

SHUTTING GOD OUT | MARCH 31, 2019

These last few week we have followed Jesus from His baptism in the Jordan River through a forty day fast where he resisted the voice of the tempter in the wilderness, Jerusalem, and then in the temple in the Jerusalem. Today, we are going to turn our attention to Galilee where Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit's power, officially begins his teaching ministry.

READ Luke 4.14-30.

Something happened in the synagogue that day that was both monumental and totally unexpected. Jesus announces that what they have been eagerly waiting for, for roughly 700 years is no longer a future hope, but a present reality. In this moment, Jesus is declaring that HE is the Anointed One who will bring the message of Good News to the poor, who will announce pardon to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, and who will set the burdened and battered free. The wait is over! The time of salvation is TODAY!

At first his hearers are amazed at his teaching, but then something in them switches and they begin to question the authenticity of Jesus' claim. Jesus, knowing what's in their hearts, calls them out.

READ Luke 4.24-30

What did Jesus say that was so offensive? What did he say that caused this explosive reaction? In a nutshell, Jesus implied that God also loves the Gentiles.

When Jesus reads from Isaiah he doesn't quote the whole chapter. N.T. Wright suggests that reason for this is that "he seems to have drawn on the larger picture in Isaiah and elsewhere which speaks of Israel being called to be the light of the nations. " Jesus didn't come to condemn the world. He came to save it. He didn't come to preach a message of punishment but of Good News. He came to bring God's grace and mercy to ALL. Jews and Gentiles alike.

What Jesus said here was so far from what they wanted to hear; what they expected to hear that they turned on him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How do we respond when God works outside of the borders we put around him?
- What do we do when God does something that we, as flawed people, don't expect?

READ 1 Timothy 2:1-6

I wonder, when we read this verse and others like it, how often we translate the word *all* and *everyone* to *some*.

Jesus doesn't give us the luxury of choosing who the Good News is for, who we are to serve, or who we are to love. He says, "all", not just "some".

Dave talked about how our belief determines how we behave. If we are thinking *some* when we are told *all*, we will inevitably pick and choose our obedience when it comes to our behaviour towards others. If we give money to charities but turn our gaze away from the homeless man asking for change, we shut God out. If we love our neighbour but turn our back on the refugee, we shut God out. If we speak well of those who treat us well, but gossip about those who rub us the wrong way, we shut God out. If we preach Good News to one group of people, but condemnation to another group of people, we shut God out. Jesus has made the Good News available to all, not just *some*.

We as followers of Jesus are called to be a light to the world; a light that shines brightly on all people. Like Jesus and because of Jesus, we get to be the bringers of Good News to those around us. We get to bring Good News of hope, freedom, and life eternal!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What can we do to be a light to all?
- Who do we need to reach out to?