

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY --- "JESUS ACCORDING TO JESUS"

Lesson 3 --- "Rejected!" --- The Cross for Jesus and for Us

Isaiah 49:1-6; Luke 4:16-30

Mark 8:31-38; 9:30-37; 10:32-45

I. Jesus in his hometown Nazareth synagogue. This story continues. Jesus initially is praised profusely. Jesus seems to see through them and perhaps better, to see into them. He says "no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown." Jesus then tells them two Old Testament stories, one about prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17), the other about prophet Elisa (2 Kings 5). The congregation is outraged, so much so that they chase Jesus out of the synagogue, out of town, and try to throw him off a cliff. The sobering story: Jesus rejected, rejected in his hometown.

II. The life story of Jesus being rejected. What are other such moments?

^ King Herod seeking to find and to have killed the baby Jesus. Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus fleeing to Egypt as refugees.

^ Jesus being continually questioned, doubted, and opposed ... "who are you to forgive sins" ... "you healed this one by Beelzebul" ... "blasphemy, you being a man have declared yourself God" ... "why do you heal on the Sabbath?" ... "your disciples do this and do that" ... others ...

^ Most of all, the cross

III. Jesus himself speaking of his upcoming suffering and death and the disciples reactions (the "Passion Predictions")

^ Mark 8:31-38 and Peter ... Mark 9:30-37 and the disciples arguing over who is the greatest ... Mark 10:32-45 and James and John seeking to sit beside Jesus in glory

^ Jesus Rejected! What does Jesus' rejection say about Jesus and his mission? About ourselves and following Jesus?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer on "Cheap grace" and "Costly grace"

"Cheap grace is the mortal enemy of our Church. Our struggle today is for costly grace."

"Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord's Supper without confession of sin; It is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ."

"(Grace) is costly because it calls us to discipleship; it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It

is costly because it costs people their lives; it is grace, because it thereby makes them live. It is costly because it condemns sin; it is grace, because it justifies the sinner. Above all, grace is costly because it was costly to God, because it costs God the life of God's Son --- "you were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20) -- and because nothing can be cheap to us which is costly to God."

DISCIPLESHIP (The Cost of Discipleship), pp. 44-45

IV. THAT Jesus was rejected, indeed, crucified, is central to our faith. FOR WHAT Jesus was rejected here and elsewhere is also central and significant.

^ The two Old Testament stories that so riled the Nazareth congregation: 1 Kings 17 --- in the midst of a famine, a widow is given food and drink and her son is revived. 2 Kings 5 --- in the midst of many lepers, only Naaman the Aramite commander is healed. The offense? The widow and Naaman are Gentiles! Non-Gentiles! The offense? Jesus reminds them their own scriptures testify to God's love, grace, mercy, and healing to Gentiles as well as to Jews! To others as well as to them. In these stories, God's love to outsiders INSTEAD OF to them. The congregation will not have it.

^ Jesus' vision of God's inclusive love as representative of Jesus ... the Kingdom of God vision from last week ... Jesus befriending children, widows, the poor, the blind, the lame, the crippled, "a friend of tax collectors and sinners ... D. M. Baillie, GOD WAS IN CHRIST: Jesus literally died for our sins, that one of the most if not the most objectionable thing about Jesus to some of them was his acceptance, inclusion, and forgiveness of sinners.

! Jesus said, "I have other sheep that do not belong to the fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd." John 10:16 !

^ Do we see ourselves in this Biblical mirror? Do we ever reject, doubt, question, refuse to believe God's love extends beyond a certain group? That God's love does not extend to any certain group? If so, is this following Jesus? If so, are we willing to repent, to turn more Godward?

Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson

"It's funny, isn't it? That you can preach a judgmental and veneful and angry God and nobody will mind. But you start preaching a God that is too accepting, too loving, too forgiving, too merciful, too kind, you are in trouble."

AJ Powell Facebook post (3/23/22).

A poster in a colleague's office: "For what would Jesus be crucified today?"

And still, Jesus says, "come, follow me" ...