

## How is Your Hearing?

Luke 4:14-30

*A man who smelled like a brewery flopped on a seat at a bus stop next to a priest. The man's shirt was stained, clothes unkempt, and a half empty bottle of liquor was sticking out of his torn coat pocket. He opened his newspaper and began reading. Needless to say, the priest became uncomfortable at the smell and appearance of his seatmate.*

*After a few minutes the disheveled guy turned to the priest and asked, "Say, Father, what causes arthritis?"*

*In his annoyed state, the priest retorted, "Mister, it's caused by loose living, too much alcohol and contempt for your fellow man."*

*"Well I'll be...." the drunk muttered, returning to his paper.*

*The priest, realizing the error of his comment, apologized. "I'm very sorry. I didn't mean to be so rude. How long have you had arthritis?"*

*"I don't, Reverend. I was just reading here that the Pope does."*

Just like this priest, too often we can make assumptions about people that can be completely wrong. Worse though is that all too often we make assumptions about God that are also completely wrong.

We try to squeeze Almighty God, the creator of everything with all his awesome characteristics into a box or into a set of creeds or theological explanations which we can comprehend or handle with our feeble little finite minds.

In so doing, we put limits on what we will allow God to do in us and more seriously, we try to limit what God wants to do in other people.

This morning we're going to encounter a group of people who knew Jesus very well and as a result tried to define Him and stuff Him into their preconceived box.

The problem though was that Jesus' purpose and his whole ministry was way too big to be contained in any box dreamed up by the thoughts of mere men.

### ***Isaiah 55:8-9 (NKJV)***

A summary of the first year of Jesus' ministry after He was baptized are found in our text.

### ***Luke 4:14-15 (NKJV)***

Between the time of Jesus wilderness testing and the time here when He appears in Nazareth, the events of the first four chapters of John take place.

- During that year of ministry, He had been introduced as the Messiah by John.
- Called some if not all of His disciples.
- Cleansed the temple of tax collectors in Jerusalem.
- Talked with Nicodemus about rebirth.
- Proclaimed the gospel in Samaria where the woman at the well was saved.
- When He returned to Galilee, a nobleman approached Jesus in Cana while his son was ill in Capernaum and asked Jesus to heal the boy from a distance, which He did.

In this year, Jesus had done amazing things, but more importantly, He had taught and preached some amazing things, and the fantastic reports of His ministry had reached the people of Nazareth even before He did. When He finally arrived, the level of anticipation and excitement was very high.

You can imagine the scene as Jesus returned and began to visit with His family and catch up on what had been going on in his hometown. The townspeople are curious about the reports they had been hearing, and folks at the synagogue would want to hear Jesus teaching; so when the Sabbath rolled around, Jesus was asked to read from the Holy Scriptures.

#### ***Luke 4:17-21 (NKJV)***

Up until this moment everything had been going fine, everybody was pleased, but when Jesus made this statement things began to change.

#### ***Luke 4:22-30 (NKJV)***

What happened to these people? How could they go from adoration for a home town boy to an attempt to murder Him? It's all because of their misconceptions about Jesus and ultimately God.

The Jews had three misconceptions with which we struggle also.

## **MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT JESUS**

Why would Jesus words incite such strong feelings against Him? Had He just kept quiet no one would have cared, but Jesus will not let you sit on the fence.

You've got to make up your mind about Him. He demands that you make up your mind about Him. He wants you to care, to have strong feelings about Him one way or the other.

#### ***Revelation 3:15-16 (NKJV)***

Every time you are confronted with the Word of God you make a decision about Him.

Jesus could have maintained a great following here in His home town, but He wanted the people to be more than slightly impressed with Him. He wanted them to feel something more than simple delight in a few amazing acts.

Jesus was on a mission to change lives; to change hearts; to change futures, and to change relationships with God.

But to do that He was going to have to shake things up; He was going to have to rattle their cages and make them reconsider the way they thought about Him and about God.

Everybody has their ideas about God. "I believe this..." "I believe that..."

I read about one man who said that he converted from Christianity to atheism and he explained his decision this way, "My experiences told me..."

You are no different. Every one of you has grown up believing certain things about God. About Jesus. But are they true?

Think beyond the long brown hair and beard and olive skin.

Think beyond a nice man teaching some nice things so we might become nice people. What wrong conceptions do you have about Jesus?

That perhaps He guarantees some standard of living?

That He won't allow you to suffer?

That "*good Christians*" always get blessed?

A lady told me one time that God promised abundant life to His people, and that if we really love Him and serve Him He's not going to make us do without.

Listen, that's just one of many misconceptions people have about Jesus.

But how do you know whether you have misconceptions about Him or not? Would you even know it if you did?

***You need to be studying your Bible.*** I can't hammer that down enough.

Don't rely on what I say or what some Christian Author or TV Evangelist says. Get in your Bibles for yourselves. Don't just read but ***study*** the words of God.

I don't know how much time you're spending studying your Bibles, but I can tell you that in most cases it's not near enough. Read the gospels over and over. Watch Jesus movements and decisions among the crowds. Listen to what He's really saying and realize what he never said...Think about how He interacts with people and dig for the meaning for yourselves.

When you form your understanding about Jesus, put yourself in the shoes of someone else as best as you can.

Does Jesus bless those who love Him with more and better material things?

I can assure you the people in third world countries love Jesus just as much as we do, and yet they are starving and sleeping in cardboard houses.

Do you really know Him or do you just have an idea about Jesus? Do His words cause you pain?

I'm not asking you whether a sermon stepped on your toes. I'm asking whether when you are confronted with His Word you feel enough discomfort to change. Some people feel bad about a sin or habit or behavior or thought, but they'll keep doing it.

Some of you are perfectly comfortable with where you are in your relationship with Christ; comfortable with your relationship to this church; with your service and Christian walk.

If you are, then I can assure you have a distorted view of Jesus and His teachings. He will never let you sit on the fence.

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE

Not only did these people have misconceptions about Jesus, but they had some wrong ideas about other people too.

Jesus proclaimed what His ministry was going to be about and made clear that it wasn't just about the Jews. He goes on to rub salt into their wounds by recalling Elijah's and Elisha's miracles. He points out that their miracles weren't performed in their own town. In fact, they weren't even performed in the midst of Israelites. Rather, their miracles were performed before Gentiles – Those they called dogs.

To the Jews, the Gentiles were dogs and deserved judgment.

They were waiting for the real Messiah. The one who would come and live up to their expectations and destroy these Gentiles. Who was this imposter? Before them they saw the young man they knew well. He was the carpenter. But what was he saying?

Jesus challenged the box that the Jews had created for the Messiah. Their box restricted the Messiah's ministry to Israel. It reserved the Messiah's victories for the Jews alone. It didn't have room for the Gentiles in that box.

But Jesus' ministry was far bigger than that.

Jesus' ministry was for the benefit of all people, not just the Jews. His ministry of salvation was for all nations. The Jews had got it wrong, God's purposes in choosing them was not to save them in isolation, but

so that they could be his instruments by which he would bring salvation to the whole world. His plans and his purposes were to save Jews and Gentiles.

When Jesus rode into town these people believed themselves to be special, but after hearing His message they felt betrayed and disrespected.

I want you to think about the people around us and the way we think about them.

Before you say that you love everyone and want to see them all feasting on the glory of God through our church ministries, just ask yourself which groups you exclude by default. (*race or economy or age*)

Anybody who's upset about these things, or can't be open to everybody, has some misconceptions about Jesus and other people.

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF

Do you know what the problem was with these Jews?

1. They were proud and couldn't admit it.
2. They were ignorant and didn't know it.
3. They were in bondage and couldn't see it.

They were too proud to admit that God's work didn't revolve around them. They were ignorant about Jesus, but rather than taking time to investigate and think through what He was saying to them they had a knee-jerk reaction and tried to kill Him. They were in bondage to their misconceptions.

So long as they were unwilling to let Jesus out of the box they had created for Him the Jews would never know the freedom Jesus offered.

Are any of these true about you this morning?

It takes a person of deep humility to recognize and admit being wrong. These people were wrong about Jesus.

Are you?

Are you wrong about Jesus and other people and ultimately God?

Is your pride keeping you from enjoying the freedom Christ offers?

Don't be one of those who has such an elevated view of yourself or your experiences that Christ has to move on to someone else. Don't be like these people who thought that everything revolved around them.

## CONCLUSION

It is a difficult thing to do what I am asking you to do today.

Everybody thinks they are right, so checking for misconceptions is not an easy task, but it is what every one of you must do if you are to be the person of integrity you want to be.

Have you forced Jesus into your box?

Do you really understand that His purpose is to radically transform lives?

Can you see that more often than not it is us, not God, which hinders Christ's ability to reach the people He wants to reach?

You have listened to the message, but have you really heard?

What size box have we at Family Life Assembly constructed for Jesus? What restrictions are we putting on Him here today?

The box that we make for Jesus will never be big enough to contain the plans that God has for His Son and his Church.

Whatever box I try to force Jesus into is limited to my viewpoint and my experience and the same is true for your box.

We need to let Jesus out of our box and give Him freedom to challenge us as He sees fit...to work His perfect purposes as He desires...to reach those he wants to.