

- Abraham Lincoln entered the Blackwater War with the rank of captain. By the end of the war he had been demoted to the rank of private.
- In 1940, Chester Carlson took his invention to 20 of the largest corporations in the country and they all rejected his idea. In 1947, seven years later, a company named Haloid purchased the rights to the invention—the company was renamed Xerox.
- After receiving a demonstration of the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell, President Hayes replied, “That’s an amazing invention, but who would ever want to use one of them?”
- Jesus returned to his village of Nazareth—he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath as was his custom, he read from the prophet Isaiah and commented on the words. As he spoke they grew angry, drove him out of the synagogue, chased him out of town and sought to kill him by tossing him off a cliff. What happened? What caused such a change in their attitude towards him? Why such a rejection of a hometown kid?

At the beginning of our text they are proud of the carpenter turned rabbi, “*All spoke well of him*” (22). They are “amazed” at his words. There is something different about him. He has changed since he left the carpenter’s shop. There is a note of authority in his voice. This is not the Jesus they had known. They who had previously attended synagogue worship. “Is this Joseph’s son?” they begin to wonder.

What has happened in those few brief moments to change their attitude toward him? He has reminded them of their own history, Israel’s call to be a witness to the whole world. God is moving outside their expected norm—but it is nothing new for God. Look at what God has done in the past.

- He sent both Elijah and Elisha to minister to Gentiles.
- With many lepers in Israel one was a Gentile, Naaman, who was cured.

Jesus is setting the direction for his ministry, the ministry of the church he is calling into being. He has reminded them that God works outside the norm of tradition.

But this is Joseph’s son. What about the miracles we heard he has done in Galilee. Why doesn’t he do some of them for us? Then we too will believe. They demand that Jesus demonstrate for them the truth to his words. They want him to prove his claim. He is being asked to demonstrate that the Spirit of God is truly upon him. They know who he really is, he is Joseph’s son. They don’t believe the claims he is making.

Quickly the scene changes from praise to condemnation and rejection. He is being rejected in his hometown. Rejection is not easy. Especially when it comes from those who know us.

Why did Jesus not perform miracles in Nazareth? (Matthew writes, “*And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith*” (13:58 NIV).

But before we come to a conclusion, I want to look at the wider scope of Jesus’ whole ministry. In the three years or so of his ministry we have relatively few recorded miracles of his. Miracles were not the primary focus of his agenda. When his mother wanted him to “fix” the problem at the wedding in Cana he was not eager to do so. His agenda is not to be played out as a miracle worker. Yes, he does heal the sick, cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, raises some from the dead and commands the wind and waves to obey. But this is not the primary reason for his coming. He comes to preach and teach the agenda of God. He comes to share God’s grace, love and hope for the whole world. He comes to teach what it means to be a member of the household of God. He comes not as a miracle worker. He does not heal all who need to be healed, feed all who need to be fed, etc. This is not the agenda of God.

Because of this, because of his refusal to do miracles in Nazareth, he is rejected by his own town. Rejection is never easy. Yet, we have all been rejected in some way. We may not have been chosen to play on a team. We may not have been hired for the job we wanted. We may not have gotten the promotion we thought we deserved. Friends may not have stood with us when we most needed them by our side. The list goes on. I often wonder when I see marriage proposals on television if they are pre-planned. What if she says no?!!

We don't like rejection and yet statistics tell us that we will be rejected. I remember hearing that only 3 out of 10 invitations are accepted. In other words, we are only batting about 30%. Now any baseball player would be happy with a .300 average, but when it applies to our invitations we grow discouraged and stop inviting. What if those who are going to respond are invites 6, 8 and 10?

We are also told that new programs take three to five years to get off the ground. Yet, we want instant success. If it is not doing what we think it should in three months we stop doing it and go looking for another program to get the results we want. We have no patience to wait.

Seahawks fans are debating whether it was a good idea to fire their coach after only one season. Many are asking what they expected after only one season on the job. But we want instant success and instant gratification. We can't wait.

I wonder how many good programs have been dismantled because of our impatience or how many invitations we have failed to issue because one or two rejected our first attempts. Rejection is a part of life. No, it is not easy but...

I imagine this was a difficult moment in Jesus' life. We are taught that he experienced life as we experience it. He knew the ups and downs of emotions. It is a part of our humanity and his. These were not strangers who were rejecting him and his message (wonder if they ever really heard his message). These were people he had grown up with, worked with, played with. He may have attended their weddings and comforted them at funerals. He may have shared meals in their homes and laughed at their stories. These are not mere strangers, this is his hometown. These are friends of his mother and father. These were the ones who knew him.

Things had been going well. *"Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone"* (Luke 4:14-15). His ministry was going good. People were praising him for the words he spoke. Then he comes to his hometown and a lesson is learned. The praise suddenly turns to rejection. They reject his message and they seek to kill him. They don't want to hear. Rejected, he moves on.

The story does not stop there. Jesus moves on. I am sure he is disappointed with the events in Nazareth. It may have stopped some from continuing on with their mission and message. *"Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching because his message had authority"* (Luke 4:31-32 NIV).

As difficult as they are, rejections come. The question is not if we will be rejected but how well we handle them when they do come. If we walk as Jesus walked, we gather ourselves together and move on. Our God is not through with us yet. There are those who will hear and who will respond.

Jesus was ultimately rejected by the very people he came to redeem and it was in that rejection that our redemption was secured.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quoted is from NRSV, NCCC/USA 1989
NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1989