

Title: BAD NEWS – GOD AT WORK, LUKE 4:21 – 30.
(Chatham, NJ; 01/30/10, AM) [Pc – Acceptability Pattern]

Theme: Though at first this appears to be a case of familiarity breeding contempt, the problem goes much deeper than that.

Purpose: To warn everyone that we are susceptible to the same hardness of heart and blindness that Jesus' hometown displays.

Introduction:

1. Last week we looked at the good things characterizing Jesus' ministry: good news to the poor, liberty for the captives, and God's favor.
2. This week we see that the fulfillment of God's promises becomes bad news to his hometown.
3. What should have been a joyous homecoming turns sour, even violent.
4. Though their reaction is perplexing, we can learn from it.
5. We might be tempted to think that this is a simple matter of familiarity breeding contempt but we miss several important things if we reduce it to this.
6. We begin by tackling this question directly.

I. Does familiarity breed contempt here?

- A. Is it true in the abstract? Does it sometimes happen in life?
 1. It has become a proverb because it certainly can be true.
 2. Infatuation can turn to hatred when the true nature of our object of affection turns out to have lots of blemishes we didn't see at first.
 3. Does it necessarily have to turn to contempt?
 4. Not if we learn to love properly: forgiveness, love in spite of faults, etc.
- B. Does Jesus' hometown react with such violence because of their familiarity with him?
 1. Perhaps to some degree: a prophet is not without honor except in his own home.
 2. But I don't think verse 22 represents their doubts about him.
 3. More likely the problem goes much deeper.
 4. Jesus actually provokes this reaction by challenging them.
 5. Remember that we saw several weeks ago how Jesus exposed the motives of the man whose son was ill, and he often does so in other circumstances.
 6. He sees through the veneer and he knows more about their deep motivations than they are willing to admit.
 7. The examples that he cites question their faith.
 8. They are like their faithless ancestors.
 9. So I would say no, this is not a case of "familiarity breeds contempt." At least when it comes to their familiarity with Jesus.

II. Has familiarity with their religion bred contempt?

- A. Can people be too close to their faith to miss some truths?
 1. Some had come to expect certain things of God, Luke 11:29-32.
 2. God's message of Good News, however, was more often understood and accepted by others: the sinful woman, Luke 7:36ff; the Publican, Luke 18:9-14.
 3. Perhaps it isn't just proximity to one's faith but a failure to grasp its true teachings.

4. Faith can be perverted into a right rather than a privilege.
5. We can become like the older brother, resentful that God's mercy extends to the sinful and unworthy.

B. Too comfortable with the privileges?

1. Jesus does not tell them something new. They knew the stories.
2. They don't want to face the truths of their own heritage.
3. Their history was laced with stubborn refusal to obey God.
4. Stephen insists that their forefathers persistently rejected the Holy Spirit all the way through their history (read Acts 7:51-53).

III. Why was their reaction so violent? What unpleasant truths must we also face? (Perhaps the answer to both questions is the same.)

A. Blindness to their sins.

1. They assumed God's favor because they were Israel.
2. Amos warned his audience not to take God's favor for granted; in 5:18-20 he addresses those who assume the vengeance that God will seek against his enemies does not include them.
3. They have consistently broken the Law yet fail to perceive the sinfulness of their own actions.
4. The stories that Jesus refers to (the widow of Zarephath, and Naaman, the Syrian) clearly imply the faithlessness of Israel.
5. Jesus fires a warning shot across their bow: just being in Israel does not revoke responsibility to obedience and holy living.
6. They were infuriated at the thought that God could reject them however true it was.

B. Limiting God's love.

1. Those outside Israel or even on the fringe are objects of God's love.
2. God sent the prophets to heal a Syrian and provide for a woman of Sidon.
3. Luke includes Jesus' statement that even the people of Ninevah will judge Israel for her faithlessness because they repented, Luke 11:32.
4. Remember that Jonah, who preached to Ninevah, sought to keep God's love and forgiveness within the bounds of Israel and out of the hands of her enemies.
5. There is certainly a veiled reference to the future mission of the Messiah.
6. This, too, infuriated his hometown.

Conclusion:

1. The warnings of the Psalmists (95:6-11 & 106:25) must also of necessity be a warning to the church.
2. The good news of God's favor resides with those humble enough to repent and obey no matter who they are.
3. The Gospel begins with the command to repent; it ends with God's favor, freedom, and forgiveness.
4. If you need the prayers of the church today because your heart has become hardened and blind then come forward; seek and receive the grace that is abundant and free.