

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

Luke 4:21–30 • Jesus Rejected in His Hometown

Prepared by the Rev. Lee Woofenden

Luke 4:21–30 . . . Jesus rejected in his hometown
Jeremiah 1:4–10 The call of Jeremiah

Overview

Last week we heard the gracious and comforting words that Jesus read to the people in his hometown synagogue. Today we find out what their reaction was: they angrily rejected him! They could not accept that this “local boy” could be a great prophet, let alone God come to earth. Today’s lesson points out that for those of us who are used to Christianity, it is often harder to take Christ’s teachings to heart than it is for people who are *not* Christian. But belonging to a church doesn’t “save” us—only accepting the Lord and living by the Lord’s teachings does!

Key Points

- We can experience the full power of Jesus only if we accept him as divine—as God among us.
- It is often hardest for us to see the Lord’s power when that power is right in our ordinary lives.
- The Lord’s power is stronger than our doubts.

Example for Teaching Children

In our lesson last week, Jesus read a very comforting passage from the prophet Isaiah. Do you know where he was when he read it? (*Pause for responses.*) He was in Nazareth, the town where he grew up.

What town (or city) do each of you live in? Do you have friends there that you like to play with? What sorts of things do you do together? (*Let the children talk about the people they know and the things they do in their neighborhood.*)

Now imagine that you have grown up. Think of one of your neighborhood friends, and imagine meeting him or her when you are both grown up. . . . Now imagine that your friend tells you that he or she has been called by God to deliver a special message to the world. What would you think? Would you listen eagerly for your friend’s message from God? Or would you think maybe he or she had gone crazy?

This is exactly what happened to Jesus when he went back to his hometown as an adult. He read a special passage from the Bible, and then told all the people in his old neighborhood that he had come from God to bring a powerful message to the people, and to make everything in the Bible come true.

Do you know how the people reacted? They got really mad at Jesus! They said, “We’ve known this guy since he was a little kid! Who does he think he is?!” When Jesus pointed out that they were rejecting him just because he came from their own town, they were so angry that they tried to throw Jesus off a cliff and kill him.

We probably wouldn’t try to kill an old neighborhood friend even if he or she did claim to be a special messenger from God. But Christians do sometimes reject Jesus even more than people from other religions do. We are so used to the things we learn about Jesus in Sunday School that we sometimes don’t bother to pay much attention to them. We might say to ourselves, “Oh yeah, that old stuff. Big deal!”

But it *is* a big deal whether or not we believe in the Lord and live by what the Lord teaches us. If we reject Jesus and his teachings, we are rejecting a good and spiritual life. But if we believe in Jesus and live by his teachings, he can heal our inner hurts, and make us truly happy from deep within.

Basic Correspondences

Nazareth = habits developed from childhood
“local” people = “religious,” but not living by it
widow, foreigner = lacking, but wanting, religion

Thoughts from Swedenborg

The Lord’s words in Luke 4:24–26 refer to people outside the church who long for truth. But the widows in the destroyed church, to whom Elijah was *not* sent, refer to people who have no truth because they are not involved in goodness. Wherever there is no goodness, there is no truth. No matter how much “truth” these people have may appear to have outwardly, it is actually a shell without a kernel.

Arcana Coelestia #4844.13

These days, it is easier for non-Christians to come into heaven than it is for Christians, as the Lord says in Luke:

People will come from the east, west, north, and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Yes, there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last. (Luke 13:29, 30)

For [they] can be filled with everything relating to faith, and accept these things with a deeper love. . . . spontaneously and joyfully. *Heaven and Hell* #324