

## Jesus rejected at Nazareth

Recap of sermon from January 19, 2025

Scripture: Luke 4:14-30

Jesus came to his hometown synagogue after some major things happened to him. As Luke tells the story, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, whereupon he heard the voice of God proclaim, "You are my Son, whom I dearly love. In you I find happiness" (Luke 3:22). Immediately after that, he went into the wilderness and was tempted by the adversary.

Faced with the temptations of food, power, and celebrity, I believe that Jesus was able to resist because he remembered who and whose he was. He understood that he was God's beloved son, and that was more important and more powerful than the things that the devil offered. He understood himself, and that gave him power to resist what others tried to place upon him,

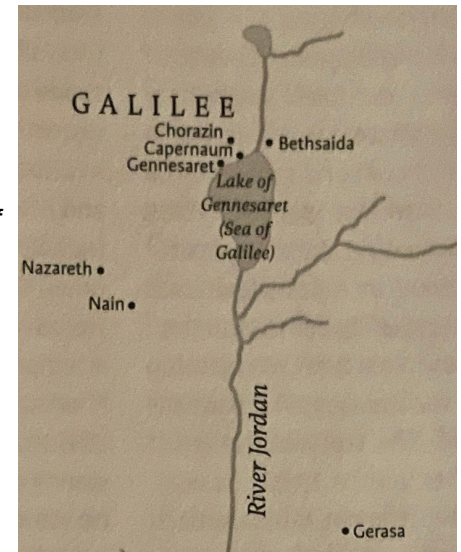
He faced another test in Nazareth, his home town. He came to teach in the synagogue, but when he shared his message, and declared his mission, it was not well received. While one translation of the text makes it sound like they loved him at first, and then turned on him, the translation could actually be much more ambiguous.

Jesus had just faced his adversary, giving him other options to his self-hood. In this case, I see Jesus as playing the adversary to the people, giving them a chance to embrace or reject his message. While Jesus passed his test, the people did not. In many ways, this small passage is a microcosm of the entire gospel. Jesus gives his message, he rejected to the point of death, but walks through and lives because he is certain of who he is.

That is the gospel message as a whole. Jesus proclaims the good news. He is rejected to the point of death, but he is raised up because of who he is: Beloved Son of God.

Men of this time were known in two different ways. There were no last names. Men were known either as their father's son or by their home town. Jesus would have been known as either Jesus, son of Joseph, or Jesus of Nazareth.

*This map of the region of Galilee shows that the Lake is the center of the population, and that Nazareth was a tiny village a day or two's walk away.*



The people want to lock him down as one of these two identities. He is either "of Nazareth" or "of Joseph." Jesus however, understands that he is "of God." In this crisis of identity, the community fails.

This is a common story for many people today. A person tried to recover from addiction, they embrace a new identity apart from the substance that controlled them, but when they return to their community, they cannot let go. They are brought back into the same story of addiction and despair. A trans kid comes to a new understanding of who they truly are. Often this journey is seeped in prayer, conversations, discernment, and therapy. But the community that raised them rejects this identity and can't even call them by name.

Jesus' community failed him. They claimed his "of." We as a community can do better. We can be a community that embraces people as they claim their identity. As people claim their self-hood, we can encourage them. We can help all people claim their identity as "Beloved" and "of God."

When we embrace Christ's identity, we can embrace his mission. Today, claim your "belovedness." Claim your "of God." Claim today Christ's mission and embrace your identity and role in the Kingdom of God.

**NEXT WEEK:**

Luke 5:1-11, Jesus at Lake Gennesaret