

Disappointments are part of life in this fallen world. It usually comes when we expect something good but instead have to deal with a hardship or unavoidable circumstances. Jesus had just been led into the wilderness for a forty day fast only to have it end with an attack by Satan. Though Jesus was victorious, I suspect He was exhausted from the ordeal. Matthew tells us that when the devil left Him angels came and ministered to Him (Matthew 4:11<sup>i</sup>). To minister in Greek is the word from which we get our word, deacon. Angels only do the Father's bidding. They can deliver God's message, give strength, or protect. The word angel means messenger. I suspect that they physically strengthened Jesus for His return to the Jordan. John's gospel tells us that when Jesus returned to the Jordan River some of the disciples of John the Baptist followed Him (John 1:36,37<sup>ii</sup>). Things were looking up, but Jesus is about to face a discouraging event.

*<sup>14</sup> And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup> And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.* Luke 4:14,15 With new disciples in tow, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. A few more disciples began to follow Jesus once He arrived in the region north of the Sea of Galilee. He began to be recognized as a teacher and was given opportunities to speak in the synagogues of the region, explaining the Scripture readings for each Sabbath and teaching parables in the open air (Mark 4:2<sup>iii</sup>). He was warmly received in the region. In fact, they glorified Him. That is a term usually reserved for God (Mark 2:12<sup>iv</sup>; Matthew 9:8<sup>v</sup>). This verse just briefly mentions this early period of Jesus' ministry (Acts 10:38<sup>vi</sup>; Luke 4:23<sup>vii</sup>). The next five chapters describe the later ministry in Galilee.

*<sup>16</sup> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup> And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,* Luke 4:16,17 Jesus had grown up in Nazareth. He went to the synagogue every Sabbath. He learned the building trade from his step-father Joseph. After Joseph died he used the trade to support his family. He had waited for the call of God to begin the public portion of His ministry. He had already been ministering for thirty years to his family and community through his trade and the words He spoke. We should not think less of our work if we do it unto the Lord.

During His weekly attendance in the synagogue, I would think He would have found it difficult not to speak up when someone expounded on the Word and either had a wrong interpretation or missed the main point. Jesus had complete control of Himself to wait for the Spirit's direction.

In a typical Jewish worship service *There was the singing from Psalms 145-150, followed by the recitation of the Shema, which begins, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is one God, the Lord is One (sema yisra'el 'adnay 'elhenu 'adnay 'ehad)" (Deut. 6:4-9; Deut. 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41). Next the Eighteen Benedictions, known as the Tefillah, were also recited aloud in succession. Then came the reading of Scripture. An officer went to the holy ark, took out the Torah scroll, removed its cloth covering, opened it to its designated place, and placed it on the table where it was read from by various attenders. The Torah was then returned to the ark, 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") (cf. Numbers 6:24-26; Mishnah Sotah, XII.6).*

Jesus was teaching on a portion from the prophets. *<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are*

*oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" Luke 4:18,19 Just as John the Baptist knew his ministry was Isaiah 40:3,4<sup>viii</sup>, Jesus knew His ministry was these verses that He read, Isaiah 61:1,2a<sup>ix</sup>. There were no chapter or verse numbers in Jesus' day. He stopped mid-sentence in the text and added Isaiah 58:6<sup>x</sup> "to set at liberty those who are oppressed". What He left off was telling, for the end of 61:2 reads *"and the day of vengeance of our God."* This tells us that Jesus clearly understood the prophecies of His coming had two distinct parts. The first was the suffering servant who would proclaim the Gospel and bring healing and liberation to souls. Then later, He would come again to execute justice and establish His physical kingdom.

Jesus' text described the year of God's favor in four ways. Good news to the poor wasn't about getting rich. It was that spiritual poverty was going to be relieved with spiritual wealth. The same words are used in the Matthew beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor" but there it goes on to say, "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3<sup>xi</sup>; Revelation 3:17<sup>xiii</sup>). Jesus' letter to Laodicea told the Laodiceans that they say they are rich but are in fact poor. Spiritual poverty is much worse than physical poverty. The people then had difficulty realizing that just as we do today.

Captives liberated means prisoners of war, but the war Jesus was referring to is the war within our hearts. Spiritual bondage has many forms. Some people are enslaved to the desire for wealth. Others are captives of hatred, while others are held by sensuality of one form or another. Jesus had come to set us free from being a prisoner of carnal desires (Galatians 5:17<sup>xiii</sup>).

Sight for the blind is also spiritual, though Jesus demonstrated it in the physical realm by restoring physical sight. The truth of God is light in a dark world that enables us to see things as they truly are (Acts 26:17,18<sup>xiv</sup>). When we are in sin, we seldom realize that we are damaging ourselves (2 Peter 2:19<sup>xv</sup>). But when the light of Christ shines in our darkness, we can see that sin is destructive and oppressive (Galatians 6:8<sup>xvi</sup>).

Liberty for the oppressed! Oppressed here can be translated "broken in pieces". Life can be hard. The pain of a wayward child, or of losing loved ones, the burden of debt, the responsibilities that seem impossible to meet can leave us feeling crushed. Jesus has come to give us liberty. We may not escape the situation, but the realization that Jesus will carry the burden gives us liberty (1 Peter 5:7<sup>xvii</sup>). All of these points mean the year of God's favor had finally arrived.

*<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."* Luke 4:20,21 Jesus declared that day had come. Many would have been familiar with the chapter and the description of the Millennium that followed in Isaiah chapter 61. He had their complete attention. They understood that He was telling them He would usher in God's kingdom. This is what the town of David's descendants were longing for. A buzz of excitement must have gone throughout the synagogue as they whispered to one another.

One of the questions was regarding His ancestry. Joseph was not a prophet or scribe or rabbi. He was a simple builder. It added to their amazement that Jesus so clearly understood the Scriptures and His calling. So far all is well. If Jesus had stopped there He would have been the talk of the town and welcomed to stay and teach. But like many sermons delivered throughout time, the congregation probably thought it was for others, not themselves. "Surely, we aren't the poor and blind, oppressed and held captive. What a good message for those who are, but it doesn't apply to us." Our prideful hearts can blind us to the blessing of conviction.

*<sup>22</sup> And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"* Luke 4:22 They are saying, "Wow, Joseph's son is really becoming a good preacher!" That implies that Joseph had relations with Mary before their marriage. In other words, what they were saying is that the little illegitimate boy turned into a good preacher. No! He is the Holy One of God, as the demon in Capernaum

will cry out in the next passage (Luke 4:34<sup>xviii</sup>). How ironic that even demons acknowledge the obvious that Jesus' fellow towns folk in Nazareth could not see!

*23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well." 24 And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.* Luke 4:23,24 Jesus knew their hearts. The appropriate response to the sermon would have been to ask for spiritual wealth, freedom, sight, and liberty. Jesus discerned that they didn't see their need.

Good preaching brings conviction. The end of His sermon addressed their hearts, and their hearts were prideful. They were too familiar with Jesus and His years as a builder. They wanted to see miracles before they would believe. But miracles are the response to faith, and they were lacking in faith (Matthew 15:38<sup>xix</sup>). Their expectations were of the latter half of Isaiah 61 with nations paying tribute to them as their Messiah became king of the world (Isaiah 61:6<sup>xx</sup>).

**How easily we are disappointed when God does not do what we think He should do!** We even misread Scripture as they did to see what we desire. Then God will not do among us what He desires because of our lack of faith and our worldly expectations (James 4:3<sup>xxi</sup>). Our disappointment is a declaration of our lack of trust in the God of Scripture who had declared that He works all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purposes (Romans 8:28<sup>xxii</sup>).

*25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."* Luke 4:25-27 Luke recorded the sermon hook. Preachers expound on a passage but then usually end the sermon with the point of conviction that demands a change in our thinking or behavior. While the main message was about the Messiah bringing good news to the poor, freedom for captives, enabling the blind to see, and liberating the oppressed, His hometown would not receive Him and therefore would experience little of these blessings.

Jesus pointed to several passages that explain why. Elijah was sent during the draught to help the widow of Zarephath, in the land of Sidon. She was a Gentile. When Elijah met her, she was gathering sticks for a fire to bake the last of her flour and oil so that she and her son could have their final meal. Elijah told her to bake a cake of bread for him first and bring it to him. He said the LORD will never let the flour or oil run out until the rains come again. He was asking her to have faith and believe without any evidence if she wanted to receive a blessing (Hebrews 11:1<sup>xxiii</sup>). Jesus was saying that God sends His prophets to people who will act in faith, but at that time there were none in Israel. It was the same in Nazareth. Others would receive the blessings promised in the passage He read (1 Kings 17:7-16). **Jesus wounded their pride to open their eyes.**

While Israel had many lepers, God had Elisha heal the Gentile leper, Naaman of Syria (2 Kings 5). Naaman was a commander of the Syrian army. His servant girl was slave taken from Israel. This little girl told him there was a prophet in Israel who could heal his leprosy. He went with a letter from the king of Syria to the king of Israel asking to be healed. Elisha heard of it and told the king to send the man to him. He told the man to dunk himself seven times in the Jordan. Naaman was angry at the demand for the river was muddy. He complained that Syria had much clearer waters. The servant of Naaman pleaded with him that if the prophet had asked for a difficult task Naaman would have done it. Why not this simple act? So Naaman humbled himself and after the seventh time coming up out of the water found he was healed.

The message was clear. The people of Nazareth were not the ones that would be blessed, but Gentiles would humble themselves and be the main recipients of the Messiah's blessings. **Jesus was contradicting Nazareth's hope of bringing forth a Messiah who would exalt them as**

**His kin.** Here is their hometown boy saying they are going to miss out and those Gentiles they abhor are going to be the ones that are blessed. “How dare He!”

*<sup>28</sup> When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. <sup>29</sup> And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.* Luke 4:28,29 The message infuriated them (John 1:11<sup>xxiv</sup>). How dare the local carpenter tell them their interpretation of Scripture is wrong and that they will reject their own Messiah. “What does a carpenter know? Sure, He grew up among them and was always kind, merciful, and gracious, a perfect example of a godly life, but how dare He turn against them and side with Gentile dogs! Blasphemy! He deserves to be stoned for His arrogance.”

The synagogue service didn't conclude. Rage interrupted the service. Why? They had been challenged to look at their charade of religiosity. They had ignored the Scripture that says that God is pleased with the broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17<sup>xxv</sup>). By ending the worship service with attempted homicide, they were demonstrating the pride Jesus had suggested would keep them from the blessings of the Messiah.

They took Him up a hill to throw Him down from a cliff. This would have been for the purpose of stoning. There are no such cliffs around Nazareth over which one would die if they fell off. The Jews' form of execution was to throw someone down, preferably in a hole or an area that dropped off sharply. They could then hurl larger rocks from above the victim down upon him or her, quickly, but painfully executing the person.

*<sup>30</sup> But passing through their midst, he went away.* Luke 4:30 Jesus walked right through their midst and went to Capernaum. I can picture the crowd pushing and shoving and Jesus just backing through the crowd as they hurried up the hill. At the top they found their victim was nowhere to be found. It was a miracle and it would happen again under similar circumstances in the temple (John 8:59<sup>xxvi</sup>).

Jesus had to leave those He had grown up with, His family, neighbors, and former friends, and go to where He was accepted and could proclaim the Good News. He left all behind and moved to Peter's home in Capernaum which is over twenty miles east of Nazareth.

There are many spiritually starving widows like the one in Zarephath and spiritually ill, like Captain Naaman, as well as prideful Nazarenes in churches, synagogues, and other spiritual gatherings. They don't realize their own condition. Like the church in Laodicea, they think they are rich and don't need a thing. But they do not realize that they are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked (Revelation 3:17<sup>xxvii</sup>).

We expect the world to be blind to man's depravity, but those who claim to be spiritual are sometimes the most blind and impoverished of all. Their pride has blinded them to their true condition. We are *all* in desperate need of Jesus' mercy and grace! All He asks is that we recognize our true condition and humbly come to Him in repentance and brokenness to receive His grace and forgiveness. Nazareth would not do that. Will we recognize we are spiritually poor, the captives of sin, the blind to God's ways, and broken? Until we do, we will not experience the favor of the Lord. This is why the public is so upset with the mere mention of the name of Jesus (John 15:18<sup>xxviii</sup>). His name calls out our need for a Savior. **Our response will either be anger and rejection so that He walks away, or humble repentance so that He embraces us with forgiveness and love** (John 10:9<sup>xxix</sup>).

Humble, broken, and contrite believer, you are rich in Jesus, you are clothed in His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21<sup>xxx</sup>), you are liberated from captivity to sin (John 8:36<sup>xxxi</sup>). Realize the blessings you have in Him and be thankful. Continue to realize our desperate need to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. Rejection by the world can be disappointing, but Jesus tells us to rejoice and be exceeding glad, for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:12<sup>xxxii</sup>).

## Questions

- 1 What was the response to Jesus in Galilee?
- 2 Describe a synagogue service.
- 3 What verse was Jesus' calling, and what was left off?
- 4 What other verse did He add and why?
- 5 What was Nazareth hoping regarding the Messiah?
- 6 How did Jesus end His message?
- 7 Why were they upset?
- 8 How should we respond to a message like that?
- 9 How did they prove Him right?
- 10 What blessings do believers have?

---

### **i Matthew 4:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

### **ii John 1:36-37 (ESV)**

<sup>36</sup> and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

<sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

### **iii Mark 4:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them:

### **iv Mark 2:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

### **v Matthew 9:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

### **vi Acts 10:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

### **vii Luke 4:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well."

### **viii Isaiah 40:3-4 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

### **ix Isaiah 61:1-2a (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor...

### **x Isaiah 58:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?"

### **xi Matthew 5:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

### **xii Revelation 3:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

### **xiii Galatians 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

### **xiv Acts 26:17-18 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you

---

<sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

<sup>xv</sup> **2 Peter 2:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

<sup>xvi</sup> **Galatians 6:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

<sup>xvii</sup> **1 Peter 5:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

<sup>xviii</sup> **Luke 4:34 (ESV)** <sup>34</sup> "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God."

<sup>xix</sup> **Matthew 13:58 (ESV)** <sup>58</sup> And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

<sup>xx</sup> **Isaiah 61:6 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> but you shall be called the priests of the LORD; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast.

<sup>xxi</sup> **James 4:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

<sup>xxii</sup> **Romans 8:28 (ESV)** <sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

<sup>xxiii</sup> **Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

<sup>xxiv</sup> **John 1:11 (ESV)** <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

<sup>xxv</sup> **Psalms 51:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

<sup>xxvi</sup> **John 8:59 (ESV)** <sup>59</sup> So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

<sup>xxvii</sup> **Revelation 3:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

<sup>xxviii</sup> **John 15:18 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

<sup>xxix</sup> **John 10:9 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

<sup>xxx</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)** <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>xxxi</sup> **John 8:36 (ESV)** <sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

<sup>xxxii</sup> **Matthew 5:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.