

Title: WHEN GOOD NEWS SOUNDS BAD, LUKE 4:21-30  
(Chatham, NJ; 02/03/13, AM) [D – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: Jesus challenges the people of his hometown who don't have enough faith in him.

Purpose: To think about why some people get so angry at the Word of God.

Introduction:

1. This episode occurs in a much larger narrative of redemption.
2. It is a short story that doesn't necessarily resolve conflict as much as it reveals it.
3. Jesus announces that Isaiah's prophecy is being fulfilled by his presence.

#### I. Questions that Arise

- A. What seems to be the point of the story?
  1. Hometown folks don't accept a prophet
  2. Matthew 13:57 gives the same statement
  3. I suspect that the story goes deeper
- B. Why Begin with Confrontation?
  1. Jesus doesn't try to explain himself
  2. He confronts them
  3. Their words (22) betray skepticism
  4. He expects they will quote, "Physician..."
  5. Jesus has a knack for knowing the thoughts of the people (5:22; 6:8; 7:40, etc.)
- C. Why are they so angry?
  1. They were "filled with wrath" (28)
  2. Enough to want to kill Jesus

#### II. Who Believes and Who Doesn't

- A. Elijah and the widow of Zarephath
  1. Elijah prays for a famine on wicked Israel during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel
  2. He is told to go to Zarephath where he is fed for several years
  3. She is a foreigner, and God makes the oil and flour replenish daily
- B. Elisha and Naaman, the leper
  1. 2 Kings 5 tells the story
  2. Naaman hears about the prophet from a slave girl
  3. The king of Israel fails in his faith, 5-7
  4. Yet Naaman is healed and believes, 2 Kings 5:15-19
- C. Who believes
  1. In both cases God finds faith in foreigners
  2. The people of God, on the other hand, are faithless
  3. The centurion in Jesus day is another example, Mt. 8

#### III. Why Does Good News Sound Bad?

- A. Familiarity
  1. His hometown knew too much about him
  2. Was this also the case of Elijah and Elisha?
  3. Faithlessness characterized the nation in their time
- B. Self-deceived about their own lack of faith?

1. If you were to ask them if they believed, they likely would have said yes
2. Jesus sees through the lack of repentance of many Jews, Mt. 11:20-24
3. This is a general human problem as much as a people of God problem
4. Rapper Psy failed to admit fault (see photocopy)

C. Expectations of God

1. Perhaps people expect God to do more
2. Many atheists keep bringing up the argument that they are angry that God could let innocent people die (see article from NY Times, 1/6/13)
3. It is the same thing that Job tried to bring up
4. We want somebody to fix things
5. We can't accept that God won't fix them in our way
6. C. S. Lewis addressed this in "God in the Dock" article
7. If God passes our test, we'll believe

Conclusion:

1. Let us learn the hard lesson from Jesus' hometown: we must open our hearts to faith.
2. As people of faith, we must believe even against our own expectations; God doesn't always act according to our plan.
3. We must work out our salvation (Phil 2:12 -14) and do so without grumbling or complaining.
4. Remember the widow; remember Naaman; remember the Centurion.
5. Imitate their faith.