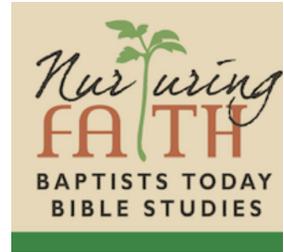


Adult Teaching Resources

January 31, 2016



A Good Way to Begin — Psalm 147:12-20

Jesus: The Curtain Rises

Of Water and Fire — Luke 3:15-22 (RCL 3:15-17, 21-22)

Of Water and Wine — John 2:1-11

An Old Scroll and a New Mission — Luke 4:14-21

A New Prophet and an Old Response — Luke 4:21-30

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A New Prophet and an Old Response

Luke 4:21-30

FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Before the Lesson: Make copies of the handout. Have paper and pens to be used for the Transformational Exercise.

Fellowship Question

Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

Many cities are proud enough of a resident to put on their signs, “Home of ...” What celebrity or event would be on your hometown’s sign? (For example, “Wilmington, NC: Home of Michael Jordan”)

If you could change one thing about your hometown, what would it be?

Information

In last week’s lesson, Jesus entered his synagogue with an agenda.

[Have a class member read Luke 4:16-21.]

It was becoming obvious that the Spirit of God was with Jesus. Now, he explains why. He is the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy.

[Have a class member read Luke 4:22.]

How would you summarize the listeners’ response to Jesus thus far?

THE BIBLE LESSON writer notes: “The word translated as ‘marveled’ or ‘were amazed’ often appears as a response to Jesus, but typically to indicate wonder or curiosity that falls short of belief...It’s one thing to hear Jesus’ teaching or see his mighty works and say, ‘Oh, wow! That’s amazing!’ It’s another thing to say, ‘I believe: I will follow.’”

Were the listeners admirers or followers? Why?

One barrier to discipleship for the listeners may have been that they knew Jesus already. How could that have been a barrier? How could that be a barrier to those of us who were raised in the church?

[You might use this illustration: “At our family Christmas dinner a few weeks ago...my 18 year old nephew sat down beside me and began to regale us with stories. I look at him

Information *continued*

and still see the toddler he was, toting everywhere his special case filled with Thomas the Tank Engine locomotives and cars. The day will soon come when he will bear even less resemblance to who he was then and I wonder if I will be able to fully embrace who he is becoming...

Indeed, you and I sit in the synagogue today and we know Jesus very well...I wonder if our believing we know Jesus well leads us not to truly hear him at all — not to deeply comprehend who he was and who he came for. I wonder if as we hear Jesus reading in the synagogue if we forget to hear his words as our call as well. Does our familiarity with Jesus stifle our imaginations? Does our long acquaintance make us less sensitive to the radical nature of what he calls us to now? Are we, in some ways, like his first listeners?" [Janet H. Hunt. <http://words.dancingwiththeword.com/2013/01/going-home-again.html>]]

Commentators are divided on the sentiment behind the question, "Is this not Joseph's son?" What do you think their sentiment was? (Some commentators link the question with the amazement the crowd is expressing. Others see this as a skeptical jab. Still others think it is a means of calling into question Jesus' birth story.)

[Have a class member read Luke 4:23-24.]

Jesus is a hometown hero! If he truly is the Messiah, imagine how much business that would bring to this small town!

Hometown heroes are great for their hometown, so long as they keep themselves clean and they always say nice things about their hometown. And, as long as they say nice things to their hometown.

But, Jesus is not interested in being the hometown hero. His message is not for the sole benefit of his friends and neighbors, or even his people/nation.

How do we see Jesus as being of benefit to us? How do we see Jesus as belonging to "us" and/or to "our" nation?

One commentator says: "He knew this town. He had grown up with its narrowness. He remembered how they had treated his mother and whispered about his 'virgin' birth. They wanted to group her with the prostitutes who lived on the edge of town. He had seen how Samaritans passing through had been rejected, and how the tax-collectors were despised.

Of all people he could assume. After all he was one of them. But he had walked away." [<http://thelisteninghermit.com/2013/01/29/the-old-home-town-acts-the-same/>]

Many young adults have tired of "religion" although they may consider themselves "spiritual." They do not want to affiliate with any particular faith group, believing that if there is a God, God is bigger than any particular church or denomination or even religion. So, they have been labeled the "nones," because this is the box they check on surveys when asked their religious affiliation.

Do you think Jesus was becoming a "none"? Why or why not?

Information *continued*

What do you think the saying, “Doctor, heal yourself,” meant as Jesus said it?

Jesus predicted that the hometown would beg their hero to perform miracles locally for their benefit. Here, Jesus seems to mock that idea. In a parallel passage, it seems that Jesus does try, though.

[Have a class member read Mark 6:4-6.]

Luke used Mark as a resource for his writing. Why do you think he left this part of the story out?

Jesus was not trying to win friends. At that, he was successful on this day.

[Have a class member read Luke 4:25-27.]

Jesus self-identifies himself as a prophet. Prophets bring words of truth whether we like the words (or the prophet) or not. And, prophets sometimes do things that do not promote the best interest of themselves or their people/nation. They may even aid the enemy. That upsets nationalists.

Jesus offers two illustrations of how God has worked in the past. In the first, a widowed foreigner was helped even though there were needy people in the prophet Elijah’s own backyard who were not helped. In the second illustration, an enemy general (another foreigner) was healed by the prophet Elisha, even though there were surely lepers from the Jewish community who were not healed.

There are blessings in life that God gives to all people. We believe that God “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Mt. 5:45) But here, Jesus is saying that sometimes God blesses the enemy while allowing the “chosen” to suffer.

Does God have “favorites” that get more blessings?

That last illustration was too much for the listeners to take.

[Have a class member read Luke 4:28-30.]

In verse 22, everyone was pleased with Jesus and his message. What has made them so upset?

Jesus has earned the anger pointed toward him. He has told the listeners, in essence, “the kingdom of God is here and you don’t even know it.” They ask for miracles as signs and Jesus refuses. Before they say the first critical word, Jesus accuses them of ignoring him. They would love to be affirmed as God’s favorites, but Jesus tells stories of how God blesses their enemies. He predicts, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown” and his hometown is eager to keep that saying true.

Somehow, Jesus vanishes through the crowd. If it is a miracle, it is the first one Jesus performs in the book of Luke.

Information *continued*

THE BIBLE LESSON writer notes: “It is hard to avoid the irony: the people who wanted to see a miracle had one performed before their eyes, but were unable to see it.”

The crowd was not “right” in trying to kill Jesus. What they were attempting was immoral and illegal. But an insistence on being considered right can lead us to do the most wrong of things.

One lesson we might learn from this text: It is not easy to get rid of Jesus.

Transformational Exercise

Is it possible that we are comfortable with Jesus because we know him, like the hometown crowd “knew” Jesus? Like them, we have seen Jesus predicted, born, and baptized. We’ve heard him preach and teach and we like much of what he said. We believe he was crucified and was resurrected from the dead, which is amazing – but we can even be bored with that story after a while.

The Jesus who lived with us made us uncomfortable. He said things we want to ignore or explain away. He lived with people we do not wish to associate with. He challenged norms and nationalism. He was a mess with marketing and poor in public relations.

Is it possible that if Jesus were living among us today, we would not like him?

Is it possible to follow Jesus, even when we don’t like what he tells us?

If Jesus makes us angry, it is for our own good. True or false?

[Distribute the handout and pens.]

We believe that “Jesus Loves Me,” because “the Bible tells me so.” But the Bible, in this story and others, tells us that Jesus irritates people.

[Sing or sing together:] Jesus irks me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. What he says begins a tiff, then we throw him off the cliff. Yes, Jesus irks me. Exasperates me. Yes, Jesus irks me. The Bible tells me so.

Try this exercise. Have an honest conversation with Jesus that begins, “Jesus, I don’t like you, because...” On your paper, begin that conversation and see where it leads.

[After some time for writing, ask if anyone would like to share their conversation with the group. After that, close in a prayer something like this:] Lord, let us not become so comfortable knowing about you that we think you ancient and irrelevant. Make us uncomfortable with your relevance in our lives and in our times. We pray we may know your love, your maddening love, for us and all the world. May we love this world in the same way, Amen.]

Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan? You may send comments to the lesson plan author at rjordan@cbfnc.org. Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Order of events — Mark places Jesus’ visit to the synagogue in Nazareth later in Jesus’ ministry (Mark 6:1-6), but Luke moves it forward to the beginning of his active work. Perhaps he does this because the encounter in Nazareth provides an overview of Jesus’ ministry as a whole, and also points to the expansion of God’s work to include the Gentiles, something particularly important to Luke.

Bearing witness — Our translations of v. 22 may be misleading when they assume that the people of Nazareth spoke favorably of Jesus’ teaching, as do the NRSV and NIV11 (“All spoke well of him”), along with HCSB and NET (“all were speaking well of him”).

The phrase translated as “All spoke well of him” is literally “They all bore witness (or testified) of him,” a non-judgmental phrase echoed by the KJV: “and all bare him witness.” Nothing in the language implies that the testimony was necessarily positive; the main thrust is that the people were talking about what Jesus had said. The phrase could even be translated as “They all bore witness against him.”

Mind reading — Jesus often showed an extraordinary ability to know what his hearers were thinking. In this case, he knew they were thinking something like “If you’re God’s heaven-sent Messiah, why don’t you look more like it?” If Jesus was teaching your class today, what would he sense you thinking? What might he reveal about you that you’d rather remain unknown?

Proverb or parable? — When Jesus said “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb,” the word translated as “proverb” is actually *parabolē*, normally translated as “parable.” It could be used in this way for a proverb that involves a comparison. The actual saying, “Doctor, cure yourself,” is not a biblical proverb, but is known from classical and rabbinic sources.

Save yourself — The implication that Jesus claimed to be a physician but couldn’t heal himself may intentionally foreshadow one of the taunts thrown at Jesus on the cross: “And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!’” (Lu. 23:35).

Hometowns — Luke’s word for hometown (*patridi*, from *patris*) can also mean “home country.” This may be Luke’s way of hinting that Jesus’ rejection at Nazareth would eventually extend to his entire homeland.

Prophets without honor — Elijah and Elisha were a special breed in the evolution of the prophetic office. They were not associated with either the royal court or the religious cult, as previous prophets had been. They were “lone rangers,” solitary prophets who lived on their own and intervened in Israel’s affairs only periodically. Both were also known as miracle

Digging Deeper *continued*

workers, a characteristic that did not continue with later prophets. Since the issue at hand was Jesus' willingness to do miracles in Nazareth, their lives offered appropriate illustrations.

There was a time when Elijah announced a lengthy drought (1 Kgs. 17:1). The drought would have brought hardship to many, especially those who were already at the bottom of the social scale. Surely there would have been many suffering widows among the Hebrews. Yet, the only one to whom Elijah gave miraculous assistance lived in Zaraphath, a town of Sidon.

Sidon was a small coastal city-state to the north of Israel, just above the equally small (but occasionally powerful) land of Tyre. Thus, it was a Gentile woman to whom Elijah went for help, and for whom he provided meal and oil that miraculously replenished itself until the drought broke (1 Kgs. 17:8-16).

After Elijah was “transported” to heaven, Elisha asked for a double portion of his spirit, and the Bible attributes miracles to him that were even more impressive than those of Elijah. Naaman, a commander in the hated Syrian army, had contracted leprosy, but heard about Elisha from a servant girl he had acquired on a terrorist-like raid into Israelite territory. He came to see Elisha, and was healed — despite the fact that he was a Gentile, a despised enemy, and an unclean leper. Undoubtedly, there were many poor lepers living among the Hebrews, but Elisha healed only Naaman, the foreign enemy.

It may be significant that in both examples Jesus cited, the work of the prophet is described in the passive. “Elijah was sent to none of them except . . .,” and “none of them was cleansed except . . .” It is not the will of the prophets being exercised, but of the God who sent and who empowered the prophets.

Challenges — When Jesus talked about prophets ministering outside of Israel, his words challenged the people of Nazareth in ways that made them uncomfortable. In what ways does the gospel challenge our prejudices and our traditional notions of what the church should be and who can be involved? How comfortable would you be if a sudden influx of people of a different racial, social, or economic background led to changes in “your” church? Who erects the community boundaries with which we live?

Throw him off the cliff! — Nazareth was (and is) built on the steep slope of a hill, so any number of places might have been suitable. It was customary to begin a “stoning” by throwing victims from an overhang, then dropping stones from above. The traditional site of this event is



called Mount Precipice, which is a steep hill that faces the city on one side, with an almost sheer drop overlooking the Jezreel Valley from the other. Whether or not it was the original spot, it gives the sense of what the place might have looked like, as you can see in the photo.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

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What did Luke mean about Jesus speaking “words of grace”?

An English reader might legitimately translate *logois tēs charitos* as “gracious words” rather than “words of grace,” and that’s precisely what the NRSV does, as do the NET, NIV11, HCSB, NAS95, and KJV. But given our cultural presuppositions, is that how it should be read?

We think of “gracious words” or “speaking graciously” as referring to one who shows appropriate gratitude to hosts, or who speaks kindly to others. A guest preacher who spends the first several minutes of his or her sermon thanking the pastor for the invitation and the church for its hospitality could be said to speak “gracious words.” A person who characteristically says nice things about others or is a constant encourager might be thought of as speaking graciously.

Luke, however, clearly has more in mind than this when he says the people “marveled at the words of grace that came out of his mouth.” The implication is not just that Jesus expressed humble gratitude or even that his rhetoric was impressive. There is something more. Richard Vincent notes that “‘Gracious’ can be an adjective meaning ‘grace-filled, kind, generous,’ but it can also be more literally ‘words about God’s grace.’ If the first sense is meant, then the Nazareans are amazed at how well Jesus speaks; if the

second, they are amazed at what he is saying about God’s grace” (Richard B. Vinson, *Luke*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary [Smyth & Helwys, 2008], 122.

But Luke appears to have in mind even more than people being impressed by what Jesus had to say about God’s grace. By “words of grace,” he seems to indicate that there was a particular weight to Jesus’ words: they were actually imbued with divine grace.

John Nolland expressed it this way in the *Word Biblical Commentary*: Jesus’ words were “not winsome words or words about God’s mercy or grace, but words endowed with the power of God’s grace. Luke uses *charis*, ‘grace,’ as a quasi-substantial power, especially as resident in or on people (2:40; Acts 4:33, 6:8, 7:10) but also where the grace is not immediately linked to a charismatic figure (Acts 14:26, 15:40, 18:27 and esp. 20:32)” (John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 35A [Word Books, 1989], 198-99).

To elaborate, when the apostles witnessed with power of Jesus’ resurrection and their experience at Pentecost, “great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33). When Stephen worked wonders among the people, he was “full of grace and power” (Acts 6:8). When Paul called for the elders of the church to meet with him on his way to Jerusalem for the final time, he blessed them with these words: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the

The Hardest Question *continued*

word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

Luke’s use of grace in a near-substantive way in Acts suggests that he intended for it to be understood in the same way in the gospel. When the people of Nazareth marveled at Jesus’ “words of grace,” it wasn’t just the artfulness of the words: grace was upon them in a near tangible way.

Jesus Irks Me

[To the tune for “Jesus Loves Me”:]

Jesus irks me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.
What he says begins a tiff, then we throw him off the cliff.
Yes, Jesus irks me. Exasperates me.
Yes, Jesus irks me. The Bible tells me so.

Try this exercise. Have an honest conversation with Jesus that begins, “Jesus, I don’t like you, because...” On your paper, begin that conversation and see where it leads.

Me: Jesus, I don’t like you, because...

Jesus:

Me:

Jesus:

Me:

Jesus:

Me:

Jesus:

Me: