

(Luke 4:22~30)

Tonight, I want to preach on the subject... *The POWER of UNBELIEF*... We often talk about the “*Power of faith*,” that when we have faith, *all things are possible*. I think that it would be fair to say that through faith, there is nothing that is impossible. God can do anything... Jesus taught that having the smallest amount of faith, could do great things!

**(Lu. 17)** <sup>3</sup>*Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.* <sup>4</sup>*And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.* <sup>5</sup>*And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.* <sup>6</sup>*And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.*

**(Mt 17)** <sup>14</sup>*And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,* <sup>15</sup>*Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.* <sup>16</sup>*And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.* <sup>17</sup>*Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.* <sup>18</sup>*And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.* <sup>19</sup>*Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?* <sup>20</sup>*And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief:*

*...for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

Faith can move mountains! Think about it, the mountain illustration is designed to teach us that faith does the impossible! How many of you think you could literally move a mountain. If were honest, we say that notion is crazy. Jesus wasn't talking about a literal mountain, but rather the mountains we face in life. Point in, there's nothing too difficult for God!

This is just a couple of the many verses that speak to *the power of faith*! But what about the power of Unbelief? We might think of unbelief as the opposite of faith, and consider *unbelief as having no power*.

But consider this, *unbelief hinders* the moving of God in our lives... I thought about this as I studied this passage here in Luke, specifically the section here that speaks of Christ' rejection by those of his own hometown, Nazareth. As I studied Luke's account, Matthew's account came to mind, and there Jesus said that same thing, that “*a prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.*” But what I found most interesting was how Matthew closed out that passage... “*And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*”

Think about that... There *Unbelief* hindered the *mighty works* of God...

Now that is not to say that unbelief hinders God from carrying out His will in the world, not at all. That is only to say that it keeps God from working in the lives of individuals. I think a water hose illustrates it best, unbelief is having the spicket of blessings turned off... The water is God's power, God's blessings, and there real...and others are enjoying them. But unbelief shuts them off to your life.

Here in this passage, we find the people were in “*disbelief*”...

<sup>22</sup>*And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words, which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?*

That word *wondered* speaks of the fact they were “*in awe*”...of the words coming out of his mouth...

It must have been something to hear him preach... According to Luke, He had been preaching throughout the entire region of Galilee, in and around Nazareth, and Luke writes that “a fame” was spreading throughout the region. This is something that followed him throughout his ministry...

(Mt. 7) At the conclusion of His message, “*The Sermon on the Mount*”...

<sup>28</sup>And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

<sup>29</sup>For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

(Mt 22) Having just been tested concerning marriage/seven brothers... (*Who's wife?*)

<sup>33</sup>And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

In **Mark 6**, which appears to be speaking to the same account as Luke is here, it states that upon hearing him they were “*astonished*”.

“*Astonished*”...εκπλε | σσο | (εκ-πλαχεε-σο)...to strike with astonishment: to pound, to inflict calamity. It carries the idea of flattening out...

It insinuates that his teaching was so powerful, that it was like a “*physiological blow*” to the mind! It was literally like the blow of a boxer to his opponent, leaving him *dazed* and *rattled*! Given the fact that the word carries the meaning of “*flattening out*,” these men were literally “*floored*” by the power Jesus manifested in his teaching, and the things he did!

They “*couldn't believe*” what they were hearing and seeing from this man, they'd known all their life. It's important to note, the question they asked of whether or not he was Joseph's son, was not a legitimate question, in the sense they were questioning who he was, for they knew who he was. They'd watched him grow up from a toddler, they'd seen him playing and running the dusty hills of Nazareth. Jesus had literally grown up here, it was very likely he stayed there up until the time he anointed by the Father for the work...

The questions they asked...<sup>3</sup>*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?*

...were not asked of not knowing for sure that he was Jesus, but rather asked the question out of disbelief.

...in disbelief...they began to question whether this was the same Jesus they all knew... “*Now, I am right ain't I, this is Joseph's boy? And his mother's name is Mary? James, Joses, Simon and Judas, those are his brothers...right? And these here are his sisters...right?*”

They couldn't believe what they were “*hearing*” coming out of his mouth, even though they heard it with their own ears. Mark declares they were “*offended*” in him...<sup>3</sup>...and they were offended in him.

**Offended** is the Greek word, skandalizoô ...(*skan-dal-id'-zo*) which means to *entrap*, *entice* to sin to trip up (figuratively *stumble*). It is often translated...“*Stumbling block*.” Referring to something that is in the way, something that trips you up, something that hinders.

Mark explains here, that the people of Nazareth were “*hindered*” from believing in him for the simple reason they had grown up with him! The fact that they had watched him grow up from a toddler to a 30-year-old man, became a stumbling block in believing his claims of being the Messiah, the Son of God.

In all three gospel accounts, Jesus explains, **that is to be expected**...for the truth is...

*A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.*

Jesus declares that the truth is, that those closest to him, would be greatly hindered from accepting his claims, for the simple reason they knew him before hand. People who had never met him before were much more likely to accept him and believe his claims.

I think it's significant to point out *what* they questioned. They never questioned the wisdom and the authority in which he spoke. Nor did they question the miracles he performed. But rather, **they questioned the one who was doing these things**. That says a lot. Because in our day, there's a lot of so-called healing services on TV that I question! There's no doubt in my mind, that much what we are seeing on TV is phony. But here, it becomes apparent, that the miracles and wonders Jesus did were authentic. The fact they didn't question them tells us that the things Jesus spoke, and the things that he did were genuine. There was *no doubt in their mind* that they were real. They saw him heal the sick with their own eyes...they heard things come out of his mouth that absolutely floored them. There was *no doubt in their mind that he possessed supernatural powers!* If you notice, throughout scripture, they never questioned that. The fact that they didn't question them, is evidence that the claims of Jesus possessing supernatural powers is true! And mind you, this is affirmed by "unbelievers!"

*You may say...* If that's the case, how is it, that seeing these things and hearing these things, how could they not believe?

Naturally speaking, you would think that witnessing all that he did would make a believer out of you. You'd think, that if you saw him heal a man...you'd believe.

But the fact that they knew him before hand, made it nearly impossible for them to believe... Think about it, this man that they had known all their life as Joseph's son, Mary's boy, James and Joses, and Simon and Judas' brother...the one they watched grow up from a toddler, now claims to be the "Son of God?" It was no wonder they didn't believe him. Given the circumstances, it was *virtually impossible* for them to believe. I am convinced that what Jesus meant by his statement here in Luke...

**(Luke 4)** <sup>23</sup>And he said unto them, *Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.*

The proverb of "Physician, heal thyself" was one of sarcasm...one of disdain, one formed out of unbelief. In essence it was to say... Prove yourself Doc...do the miracles here that you did in Capernaum... If you've come to heal the broken hearted, mend the bruised, to give sight to the blind...you must be a doctor. Prove it...do the miracles here as you did elsewhere...show us.

Notice, they didn't actually say that, Jesus did. But he knew what was in their hearts... But Jesus was not surprised, and explains that, that is to be expected...

**(Vs 24)** <sup>24</sup>And he said, *Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.*

**(Vs 25~26)** Jesus gave a couple of "Examples" of the TRUTH of what He was saying...

<sup>25</sup>*But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;* <sup>26</sup>*But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*

<sup>27</sup>*And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.*

Jesus mentions these two examples to remind them of Israel's rejection of them... Elijah and Elisha were two of God's prophets, but because of "disbelief," they couldn't help those of the nation Israel, they had to go to the Gentiles...

It was a blast at their unfaithfulness! He basically said, that Israel was a “faithless nation...” and that this had always been the case...suggesting that the Gentiles had more faith than them!

**(Vs 28~30) Well, this infuriated them...** <sup>28</sup>*And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, <sup>29</sup>And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. <sup>30</sup>But he passing through the midst of them went his way,*

Marks’s account of Jesus’ rejection in Nazareth ended with the words...

<sup>5</sup>*And he could there **do no mighty work**, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. <sup>6</sup>And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.*

Matthew’s account of Jesus’ rejection in Nazareth ended with the words...

<sup>58</sup>*And he **did not many mighty work there** because of their unbelief.*

I opened the message tonight, telling you I was going to preach on... *The POWER of UNBELIEF...*

Unbelief and contempt drive Christ out of the heart, as they did out of his own country.

Faith seems to put the almighty power of God into the hands of men...

Whereas unbelief appears to tie up even the hands of the Almighty.

As a result of their “*disbelief*,” Jesus was hindered from blessing them as he so desired too... Their unbelief became a stumbling block to unleashing the power of God in their life. And the same is true today. The only thing that stands between people, and the blessings and power of God in their life, is belief. The only thing that stands between eternal life and eternal damnation...is unbelief.