

## **Listening To Jesus Conference**

### **Session 3 - We don't like being challenged!**

**Aim\*:** To become a truly prophetic people who hear and obey our extraordinary Lord.\*

Jesus lived according to Kingdom culture and that often clashed with his native culture. We are called to courageously walk in Kingdom culture where it is contrary to our native culture.

In our first session we reminded ourselves that, like Mary, we must listen to Jesus and not just busy ourselves with many distractions like Martha.

I reminded you that discipleship is not about teaching people good doctrine, or good behaviour. It is teaching people to listen to Jesus.

Last week, in our second session, I reminded you that our mission is to bring people to Jesus so they can find rest for their souls in Him.

And then we looked at Luke 4:14-30 - Jesus visiting his home synagogue after His baptism. We thought about this story from Joseph's point of view.

*What is Jesus saying to you?*

When I read this story a few months ago I felt the Holy Spirit say that He wanted to speak to me through it. At the time I had no idea what He wanted to say to me. I had to stop and listen. I read it many times praying over it, asking Jesus to speak to me. I went for long walks thinking it over and listening to the Holy Spirit. He taught me many things and showed me more about Jesus. I wonder if any of you have that sense of "Yes. Jesus wants to speak to me through this story."

**Does anyone want to share anything about your encounter with this story so far?**

*Imagine you are one of those who drove Jesus away*

This week I want you to think about the story as if you were one of those who drove Jesus away.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.

Everyone has come early today to try and get a seat. Look around you. Here are all your friends and family, that you have grown up with and know intimately. This is your synagogue, which your parents helped to build when you were a child. You helped carry the water and mould the mud bricks. You remember the day when the community held the first synagogue service here. You feel secure and at home.

Today there is much excitement because in recent weeks, your school-mate Jesus has become the talk of the town and all the towns round about. He has become a powerful and popular preacher in the district. He is coming home today and everyone wants to hear all His stories. The Rabbi said it

wouldn't be appropriate for Jesus to talk about Himself in the service, so He is just reading the lesson. But we are all staying afterwards to hear His stories.

As the familiar service gets underway your mind wanders back to your youth when you and Jesus got up to some fine pranks – you remember the night you secretly got into the Rabbi's house and tied his prayer-tassels into such a terrible knot that he had to go through the service the next day with them all tangled. You got into terrible trouble – not because of the tangles, but because you did it on the Sabbath. You had such a laugh. Your attention comes back as Jesus is asked to read.

#### *You love the reading*

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

Then 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. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

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

Everyone looks at Joseph, and you feel a certain pride that you were one of Jesus' best childhood friends.

There are smiles on everyone's faces and the service is about to move onto the prayers and the final blessing. But we never get to the prayers. The service ends in utter chaos – worse than that, it ends in a riot! Just as the Rabbi is about to start the prayers, Jesus speaks again.

#### *Jesus deliberately provokes you*

Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’ Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I 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. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And 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.”

You are taken aback at this. For a start, the Rabbi had said that Jesus wasn't to preach, but only to read the lesson. But what a strange way to carry on. Everyone was happy and smiling until Jesus accused them of being stiff-necked. That's what the privileged people up in Jerusalem say about us northerners. They are always quoting the prophets at us and telling us how our ancestors filled the land with Baal worshippers. They love telling the stories of Elijah and Elisha, but they never fail to point out that our

ancestors rejected their message, and that eventually God sent the Assyrians to make slaves of them. We are stigmatised as stiff-necked people that reject God's message. And now, here is Jesus, one of our own, quoting Elijah and Elisha at us again! Who does he think he is? Does he think he is better than the rest of us?

*You drive Jesus away*

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They 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 off the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

You don't have any idea that God has given your old school friend a message He really wants you to receive; a message to challenge and change you; to bring you into His Kingdom in a new way.

**Imagining yourself to be one of those angry people – what made you so angry?**

**Why did you want to drive Jesus away?**

*Compassion for the angry response*

**How do you respond when you are challenged about what you are doing?**

- Angry
- Irritated
- Defensive
- Listen prayerfully!

We usually challenge-back:

- "Who are you to question what I am doing?"
- "What about this thing in your life?"
- "Why should I listen to you?"
- "What makes you so special that you can challenge me?"
- "If you want me to listen then show me your results."

**What do you feel when the challenge has been shaken off?**

- I have stood my ground
- I have regained control
- I feel secure again
- I know what I am doing
- This is what people want

**Imagine Jesus walking into your service and challenging what you are doing.**

**What is your response?**

I encourage you to keep reading and meditating on this story and see what Jesus wants to say to you.

Next time we will consider the story from Jesus' perspective.