

More Like Jesus Part 2

The Blessing of Rejection

Matthew 13:53-58, Luke 10:13-16

Memory Verses: Matthew 11:29

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

In college I really liked this girl. She was easy on the eyes, fun to hang out with, and after a couple of months of hanging out, I was pretty sure that I wanted her to be my girlfriend, so one night I asked her to go with me to the computer lab. At LU we had a midnight curfew and the only way you could be out after curfew was if you got a pass to the computer lab for studying. So we got our passes and my plan was to ask her to be my girlfriend at the computer lab but as time passed the more nervous I became and I just couldn't find the words or way to say it. A couple hours went by of casually doing homework with some small talk and then we made our way back to the dorms. I walked her to her door and finally I mustered up enough courage to ask her to be more than just friends. And she didn't say anything. So after a few minutes of very uncomfortable awkwardness I said, well how about we stay friends and if you ever want to be more then you let me know. And she said, okay cool, and went inside. I found out later that she had no plans of ever letting me know, because she wanted to keep her options open. I felt so rejected. I had put it all on the table, put my heart on the line, and walked away dejected and defeated.

To add insult to injury, a couple of my friends in the dorm knew that I was doing this and they had waited up to congratulate me. When I walked back into the dorm a handful of my friends were ready to celebrate with high fives and pats on the back but as soon as they saw my face they knew. My best friend Josh looked at me all confused and voiced the opinion of all; "she rejected you?" She most certainly did.

As we all know, it takes a lot of guts to put it all out there on the line only to be shutdown! No one likes to be rejected. No one likes to not be taken seriously. Rejection embarrasses. Rejection wounds. Rejection hurts.

Last week we began a new series looking at the life of Jesus and what it may look like for us to emulate him more with the way we live our lives. As our primary example, Christ shows us what it looks like to pursue a life of righteousness and flee selfish hedonism. As we saw last week it begins with spiritual baptism. A moment when the grace and love of Christ compels himself to seek after us and save us despite our sinful state. From there we begin a lifelong journey of drawing closer to Christ one small step at a time. A journey to be more like Jesus.

In **John 2:23** we see a snippet of Jesus' mission. He preached and did signs and people believed on him! That's great right? That's the part of the journey we like. But it's not all fun and roses from that point on. Anyone who tells you otherwise is a liar and a fraud. Look at the next two verses **John 2:24-25**. Here Jesus tells us something hard to swallow. Though some said they trusted in Him, he could not put his trust in them. Why? Because he knew that at the heart of man, they are untrustworthy, and they may say they believe but their lives may tell a different story. Even Judas, his friend and disciple would eventually reject him! The truth is, the Christian life is a hard life. It brings overwhelming joy and peace, but it also consistently puts you in very uncomfortable spots and demands you stick your neck out where you, like Christ, will be rejected. In fact, if we are to follow the model of Christ and be more like Jesus, then we will be rejected... a lot. Look at **Luke 10:8-11**. In **John 15:20** Jesus tells his disciples that if people persecuted him then they will also persecute those who follow him. **Luke 10:16** makes it crystal clear, those who reject us reject Jesus and those who reject Jesus reject God. If we desire to be more like Jesus then we must recognize that we will be rejected and worse.

The key human instinct when it comes to rejection is to avoid it at all costs. I know for a fact that being rejected stinks, remember computer lab girl. But, here's the thing... there is a blessing to being rejected. A couple months after being rejected in the computer lab that girl became my girlfriend, and a couple of years later she became my wife. At first what seemed like a dead end turned out to be simply the beginning. **Perhaps the distance between rejection and blessing is perseverance**, because with a little perseverance, rejection can end in blessing. Today we will continue our journey in learning how to be more like Jesus by embracing the rejection that he had to endure. Today we will see that... **Sometimes being more like Jesus means embracing not only the blessings he received but also the rejections he endured.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing I want us to notice here is that... **To Be More Like Jesus We Must Risk Rejection For The Sake of the Gospel**. After Jesus' baptism and subsequent temptation He was then set on his mission in Galilee and Israel. Look at **Luke 4:14-15, 42-44, Mark 1:35-39**. A couple of things to notice here. Here we see the purpose of Christ's mission on Earth; "to preach." We see his message; "the good news of the kingdom." And we see his destination; "Galilee and the surrounding country." Let's start with that last one. Where exactly was he sent to preach and what was the risk of doing so in those specific areas?

The first was the closest to home... literally. One of the first towns of Galilee that He went to preach in was his hometown of Nazareth. And, as anyone knows, your hometown produces your greatest critics. The risk was

simple, preaching where you grew up meant that most likely no one in that place would hear his message simply because they couldn't see past the little kid they watched grow up. Let's look at this reality in the scripture; [Luke 4:16, 22-24](#), [Mark 6:1-4](#), [Matthew 13:53-57](#).

Another area of Christ's focus was the city of Capernaum and its outlying towns. Whereas Nazareth was Jesus' hometown as a child, Capernaum was Jesus' hometown as an adult. These people knew him but they had never heard his message. This was an evil place kind of like the worst parts of New Orleans or San Francisco. The risk is clear, telling evil people that they are evil and in need of redemption is a hard sell. Let's look at [Luke 10:15](#), and [Matthew 11:23-24](#).

Of course one of Christ's major focus was the capital city of Jerusalem. The risk there would be obvious; those with power don't like being told what they should do with that power. Jesus often handled it the same way. Bluntly. Look at [John 2:13-17](#).

And one of the most important places for Jesus was Samaria; the place where Jews were hated most. The risk... not even being heard; [Luke 9:51-53](#).

And what exactly was this risky message? The good news of the kingdom of God." As David mentioned a couple weeks ago, the word for good news is Gospel. The Gospel is the good news of the kingdom of God which is sustained by the long awaited for messiah; [Luke 4:16-21](#). Jesus reads them a passage about the Messiah and then says... thats about me... I'm here! By placing your trust in me you can be restored to the kingdom of God.

The bottom line is that without this message, without this good news, no one will be saved, no one will be restored! This is the greatest message ever told and thus it is worth the risk of being rejected! If they reject it, so be it... but we must give them that chance! **If they reject the message of Christ so be it, but it's worth the risk to give them that chance . Sometimes being more like Jesus means embracing not only the blessings he received but also the rejections he endured.**

The second thing we need to see here is that... **To Be More Like Jesus We Must Respond To Rejection With Grace**. It is interesting to note how Jesus responds to rejection. According to [Matthew 13:58](#) Jesus did not do many works in Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people. [Mark 6:5-6](#) tells us that Jesus could do no mighty work there except a few healings and he marveled because of their unbelief. Could you imagine Jesus being surprised or caught off guard by someone's unbelief. And then it says that he went about teaching in other villages. [Luke 4:25-27](#) adds a huge piece to the story. Jesus responds to the Nazarene people's rejection by reminding them that in the time of Elijah and Elisha the people of Israel rejected them too and so God blessed the

gentiles instead. [Luke 4:28-30](#) tells that after hearing this they tried to murder Jesus by throwing him off a cliff but he "passed" through their midst.

In Jerusalem, [John 2:15](#) reminds us that Jesus responded to their rejection with stern discipline, a literal whipping. In Capernaum Jesus goes even further and pronounces judgement upon them. Look at [Luke 10:10-15](#), [Matthew 11:20-22](#). Chorazin & Bethsaida were both towns on the outskirts of Capernaum. Tyre & Sidon were pagan towns mentioned in the OT north of Capernaum that were also punished by God for their wickedness. Capernaum had a long history of rejecting God... now it's time to pay the piper. In addition, in [Luke 9:5](#), Jesus tells his disciples to brush the dust off their feet. This could be another way of showing that they were under judgement, but more so it simply meant that they weren't responsible for the Capernaum people's response to the message. The shaking the dust off of their feet meant that they had done their part.

Lastly, in Samaria, in [Luke 9:54-56](#), Jesus rebukes his disciples who wanted to bring judgement on the Samaritan village. Here unlike in Capernaum, Jesus shows grace and mercy on the village that rejected him. And then again it says they went on to another village.

So that's how Jesus responded to rejection, but how should we. We must remember that we are not Christ. We are not the Messiah, we are not God. Christ is able to do things we are not able to do because of his power and because of his authority. For example, Christ is able to pronounce judgement, we are not. Remember that Christ got mad when the disciples wanted to bring down fire on the Samaritan village. Christ disciplines mankind while we alone can only discipline or rebuke believers under the authority of church leadership. And, Jesus is able to "pass through" supernaturally, we are not.

So what should be our response to spiritual rejection? Just like Jesus, if there is a lack of belief on their part there is very little we can do. We can't give them belief, we can merely tell them the truth and give them an opportunity to believe. When they reject the message and reject us in the process Jesus shows us that we must not retaliate by rejecting them. Rather, we must show them grace, mercy, and love. When we do that the door may be left open for another conversation, another opportunity.

Richard Wurmbrand was imprisoned for sharing the Gospel in 1950's Communist Romania. Everyday he would share the Gospel with his captors and everyday they would reject the message and torture him some more... but Richard never cursed them, never rejected them... instead he continued to show love, grace, and mercy for them. In the end he was able to lead some of the guards to Christ in prison, and eventually, after a total of 14 years of beatings he was let go and his message of love and grace was told throughout the world for over half a century! Countless men and women have heard the Gospel because he never rejected those who rejected him! **When we respond to the rejection of the Gospel with grace and love, we**

leave the door open for future blessing. Sometimes being more like Jesus means embracing not only the blessings he received but also the rejections he endured.

The last thing we need to see here is that... **To Be More Like Jesus We Must Rejoice When Rejected And Rest In Christ.** After being rejected in Nazareth, the city of his childhood, and Capernaum, the city of his adulthood, and after his disciples had endured rejection in Samaria and in the villages... Jesus does something extremely revealing. Look at **Matthew 11:25-30**. He prays, praising God and thanking him for who he has chosen to reveal himself to and who he hasn't. This is very different than us who would just be mad at God for who he had not chosen to reveal himself to. He recognizes that he has a gracious will, and then he gives this blessing which has become a comfort to Christians for thousands of years; "come to me all who labor"— all who labor to give the message and preach the Gospel. Come to me all who are bearing the weight of the lost they are trying to reach and I will give you rest.

Listen, we don't worry, fret, or become anxious about those who reject Christ... because it is Christ's burden to carry. We are not responsible for those who are saved, we are merely responsible for doing what Christ has called us to do... and after doing so now we rest in his promise of peace.

How do we find blessing in rejection? Because we know that every time we share the Gospel and someone believes we are blessed in their salvation... and every time we share the Gospel and someone rejects it we are blessed in knowing we've been obedient and are not responsible for that burden any longer. **Blessed are the rejected in Christ for they will never be rejected by Christ.** Sometimes being more like Jesus means embracing not only the blessings he received but also the rejections he endured

Application

It is estimated that upward of 98% of professing Christians have never shared the Gospel with someone else. When asked why, the number one reason is always because they fear being rejected. But when we realize that there's a blessing to being rejected it becomes easier. Within rejection we have the opportunity to show grace, rely on God's sovereignty, and find rest knowing we have done what was asked of us from our Lord. We are never responsible for how the Gospel is received, we are merely responsible for sharing it!

It's not about if we will be rejected, but how will we respond when we are rejected! If we respond with grace, dependence, and praise we will be blessed. If we choose to not share, or let rejection frustrate us we will miss the blessing of being a herald of the Gospel.

Conclusion

Have you ever heard of Edward Kimball? He was the teacher for his church's teenage boys Sunday School class. He had been teaching these boys for a while now but felt like he wasn't making much headway, especially for one kid in particular. One day Edward felt God telling him to go meet this kid at his job and giving it one more shot at telling him the Gospel. Edward was nervous. He felt awkward and didn't want to be rejected by a kid, especially in a public place. But he knew that God had called him to do this so he showed up at the shoe store that the kid worked at and while he stocked the shelves Edward Kimball was able to lead Dwight L. Moody to Christ.

Long story short; later Moody was able to lead a man to Christ named Wilbur Chapman who was able to lead a professional baseball player to Christ named Billy Sunday who was then able to lead a man to Christ named Mordecai Ham who later led a 16 year old boy to Christ named Billy Graham.

The line of famous evangelists in this story is utterly unbelievable. But none of it would have been possible unless Edward Kimball hadn't fought through the thoughts of rejection and strived toward the blessing.

The challenge today is clear... don't fear rejection! Jesus was rejected, we will all be rejected... but there is a blessing in the rejection if we persevere in grace, and trust in our Lord.