

Bad day at Church? (Luke 4:21-30)

Have you ever had a bad day at church? We have all had a bad day at church at least once in our lives. Maybe it was that time when the food you prepared for the fellowship meal did not turn out the way you anticipated. Perhaps it was that day when you found yourself in conflict with another church member over some item of business. Possibly, it was a day when you really needed a good sermon and the pastor simply did not deliver.

Maybe your bad day at church was the result of your effort to work hard at some project at church that seemed to go unnoticed by the vast majority of the congregation. You did not do it to get praise, but a simple thank you would have still been nice. It could be that your bad day at church had nothing to do when anything that happened at church. Maybe you arrived at worship in a bad mood after having a long fight with a family member.

Have you ever had a bad day at church? Jesus did when he visited his hometown for the first time after his baptism.

Jesus has been baptized and now has gone off preaching and healing around the Sea of Galilee. He decides to return home to Nazareth, in the countryside west of the Sea of Galilee, his hometown.

The news had got around and now Jesus had returned to his hometown. He did not know what he would expect or encounter but he knew that he was different to when He left.

It is a strange feeling returning home. You are not the same but everyone, including your own family, treats you the same like you have never left. But you are not the same, you are different. You have been changed.

It was certainly the case with Jesus, He left his hometown as a carpenter's son and returned as God's son with God's mission to complete. He was not back to take over the family's carpentry

business.

He goes to his home church ie synagogue as was his custom. Everyone is looking around and sees him come in. Here is Joe's son! Good to see him in church. He is handed a scroll from the prophet Isaiah. Jesus read from Isaiah 61. He closes the book. Everyone was waiting for the sermon as was the custom. Jesus begins Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

The people sensed an air of authority from Jesus. He read, he preached unlike no other man had done in that synagogue. He had grabbed their full attention. All eyes, all ears, all of their attention were on this man. This man, who said that he was now God's salvation in the world. But then they started thinking: Isn't this Joseph's son? Isn't this the young boy who we saw grow up? Isn't this the boy we saw running around here in nappies? playing with the other boys his age?. How can he now say he is God's Messiah, there isn't anything very special about him!!!!

The people of Nazareth had been hearing reports of all the great things Jesus was doing over in Capernaum. He was a hometown boy made good. This hero was returning home.

If any city needed some good preaching, it was Nazareth. If anyone could turn the city around, it was Jesus. He knew of all the troubles in the city. There were heathens all around. Phoenicians lived to the west and north, Samaritans to the south, Greeks to the west. They were far away from the good influence of Jerusalem. They were surrounded by these pagan influences. It is hard to be a good, pious Jew in the city of Nazareth. It's no wonder that Nathaniel said to Philip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth." Nazareth was not a good place for a Jew to grow up.

But now Jesus is coming back. Jesus will set the Hebrews on fire. Jesus will help run out the ungodly people and things in our town. Maybe Jesus can turn Nazareth around. Maybe he can make it a decent place to live. Maybe he can turn it into a godly city again.

Jesus heard the questioning of the people. He realized that the people were having a difficult time accepting what he was saying. Jesus then takes the bull by the horns and says that he is God's messiah, but he won't prove himself, he won't do any signs or miracles just to prove who

he is, his word is enough, his word should be enough to demonstrate that what he said was true.

Then Jesus says something about miracles. The crowd has heard all about the wonders that he performed in Capernaum. Many of the people had gathered to see some great event – a little razzle-dazzle to get this crowd going. If Jesus would just do some healings or some other miracle, we would know that God's power was here and we could drive out these pagan Gentiles and their ungodly influences in the city. Jesus does no miracles in Nazareth.

Jesus says the wrong things for this crowd. He recalls a story from Elijah's time. God miraculously provided food for a poor, pagan widow. There were many poor, starving widows in Israel during the famine who didn't receive any miraculous food. The crowd in the synagogue starts mumbling to each other: "Is he saying that God likes Gentiles better than Jews? Jesus' had better watch what he says."

Jesus recalls a story from the time of Elisha. God miraculously cured Naaman, a pagan leper. There were many sick lepers in Israel during that time who received no miraculous cure. The crowd's whispers are getting louder. "Is he saying that God prefers the pagans" That's not what we came to hear? We want to hear some harsh words of judgment. We want Jesus to urge the Jews onto living and acting right. We want him to drive out the Gentiles.

Why did he use those examples? Why did he talk about God helping pagan Gentiles? He should be warning us to stay away from those Gentiles. If God likes the Gentiles so much, what's the use in being a Jew, keeping all those commandments? He's going to destroy what little faith there is left in Nazareth."

In essence, the people declared Jesus a false prophet. He was blaspheming the faithful, pious Jew. He was praising the sinful, pagan Gentiles. The punishment for false prophecy is death. They try to destroy Jesus. He just wasn't what they expected. He didn't do the miracles they expected. He didn't say the words that they expected. He had to be a false prophet, because he didn't act like they wanted him to act.

The crowd rises up against Jesus and takes him to the brow of the hill on which Nazareth was built to throw him over. But Jesus walks through the crowd and leaves them standing with their

mouths wide open. What started out as a good day, turned into a bad day at church for Jesus! One minute they love him and the next minute they want to kill him.

So what is the message for us? What is Jesus saying to us about himself and our response to Him?

1. The mission of Jesus, then and now, is to bring good news to the poor; those who are poor in spirit whether they have no money or plenty of money, those who recognise that they are poor and need good news. The good news is despite your circumstance, God is able to turn it around. He is big enough and more powerful enough to do it.

The mission of Jesus is a mission of healing and release from all that holds a person in captivity viz sin, sickness, sick thinking and Satan. He has come to set the captive free and He is powerful enough to do it. It does not happen overnight but it does and can happen for you.

This is what Jesus came to do: to save us from sin, Satan and ourselves. This is what we proclaim. Jesus is the answer to every problem. This is not a glib statement but every problem has a solution and it must begin with Jesus. He has the solution for your problem and the steps to take to get there but unless you begin with Jesus and walk with Jesus through your problem, you will not get there.

Each path is different. Your solution to your problem will be different to my solution to my problem. But the starting point is the same. Jesus. If you do not start on His page you will wander around, getting nowhere and then you will get angry with God and start blaming God that he does not love you or heard you or whatever.

Every solution to every problem starts with Jesus.

2. The mission of Jesus is for the least, the lost and the last. The Jews thought that they were the privilege ones. Jesus upsets his hearers. He quotes the proverb "Physician heal yourself. Do what you have done in Capernaum here."

But he knows that they have ulterior motives. They are really not interested in being healed. They just want the side show. So he draws from the scriptures the lives of the prophets, Elijah and Elisha, who brought healing to people who were outside the Jewish faith: the widow of Zarephath and Namaan the Syrian general who had leprosy.

This angered Jesus' hearers and resulted in a mob trying to kill Jesus.

Often we in the church can feel that we are the privilege ones. We can get a bit ansty when we hear people getting the blessings of God but not necessarily coming to church; coming to our church. We have to be careful that we do not adopt an elitist attitude like the Jews in Jesus' time.

We have to be careful that we do not adopt a hometown boy attitude where we do not allow Jesus to work through a person because they are one of us.

There seems to be this attitude that only the visiting preacher can do miracles and not the local preacher. People will go around the world to get the healing or the spiritual touch they are looking for but they do not realize that they can have what they want in their home church without all the travel.

3. This leads me to the final point. Familiarity breeds contempt. Jesus was only able to do a few miracles in his hometown as Mark attests in ch 6. Fancy that. The God of miracles could only do a few and yet in other places hundreds came and he healed them all.

The reason why we do not see many miracles ie healings, Holy Spirit experiences is we do not expect them every Sunday and we do not want them as they will change our lives and upset our comfortable living.

It is not just that we have enough faith because Jesus says you need only mustard seed faith to move a mountain in your life.

But you do need to want Jesus; hunger for Jesus; make Him the most important person in your life. You need to want it.

As Jesus said the Kingdom of God is like a person who found a great pearl and sold everything to get it. He must become everything that we need.

In the 1970's The Holy Spirit visited Toronto Airport Vineyard in an amazing way. The pastor had to make a tough decision. He decided to put aside the church program and restructured its life around this visitation. Worship was held every day. People came from far and wide to be healed and to experience the presence of God. This was sustained for over a year. They learnt that it was OK to have a day off rather than try and sustain it 24/7 seven days a week.

But people came because they were hungry for the presence of God.

Brothers and sisters, the church has lost its hunger for God. The church people have lost its passion for Jesus. We can easily get into a rut in our Christian life. And we all know what a rut is. A grave with the ends removed.

Jesus is calling us to hunger for him; to worship him; to surrender our whole life to Him; to live in the joy of His presence. He wants us to receive all that He wants to get us and not let our presuppositions and prejudices block Him and what he wants to say and do with us.

While we may have some bad days at church, let us not have a bad day with Jesus. Let us hunger for Him every day especially if it is a bad day!

Walking Free: We begin 2016 with a few challenges as we wait and see what God is doing. While we have clients to pray for, their ability to contribute to their healing via a donation is limited. We also face sponsors re-evaluating their regular donations and thus donations will be effected.

But we are confident that God will supply our needs. But we may face the prospect of a drop of income for Liz and myself. We will have to manage that by God's grace.

We are looking to develop more teams to pray for people. Some have been in training and now will soon be ready to "fly".

We continue to work with clients of Teen Challenge and support them in their journey of healing.

Toowoomba Team: Hal, Debbie and Stephanie are seeing great results as they are praying for their clients. God is showing them some new ways to pray to set their clients free. Recently they prayed for a woman who has had many ministries from other people but God set her free through the team as they discerned what the problem was (a generational curse going back generations). God is doing wonderful things through them.

WA: People are going through the teaching that I presented last year. We wait and see as the year progresses what will happen re a healing team.

Seminars: I plan to run a number of seminars this year again. Leading up to Easter, I will teach on *Unlocking the Power of the Blood of Jesus*. Then the next topic after Easter will be *Winning the Victory over Abuse*.

Then I will be teaching on *Walking with the Holy Spirit*.

I look forward to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to heal and tear down the strongholds in people's lives.

.Finances: We are looking for more sponsors to support the healing and teaching work of Jesus through Walking Free. No matter how small the donation, we welcome new donors. Remember that each donation to the gift fund is tax deductible.

Praise God for His provision.

- Thank God for His healing power released in the prayers of our teams.
 - Thank God for our work with Teen Challenge and the women who are seeking help.
 - We pray for new clients for Toowoomba and Adelaide.
 - Pray for Albany people as they consider forming a healing ministry amongst a couple of churches.
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- Pray for the monthly prayer meeting on the first Thursday of each month and for those who come: Nena, Margaret, Lesley, Diana, Ann, Dianne and Julie
 - Please pray for people at Toowoomba who have faithfully supported us: Hal and Debbie, Robyn and Jamie, Jenny, Stephanie, Desley, and Craig.

Family Life continues to be a blessing as we see our children grow in parenthood and the support they give to each other.

Pray for Naomi, Jonathan and Jennifer; Jess; David and Maddy and Elijah.

India: Pastor Devadas and CH have had successful children and youth programs during January. Rev Sambabu seeks to minister to children through his orphanage. Resources are very limited and they need the provision of God.

Pray for Pastor Devadas, Pastor CH and Rev Sambabu and their ministry amongst Hindu people.

Kenya: Pastor Isaac is running a training program for leaders. He writes *"Yes Rev John Apostles , pastors, missionaries and evengelists ets are spiritual gifts" which needs to be*

identified. We have mid-week fellowship weekly whereby some can lay hands sick people, pray for miracles, financial breakthrough , pray against evil spirits in our locations etc. Fellowship goes around in turns around our church members houses. I'm doing this in a small group fellowships to identify their gifts and talents. Yes i'll look a humble hearts and those who can sacrifice to serve Gods kingdom. I've 4 womens and 5 mens which Lord has direct me our church trains for the first time . Just help me pray because they will needs some basic needs , writing materials , bibles for their training

- Please pray for Pastor Isaac as he teaches and trains people for the work of ministry.