

# THE HOMETOWN REJECTED

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 4:16-30

## CONTEXT

Luke 4 contains a couple of well-known milestones in Jesus's ministry, such as Jesus's temptation in the wilderness. Then Jesus began His ministry in Galilee. Based upon the parallels from the other Gospel accounts, Jesus had already called His disciples and performed miracles at this time. His reputation and authority were spreading amongst the Jewish people. The people in Jesus's hometown of Nazareth, however, would have their own opinion on this matter.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus's identity and the gospel message can lead to rejection.**

As you examine Luke 4:16-30:

- Note that Jesus identified Himself as the Anointed One whom Isaiah said would preach good news and set the captives free.
- Reflect that Jesus's hometown questioned His identity and authority after He preached grace for Gentiles.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Is Tempted in the Wilderness (Luke 4:1-13)

**SESSION STUDY: Jesus Is Rejected in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30)**

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man (Mark 1:35-45)

Jesus Ministers in Galilee (Luke 4:14-15)

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34)

### Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Luke 4:14-30
- Day 2:** Luke 4:31-44
- Day 3:** Luke 5:12-16
- Day 4:** Luke 5:17-26
- Day 5:** Luke 5:27-39
- Day 6:** Psalm 31



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## JESUS FULFILLED SCRIPTURE AS THE MESSIAH, THE ANOINTED ONE (LUKE 4:16-21).

**Underline the things the Spirit anointed Jesus to do.**

**16** He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As usual, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. **17** The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him, and unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was 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 release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. **20** He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. **21** He began by saying to them, "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled."

Jesus frequently went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. On this particular day, He was given the opportunity to read the Scripture passage. He stood up and read Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus's reputation and miraculous works had already caused people to question His identity. Could Jesus, in fact, be the Messiah? Through Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus confirmed His identity as the anointed Savior who came to preach good news to the hopeless. The captives would be set free from sin. The blind would see, not just when He healed them physically but when they saw the spiritual truth that Jesus is Lord. It was the year of the Lord's favor because His Son had come.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus "as usual" entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. He knew the importance of gathering for teaching. Hebrews 10:25 reminds us not to forsake the assembly of believers. Corporate worship is an important part of our walk with Christ. The church, as the body of Christ, should collectively worship to focus on the Lord and praise Him together. Jesus gave us a good example of this importance by attending synagogue consistently. His focus should be our focus: knowing and worshiping our holy God with other believers.

### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**CHRIST AS PROPHET:** As one of His offices, Jesus fulfills the role of prophet: He alone is the ultimate teacher and has the words of eternal life (John 6:68). Jesus is also God's ultimate revelation of Himself, the very Word of God (John 1:1).

**What does Jesus's habit of attending the synagogue teach us?**

Jesus sat down immediately after reading Scripture and said that day Isaiah's prophecy had been fulfilled. We are privileged to know the entire narrative of Scripture, but imagine the perspective of the people in Nazareth. They just heard Jesus claim that He fulfilled this prophecy. Jesus, the son of a carpenter, claimed to be the Christ. His hometown of Nazareth was not a place of high prestige. Even Nathanael, one of Jesus's disciples, asked, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Jesus's humble beginnings show us an unexpected Savior full of grace and truth. The people were looking for a Savior who would come with high accolades and would establish an earthly kingdom independent from Roman rule. But Jesus came to rescue captive souls from sin. Knowing that Jesus is the fulfillment of Scripture is a joyous hope and confirmation of His identity as the Messiah.

**LEADER NOTE:** It's important to note the connection between Jesus's mission and our mission. He said He came to preach the good news to the poor, to set captives free, and to provide for the recovery of sight to the blind. We are called to proclaim what He accomplished so that people may be free from the captivity of sin and open their eyes to see the goodness of God and His salvation. But His mission is not only in a spiritual sense. Jesus looked out for the underdog. He wanted to lift up those who were downtrodden, powerless, and ashamed. We are also called to look out for the poor and vulnerable.

**How does Jesus's claim from Isaiah and His miraculous works affect how you see your mission?**

**VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY**

"You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."<sup>1</sup>

–C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)

### JESUS WAS REJECTED WHEN HE PREACHED A MESSAGE OF GRACE TO ALL (LUKE 4:22-30).

**Highlight the examples that Jesus gave of God's work in the lives of Gentiles in the Old Testament.**

**22** They were all speaking well of him and were amazed by the gracious words that came from his mouth; yet they said, "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

**23** Then he said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to me: 'Doctor, heal yourself. What we've heard that took place in Capernaum, do here in your hometown also.'" **24** He also said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. **25** But I say to you, there were certainly many widows in Israel in Elijah's days, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months while a great famine came over all the land. **26** Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them except a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. **27** And in the prophet Elisha's time, there were many in Israel who had leprosy, and yet not one of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." **28** When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was enraged. **29** They got up, drove him out of town, and brought him to the edge of the hill that their town was built on, intending to hurl him over the cliff. **30** But he passed right through the crowd and went on his way.

Jesus's declaration caused amazement among the people. Again, Jesus just said He fulfilled Scripture. But the people then began to question His origin. They wondered, "This was Joseph the carpenter's son, right?" Their question of Jesus's kinship implied their doubt of His claim to be the fulfillment of prophecy as the Messiah. Jesus, knowing their doubt, called them out on their contempt. Their hearts would not believe unless they saw the same signs and wonders He performed in Capernaum. If He could do miracles there, surely He could do so in His hometown. Doubting God can lead us down a road of contempt toward God. Doubting Christ's sufficiency leads us to look at things we think are better. Trusting in the identity and sufficiency of Jesus is essential to the Christian faith.

**LEADER NOTE:** Sometimes God uses our times of doubt to refine our faith. He is faithful to squash our unbelief and to create opportunities for unwavering faith to take its place. The danger of doubt is when we forget that Jesus is who He said He is—our Savior and Lord who is sufficient in His grace toward us. His identity, sufficiency, and grace are far superior to our doubt.

**Key Concept:** Jesus's identity and the gospel message can lead to rejection.

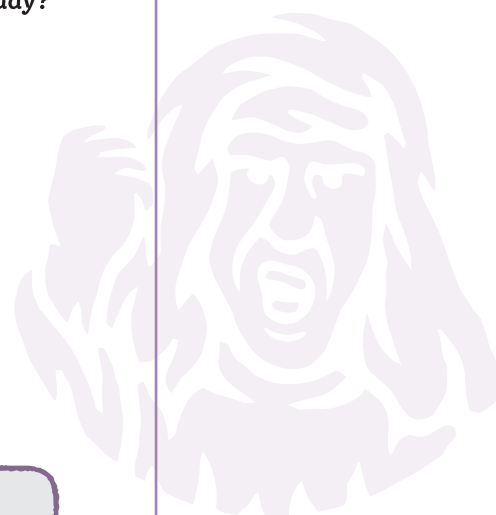
**How can you find assurance of Christ's identity, sufficiency, and grace?**

Notes

The Jews of Jesus's day believed they alone were special because they were God's people. Yet Jesus shared with the listeners in the synagogue a couple of Old Testament examples in which God extended grace through Elijah and Elisha toward Gentiles when the Jews continually rejected God (see 1 Kings 17:8-24; 2 Kings 5:1-14). Jesus's point was simple, profound, and authoritative—the grace of God is given to the Gentiles also. This revelation enraged the people so much that they drove Jesus out of the town with the intent to hurl Him off a cliff. Yet Jesus's identity and authority over the angry mob were displayed as He simply passed through them unharmed. The same truth that Jesus told them is still applicable today. Salvation from sin and an eternal relationship with God is freely offered to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ alone. What a blessing! What wonderful grace!

**LEADER NOTE:** Many false teachers in the world today try to justify a works-based salvation. The Jews of Jesus's day believed that if they upheld the Mosaic Law, they could rest in their position as God's people. Unfortunately, many Jews trusted in their own works but had no genuine saving faith in God's promised grace. Jesus pointed out to the people in Nazareth that God's grace is hope for all humankind. Anyone who comes to Jesus in a posture of repentance and surrender will receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

**Why was Jesus rejected by His own people? How is He still rejected today?**



**CHRIST CONNECTION**

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophetic words as One who would come to preach good news and release the captives, not just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. The gospel is for all people, and salvation is for anyone who chooses to believe.

**ARRIVAL**

**INTERACT:** As people arrive for the group experience, begin by asking: “When have you experienced a rejection? What were the circumstances surrounding that rejection? How did you feel, and how did you move on?” (*Examples may include rejection by a potential high school boyfriend or girlfriend, by a potential employer, for a team sport, etc.*)

**CONTEXT**

**SAY:** Nobody likes to be rejected. Yet Jesus too understood what that felt like. Today’s passage reinforces Jesus as both fully God and fully man. He was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 61. He was anointed by God to free all of humankind from sin. The power to deliver and forgive sin is held by God and God alone. Jesus would not be able to forgive sin if He were not in fact fully divine. Yet He was rejected by His own hometown. He experienced personally what it’s like to be rejected, but He continued on His mission.

**TRANSITION:** Jesus does not fit in the boxes we create. He did come to set the captives free, but He came to set captives free from sin and death as well as from physical chains. He is entirely merciful, and in His mercy, He draws us to repentance. He is entirely gentle and entirely holy. The message of the gospel will be rejected by some, but in this rejection we can see the fullness of Jesus’s character and His ability to empathize with our struggles today.

**RECAP**

**ASK:** What was one key idea that stood out to you as you prepared this week? What was interesting about Jesus’s words? About the crowd’s response?

**TRANSITION:** In Isaiah 61, the Scripture Jesus read, the Jews understood those words as pointing to the Messiah, the Savior. When Jesus claimed that for Himself, everyone was amazed. Let’s explore a little bit more the implications of what Jesus said in reference to Isaiah 61.



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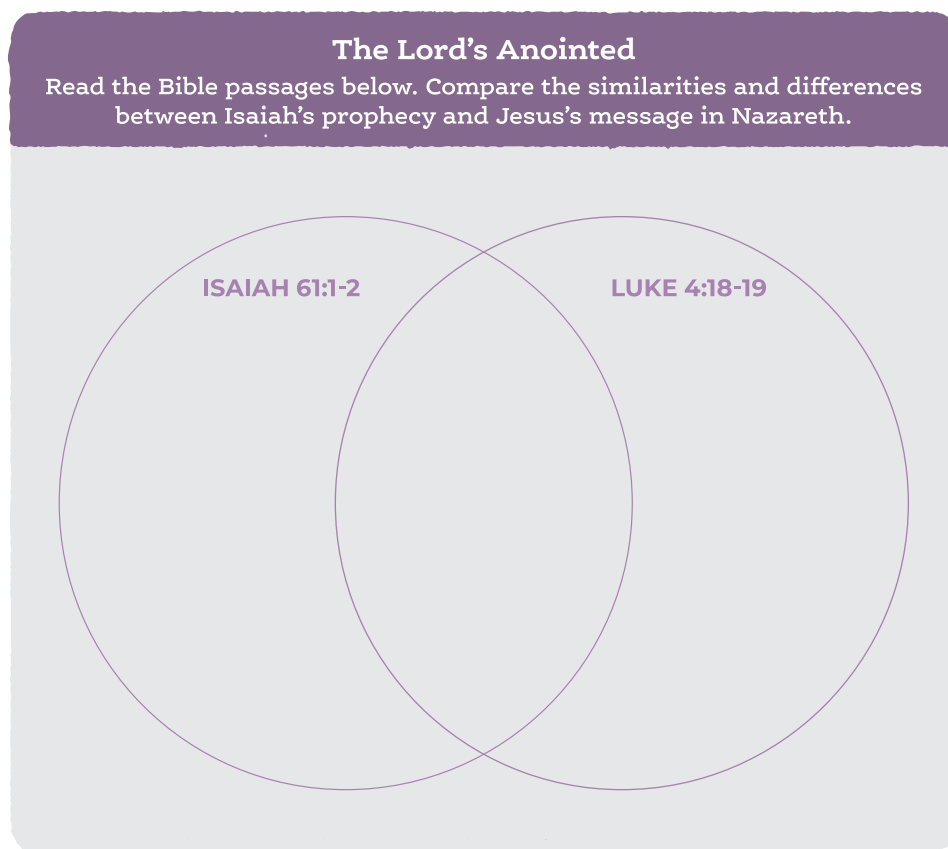
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**Key Concept:** Jesus's identity and the gospel message can lead to rejection.

Notes

### GROUP ACTIVITY

**DIAGRAM:** Direct your group to page 30 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a Venn diagram titled "The Lord's Anointed." Recreate this Venn diagram on a board in your room so you can record the group's findings as they interact with the Scripture text.



**READ:** Invite one volunteer to read aloud Isaiah 61:1-2. Invite a second volunteer to read aloud Luke 4:18-19.

**INSTRUCT:** As a large group, discuss the slight differences between what Isaiah prophesied the Anointed One would do and what Jesus preached in Nazareth. Record words or phrases that are unique to each passage in their section of the diagram. Write the shared words or phrases in the middle section.

**-Isaiah 61:1-2:** "heal the brokenhearted"; "[proclaim] the day of our God's vengeance; to comfort all who mourn"

**-Luke 4:18-19:** "recovery of sight to the blind"; "set free the oppressed"

**-Both:** "The Spirit of the Lord is on me"; "he has anointed me to bring/preach good news to the poor"; "proclaim liberty/release to the captives"; "proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"

Notes

**DISCUSS:** Why do you think Jesus's words were a little different from Isaiah's? (*translation from Hebrew to Greek may have been in play, also depending on particular manuscripts available, but the essence of the message is still the same*) Why do you think Jesus stopped after “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” and did not mention “and the day of our God’s vengeance”? (*at this moment, Jesus focused on His ministry of grace, mercy, and compassion; He would speak of judgment and end times at another time; at that moment, His message was of help, hope, and provision that only the Messiah could give to all people who place their trust in Him*)

DEBRIEF


**How does Jesus’s proclaiming good news and freedom give you comfort?**  
**What part can you play in bringing the good news to the oppressed?**

SUMMARIZE


Pass out copies of **Pacl’ Item 4: Scripture Is Fulfilled** and briefly highlight some examples given. Say: “Jesus came to earth and fulfilled prophecies of the Messiah, the Savior. Aside from all these miracles, He saved the world through His death and resurrection. Not everyone who encountered Jesus recognized Him as Lord, though, and He was rejected and persecuted for it. This life, its sufferings, and its rejection are not the end of the story. Jesus endured it for the love of humanity, and we can too through the power of His Spirit.”

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 31). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Hands** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.

 **HEAD:** All Old Testament prophecies of a coming Messiah are affirmed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Some scholars suggest that there are more than three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah, yet Jesus fulfilled every single prophecy. It only makes sense that Jesus is who He says He is.

**Why do people have a hard time accepting the facts of Jesus’s identity even though He has shown Himself to be true?**

 **HEART:** Sometimes passive doubt is a rejection of God, but sometimes active doubt is our searching for answers and having God meet us in our questions. The former makes us lazy and stagnant, whereas the latter shows we are diving into faith even in our doubts.

**What can you do when doubts arise about God, Scripture, or your faith?**



**Key Concept:** Jesus's identity and the gospel message can lead to rejection.



**HANDS:** Many in the world know of Jesus and willingly reject Him. There are also people in the world and around the corner from where we live who do not know anything about Jesus and the salvation He brings. This reality should cause us to be faithful witnesses, unashamed of Jesus's gospel message. As Jesus tried to convey to the people in Nazareth, God's favor is offered to any who will believe in the Son of God.

**How can you be faithful in sharing Jesus Christ with a world that may be apprehensive to Him?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Read Isaiah 61 in its entirety and observe how the Lord brings beauty from ashes and joy from mourning. Think of times when you have experienced this personally. Thank Him for healing those hurts.
- Jesus cannot be boxed into our wishes of who we want Him to be. Are there areas of your life in which you have diminished His divinity or forgotten His humanity? If so, repent and ask Him to give you a right view of Himself.
- Find a way to minister practically to someone who is suffering and remind them that we serve a God who is familiar with suffering and can sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 31 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 31:1-3, asking for God's protection for those who need His refuge and rescue. Praise Him that He is our rock and fortress and we can always count on Him.

#### References

1. C. S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity," *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 50–51.

Notes

