closer to us when we do not regularly go to Him in worship, prayer and the regularly study His Word and the teachings of His Word.

Of course we can say; "I am saved, let me get on with life." At the time of Jesus, the church had strayed from the Lord. They got caught up in the rules and regulations of man rather than live in His undeserved grace and mercy. When Christ came, they crucified Him. Sadly I fear that some in the church would do the same if Christ came today. Churches are dying in Europe and America because we have lost His way and decided to go our way. How blessed we are to have such a merciful God who always welcomes us back to Him. Amen