

Privilege & Prejudice

Luke, Pt 12

Luke 4:14-30

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I. INTRODUCTION

a. Imagine something with me...

- i. Let's pretend that I, Allan, decided to open a new coffee shop here in Herndon.
 - And it was an awesome coffee shop.
 1. Great location with an awesome environment that people loved to spend time in.
 2. Great coffee.
 3. Great marketing.
 4. Great customer service.
 - I put a lot of work in coming up with a way of operating this coffee shop and I was very intentional with how it would run.
 1. And because of that, the shop made excellent profits.
- ii. Now, after managing the shop for a few years, let's say I decide to hire you as the manager.
 - I was moving away so I wanted someone else to run the shop.
 - And so I hire you and I am very explicit with you about the culture we have at this coffee shop and how we do things.
 1. And I am very clear that my expectation is that you would run the shop in the same way.
 - But, after I move away, you get lazy in your management, a new culture forms within the shop, and profits at the shop start to decline...
 1. The quality of the coffee declines.
 2. The shop is always dirty.
 3. The employees are unhappy...



- iii. So, I decide to send someone who works for me to the shop to check in on how things are going and to make sure that the manager is running the shop the way that I would expect.
 - But after you spend some time with my associate...you say to him:
 1. Listen, I know what I'm doing. The way you're suggesting I run this shop is way too radical.
 2. And you kick him out of the shop.
- iv. So, this time, what I decide to do is send my son.
 - You know, my son is part owner of the shop as well. I am not able to make a trip to check in on things myself. But I send my son because I assume that you, my manager, would respect and listen to my son when he shows up.
 - But after you spend some time with my son...you say to him:
 1. Listen, I know what I'm doing. The way you're suggesting I run this shop is crazy.
 2. And you kick even my son out of the shop!
 - What do you think my next move is as the owner of the shop?
 1. You're out!

b. Now, Jesus tells a similar story to this in Mark 12...it's called the Parable of the Tenants.

- i. We don't have time to go dig into that but here is what that I want us to think about this morning.



- God has established His church.
 1. And he has given His church a mission and he has given His church very specific instructions on what He wants His church to be doing.
 - And if, one day, Jesus, the Son of God and the Head of the Church, were to show up here at Grace Hill Church.
 1. And if He were to clarify for us and remind us exactly of what God has called us to do as a church and how God has called each of us to live our lives...
 2. My question is...Would we enthusiastically accept his message, humbly accept any correction, listen to any admonishment?
 3. Or....would what he says to us be such a radical departure from what we are used to doing in the church...that we would actually reject his message...even question if he really was the Son of God...because we couldn't fathom that what he was saying is what God is actually expecting of His church?
- ii. **What does God want His church doing today?**
- What are we supposed to be about?
 - What culture does He want in His church?
 - What impression does He want us to leave on the community?
 - Do we have any blind-spots? Have we gotten too comfortable or stuck in our ways?



c. This is what I want us talking about today.

- i. And it is a fair question because as we come to our next passage in the Gospel of Luke, this exact situation happens to a Synagogue in Nazareth.
 - They get a visit from Jesus...and they did not like what Jesus had to say to them...what Jesus says to them is such a radical departure from what is normal to them...instead of embracing the Messiah, God Himself in their midst...they reject him.

II. LUKE 4:14-30

a. In our study of the Gospel of Luke, we have now come to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

- i. Over the last two weeks, we have read about Jesus' baptism and then also Jesus' temptation in the desert.
 - And today, Jesus is going to begin His teaching ministry.

ii. Read & Teach Luke 4:14-30.

b. What did Jesus just say...what sensitive spot did Jesus just poke...that caused his hometown neighbors to go from marveling at Him to trying to murder Him just like that?

- i. I think there are two things...
 - Two things that we need to look at in the text and then humbly ask if these things are blind-spots for us as well.



- ii. #1 - Nazareth wanted the privilege of receiving the Kingdom but they did not want the privilege of sharing it.
- iii. #2 - Nazareth was blind to the Kingdom because of their prejudice.
 - Privilege and prejudice. Two powerful forces within this community that Jesus confronts directly and it causes this Synagogue to go from worship to rage.
 1. And we need to find out why and see if these blind-spots are a struggle for us too.

III. NAZARETH WANTED THE PRIVILEGE OF RECEIVING THE KINGDOM BUT NOT THE PRIVILEGE OF SHARING THE KINGDOM.

a. Before there was even a Jewish people...before there was even a nation of Israel...God said...

- i. I have a plan! I have a plan of redeeming mankind from their sin and redeeming this broken world and establishing my Kingdom and making all things new!
 - I am going to raise up a nation...a people.
 1. And I am going to have favor on this nation, bless this nation, make a covenant with this nation...all by my grace.
 2. I'm going to be steadfast and never walk away from my promises to this nation.



3. They are not going to deserve this kind of never-ending love...but that's what I'm going to do.
- And through that nation, all nations will see the kind of gracious God that I am.
 1. My blessing will flow through this one nation, Israel, to all of the nations.
 2. Because my Kingdom will be comprised of all nations and all peoples.
- ii. **This is what God said to Abraham – the Father of the nation of Israel.**
 - Genesis 12 – through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.
 1. That's the beginning of your Bible.
 - Go to the end of your Bible in the book of Revelation where God gives a vision of His Kingdom and it says that it includes every tribe, nation, and tongue.
 - iii. **So, from the beginning of your Bible to the end of your Bible, God has always been about His blessing reaching every nation on earth.**
 - And he chose one nation to be the conduit through which his blessing would flow to all nations.
 - Psalm 67:1-2
 1. *“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.”*
- b. **But, somewhere along the way for the Jews in Jesus' day, something changed.**
 - i. These people had a massive privilege.



- An amazing privilege where God chose them to be the people whom He would bless and through them His blessing would flow to the nations.
 1. They didn't earn this. They didn't ask for this.
 2. This was just sheer grace from God.
 3. Undeserved love and favor from God.
 4. An amazing privilege.
 - And at some point this amazing privilege turned into an entitlement.
- ii. **See, there is a difference between having a privilege and bring privileged...entitled.**
- See, when you have a privilege, you realize that you have received something, some sort of benefit or favor, and you didn't do anything to receive that.
 1. It produces gratitude in you.
 2. Psalm 67 reflects this in Israel.
 3. They worshiped God that He would bless them and give them the privilege of being able to push that blessing out out to the nations.
 - But, sometimes when you enjoy a privilege long enough...you can become privileged...where you forget the origin of your privilege and you fool yourself into thinking that you are the origin...that you earned it...you deserve this for some reason.
 1. And so, the very idea of others enjoying that blessing...is now a threat.



- iii. This is what happened to the Jews in that synagogue in Nazareth.
 - They thought God's blessing was just for them
 - 1. They got settled into their religion, into their routine, and they forgot what it was all about.

c. And so, when Jesus preached at the Synagogue, He reminded them what it was all about...

- i. He reminded them that God is on a rescue mission, not just for Israel, but for all nations.
 - To bring the Kingdom of God.
- ii. So, He gave two examples of God sending prophets to gentiles...non-Jews...and giving them a taste of God's Kingdom through meeting their physical needs and calling upon them to put their faith exclusively in the God of Israel.
 - So, the first example is of Elijah being sent to Zaraphath who was from Sidon.
 - 1. Zaraphath was a widow and a single mom struggling to get by as there was a famine throughout the entire region.
 - 2. And Elijah announces that the God of Israel will care for them by miraculously multiplying their supply of food.
 - 3. And when this widow's son dies, Elijah calls upon the God of Israel, and God raises Him from the dead.
 - 4. See, Elijah was giving this woman a taste of the Kingdom by meeting her physical needs.
 - 5. And He also gave her faith in the God of Israel...



6. 1 Kings 17:24 - *“And the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.”*
- The second example that Jesus gave in His sermon is of Elisha who was sent to Namaan who was a commander of the Syrian army.
 1. Namaan had leprosy...a fatal and devastating skin disease.
 2. And God sent Elisha to go heal him.
 3. To give Him a taste or the Kingdom of God by meeting his physical needs.
 4. But to also call Namaan to faith in the God of Israel.
 5. 2 Kings 5:15a - *“Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, “Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel...”*
 6. Taste of the Kingdom and faith in the God of Israel.
- iii. This was the ministry strategy that God gave Israel (and oh by the way this is the plan for the church)! And Jesus reminded the Synagogue in Nazareth of this and it enraged them!
 - Because Nazareth wanted the privilege of receiving the Kingdom but they did not want the privilege of sharing the Kingdom.
 - iv. And I think it would be humble and wise for the church today, for Grace Hill Church, to ask the question if we struggle with the same thing.



d. Oh, because look how much privilege we have!

- i. We live today after Christ came for the first time and gave Himself on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
 - We have the Gospel and we know that if anyone places their faith in Jesus...
 1. They not only have all of their sin forgiven but God begins and transformative work in them and gives them purpose and meaning.
 2. And they become citizens of God's Kingdom for all of eternity and will experience God's Kingdom when Jesus returns.
 - We have the privilege of having the Words of life but God has not given us the Words of life so we could just keep it to ourselves.
 1. But it's easy to get complacent in the church isn't it?
 2. Just like this Synagogue in Nazareth, somewhere along the way, the church abandoned the fact that at its most basic level, the church is a missionary agency just like the nation of Israel was.
 3. Its very purpose is to receive blessing and good news from God and push it out to all people.
 - But we so easily fall into thinking that what the church really is, is a club of people who have all enlightened themselves with the same theology and morality.
 1. And we waste so much time fretting and defending ourselves against the culture because we see our privilege as something to protect rather than something to share.



- ii. And on top of the privilege of having the Gospel, most of us here have the privilege of financial security, a home, a car, education, stability...not all of us fit all those categories...but many of us do.
 - It's a privilege to have these and there are many in our town who do not...they don't have the Gospel and they suffering in many ways.
- iii. And so, I believe if Jesus were to visit Grace Hill, he would challenge us in the same way.
 - He would challenge us to stop holding onto all of this privilege so close and start seeing that the true privilege is that we get to share all that we have with others.

e. How are we loving our town and our neighbors like Elijah and Elisha loved the Gentiles?

- i. How are we loving our town and our neighbors like Jesus loved the people he encountered?
 - Because whenever Jesus encountered people, he would give them a taste of the Kingdom through meeting their physical needs and He would call them to have faith in the God of Israel...the God of the Bible.
 - And that is what God has called His church to do in their towns and neighborhoods.
 1. Give people a taste of the Kingdom through meeting physical needs
 2. And call them to have faith exclusively in Jesus and the God of the Bible.
 - This is the Christian life...it's a missionary life and missionary lifestyle.



f. And so, this morning, I want to highlight and challenge all of us with a very specific opportunity we have to love our town and our neighbors in this way.

i. As I said earlier, we are all privileged in that we have the Gospel and most of us are privileged when it comes to stability in our lives.

- And so many of our neighbors here in Herndon do not have either of those privileges.

ii. I want to show you some statistics about the economic demographics of the kids in our town:

- Slide of the Elementary Schools
- Slide of HMS & HHS
- These are way higher than the county average.
 1. And so as we have built our relationship with this school, they have begun to come to us with needs...

iii. But here is what I am most excited about when it comes to the ways that we have been asked to serve these schools...mentoring.

- We just signed a formal partnership agreement with FCPS agreeing to continue to provide for the needs of the students of this school and also agreeing to provide mentors to students who need them.
- FCPS provides mentors to students who do not have a reliable adult presence in their lives...and guys...in our schools here in Herndon, there are kids on wait lists waiting to be assigned to a mentor.



1. Kids who need someone to talk to, help them with their homework, be a friend, and be consistent and reliable.
- And most of us in this room have the privilege to be able to mentor a student here in Herndon or in any other FCPS school.
 1. To mentor a student, once your approved, you meet with your student during a time that works for both of you during the school day for 30 minutes once a week.
 2. Provide examples from your time...
 - And there are kids in our town who need this. They have no reliable adult presence in their life.
 1. And I want to challenge every person in our church to figure out how to mentor a student here in Herndon at one of the schools.
 2. Every school here needs mentors.
 - And I want to challenge you not to let busyness or inconvenience of schedules to be your reason why you don't consider this.
 1. It is the biggest idol we contend with here in Northern Virginia.
 2. Busyness. It's the #1 excuse we use to protect our privilege vs. sharing it.
 - And I can't think of a more softball opportunity that we have to give these kids a taste of the Kingdom of God.
 1. Let's push out of our comfort.
 2. Let's not be a church that's unwilling to sacrifice to push the blessing of God beyond us and to other people.



- iv. If you're interested, I want you to send an e-mail to Nick Jones or myself.
 - Our desire is that we would have dozens of mentors here at Grace Hill...
 1. We are able to do the trainings and background checks straight from our offices here in Herndon.
- v. So, that was the first way Jesus challenged the Synagogue in Nazareth and us here at Grace Hill...seeing the true privilege as sharing the blessing of God with others.
 - And the second way Jesus challenged Nazareth was...

IV. NAZARETH WAS BLIND TO THE KINGDOM BECAUSE OF THEIR PREJUDICE.

- a. **Why did the people in that Synagogue try and murder Jesus?**
 - i. I mean, Jesus challenged them to push their blessing out to others and not just keep it for themselves...
 - That may have made them mad at Jesus but why would that create such a murderous rage amongst the people?
 - ii. There is not many forces inside the heart that can create this kind of rage instantaneously...like racism, prejudice, ethnocentrism, racial supremacy.
 - It's not that the people of this Synagogue were too comfortable to push the blessing of God out to the Gentiles...it's that they hated the Gentiles.



- They saw themselves as superior to the Gentiles.
 1. And they believed God hated them too.
- The prejudice of the people in this synagogue literally disqualified them from the Kingdom.
 1. They could not imagine God's Kingdom including other nations.
 2. To the point where they were willing to murder Jesus for being a false prophet.
 3. And Jesus, to our knowledge, never returned to Nazareth again after this.

b. Could it be possible that prejudice in our heart prevents us from loving our town and reaching them with the Gospel?

- i. Maybe it's not hatred towards groups of people...
 - But could it be fear?
 1. Fear of people who dress different, talk different, hang out by 7/11...
 - Could it be unproven assumptions?
 1. Assumption that the many people of our town who are in poverty did it to themselves.
 2. Assumption that the un-documented immigrants in our town are criminals.
 3. Assumptions that sending your kid to a school with high percentages of other races/languages or economically disadvantaged children will be bad for your child.
 4. That's an unproven assumption.



- ii. **Every one of us has some prejudice in our hearts.**
 - It may not be based on race but it could be other things like economic status, personality, or culture.
 - And prejudice will blind us from the beauty of God's Kingdom.
 - And it will stop us from giving our neighbors a taste of the Kingdom and calling people to put their faith in Christ.
- iii. **The church, of all groups of people, should be the most humble when it comes to seeking to repent of all prejudice and we ought to be the most inclusive group of people on the planet when it comes to pushing the blessing of God that we have received out to others.**
 - And so, this morning, I want all of us to ask...where does prejudice live in my heart?
 1. Where do I fear others?
 2. How do I make assumptions?
 3. What assumptions do I make about certain neighbors? **STORY??**
 - You know what would give our town a taste of the Kingdom...
 1. If we all lived our lives befriending people and building relationship before we ever allow ourselves to make assumptions.
 2. Loving people the way Jesus loved people.
 - Who are you making assumptions about?
 1. Because that may be the very person that God is calling you to give a taste of the Kingdom.



V. CONCLUSION

a. This Synagogue in Nazareth got a visit from the Lord Jesus Christ.

i. And it didn't end well.

- Because these people wanted to receive the blessing of God but they had no interest in sharing it.
- It's like they were a stagnant pond of water.
 1. They received from God...but they didn't pour out anywhere else.
 2. They just sat there.
 3. And they became foul...entitled...and prejudiced.
 4. They looked and felt nothing of the Kingdom of God.
 5. And sadly, there are many churches, churches that consider themselves evangelical, who are like this.

ii. Grace Hill, let's not be a stagnant, foul, pond who doesn't put everything on the line to love others.

- God has poured deeply into us.
 1. He has sent His Son Jesus to save us.
- And He has called us to pour out deeply into others.
 1. He has entrusted to us the message of the Gospel and called us to push it out to others.
 2. Not wait for them to come to us, but to push it out.
 3. It's what God asks of His people throughout the whole Bible.



- Somewhere along the way...we developed this view of Christianity where we do our own thing for the week...and then on Sundays we come into church to practice our faith.
 1. And now that our society is more post-Christian, we have to do hard work to protect our rights and be sure no one takes our privilege.
- But we got it backwards.
 1. The Bible has always assumed a missionary posture of its people in a hostile world.
 2. Where we take the week to courageously push the Gospel out to people
 3. And then on Sundays we come in to rest, to worship, to be encouraged by the Word of God and each other, so we can be prepared for another week.
- iii. **Let's not be a church that is all about protection and preference...let's be a church that is all about giving our neighbors a taste of God's Kingdom.**

VI. PRAY



VII. BENEDICTION

- i. Psalm 67:1-4a
 - ¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
² that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.
³ Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!
⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy...
- ii. Grace Hill, let's go into our town and to our neighborhoods and let us give our neighbors and our co-workers a taste of the Kingdom of God.
- iii. Prayer Ministers
- iv. Dismissal

