

Welcome and Reminders

Welcome to any visitors and welcome back to the group members. It is important to remember that everything said and done in this group is confidential. The expectation is that there will not be discussion about our conversations to anyone outside of the group that is represented here and now. We understand that sometimes personal insights or information may be shared by someone who feels comfortable doing so in this group and not around others. Let's be respectful of that and carry our commitment to confidentiality as we leave this group. *(Pass out the confidentiality reminder to anyone who has not yet received one).*

Prayer and Praises

Introduction

We all deal with rejection in our lives. Whether it be rejection at work, in social settings, or in our personal relationships, we all have to deal with it eventually. And though Jesus was the Son of God and did many great and wondrous things during his time on Earth, even Jesus felt the sting of rejection. We all of course have read the Bible stories where people fall to their knees at the sight of Jesus, worshiping and loving him as soon as they meet him. It's easy to think about how loved and admired Jesus is, but it's also just as easy to forget that even amidst that love Jesus found himself turned away and rejected by those he was there to save.

In this two-part study we will explore two different times in Jesus' life in which he found himself rejected by those who should have found themselves worshiping him instead. We'll look at how Jesus handled those incidents, how we would have felt in his place, and what lessons we can learn from how Jesus handled the situation.

Jesus Comes to Nazareth

Imagine that you lived in a small town with a close community. A young couple returned from a trip with a new baby. The boy seemed a little eccentric, but as time went by he and his brothers and sisters grew up and went out on their own. Now, several years later the boy, now around 30 years old, comes back to town, visits the church and basically takes over. He stands up in the middle of service and starts reading aloud from scripture – all the while giving a running commentary on its' meaning. He ends the service by telling you he's the one these scriptures are talking about. He's the Messiah that you've been waiting for. How would you react?

That is precisely the situation Jesus found himself in as told in Luke 4:14-30. Jesus was that grown up boy who came back to town and gave people a surprise they weren't ready for.

Luke 4:14-30

¹⁴Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised him.

¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. ¹⁷The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

*¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, ²¹and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

²³Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.' "

²⁴"I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

²⁸All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. ³⁰But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

What a powerful and scary situation for Jesus to find himself in. He came back to his hometown, among the people he grew up with, and he shared with them the wonderful news that he was the Son of God. At first things seem to be going well. They've heard about the good works he did elsewhere and they were amazed at the grace with which he spoke. Then he simply told the truth - that he wasn't there to go around healing everyone just because it's his

home. His miracles weren't meant to be called on as a benefit for his friends. They were used for the purpose of spreading the glory and love of God. The people rejected that concept. They grew angry and almost killed him. They forced him to the "brow of the hill," basically a steep cliff in the hillside, and were going to throw him over. Jesus, however, simply walked away. He "walked right through the crowd," and went off on his own leaving the people of Nazareth behind. One can almost see the people moving back from him, perhaps not understanding why, as they fell back in awe so that he could leave.

Discussion

- How would you feel in this situation if you were one of the people of Nazareth, seeing Jesus come back to town and revealing what he did?
- How would you feel in Jesus' place, literally attacked by the people you grew up with because they rejected what you were trying to tell them?
- Do you view rejection any differently knowing that even Jesus was rejected by those whom he knew? How?
- Have you ever found yourself rejected by your friends and/or neighbors simply because they didn't like something you said, or your stance on some kind of issue?
- What can we learn from by how Jesus handled the rejection of his neighbors?
- How can we apply those lessons to the rejections we face in our own lives?

Welcome and Reminders

Welcome to any visitors and welcome back to the group members. It is important to remember that everything said and done in this group is confidential. The expectation is that there will not be discussion about our conversations to anyone outside of the group that is represented here and now. We understand that sometimes personal insights or information may be shared by someone who feels comfortable doing so in this group and not around others. Let's be respectful of that and carry our commitment to confidentiality as we leave this group. *(Pass out the confidentiality reminder to anyone who has not yet received one).*

Prayer and Praises

Introduction

We began this two part series several weeks ago, but took a break to write the devotionals and celebrate the Christmas holiday. To review, we talked about the inevitability of dealing with rejection in our lives. Then we looked to Jesus as the example of one who dealt with the sting of rejection as he returned to his home town and found rejection in the words and deeds of his own community. Today we will explore a second time in his life when Jesus contended with rejection – this time after liberating a man who had literally been tormented for years.

The Defeat of Legion

While visiting across the lake from Galilee Jesus and his Disciples came across a man possessed by many demons. The situation that followed is one that many people can find difficult to understand. We find a record of this encounter in **Luke 8:26-39**.

²⁶They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" ²⁹For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

³⁰Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

³²A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. ³³When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹"Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Now for those that don't know, and don't have Goggle handy (like I do as I write this) a typical Roman Legion at the time had approximately 5,120 soldiers, but could have as many as 6,000. As quoted in the Scripture, the demon-possessed man was called Legion because many demons had gone into him. If this was literal instead of hyperbole on the part of the demons then this means Jesus was facing a man in whom there could have been as many as 6,000 demon residents. Imagine the evil power that must have resided therein and yet look at the goodness and power that Jesus carried within. The Legion fell to the ground before him and begged to be released into nearby pigs, rather than be banished to the abyss by Jesus.

As we see, Jesus granted this request, and after moving into the pigs this legion of demons killed themselves. The people who had been tending the pigs saw what happened and ran back to town to tell everyone. Can you imagine the scene as the people heard what happened? I can see it all in my head as people rush to the water's edge to see what's going on only to find themselves confronted with the proof of Jesus' power. But instead of being amazed at the miracle performed and anxious to learn more about this man who could work such wonders, they instead responded with fear. They rejected Jesus' attempt to come among them and instead told him they wanted him to leave. Was Jesus mad at these people? Did he lash out in anger, demanding an apology for being so rude and calling them ungrateful? No he did not. Instead he agreed to go, got back in his boat, and left. And before leaving he made sure that word would spread of the goodness and mercy and Jesus.

Discussion

- How would you feel if it was just a normal day at work and you found yourself witnessing a

miracle of this magnitude? Would you be amazed and delighted, or would you pull away in fear and suspicion?

- How might you have reacted if you were Jesus in this story?
- Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you've helped someone and instead of being given gratitude you were instead shunned and rejected? How did that make you feel?
- Have you ever considered that the idea that helping other might not be worth the trouble?
- What lessons can we learn from Jesus this time in how he handles rejection? How can we apply those lessons to our life?