

WHEN WE DON'T LIKE WHAT WE HEAR

There are all types of messages we would rather not receive. What do we do in those moments? It can be in a doctor's office and the word "cancer" is spoken. How do we take it in? Some of the messages come out of tragedy, such as there has been an accident, there is a child is missing, there is a fire in a house. These strike at a real core and fiber of our very selves. We respond sometimes in shock and disbelief, sometimes overwhelmed with emotion. Other messages come as a warning, such as weather alerts, an indication the battery is low on the phone or tablet, the oil needs changing, there are only a few bars for cell service. These kinds of messages offer us a chance to respond. Urgency is given some leeway and actions can be taken. But what about the messages that cut deep? What happens when we feel disrespected? What happens when we feel we are not listened to? Then what do we do? Anger and hate are fueled by messages we don't like.

The Gospel begins where last week's Gospel ended. Jesus is in the synagogue and brilliantly shares a proclamation of a year of favor from God. This year of favor is to give liberty to captives and give the oppressed relief. It is a message of glad tidings to the poor. It was not the year that everyone thought. I read recently that hate is a virus; it needs people to spread it with their words and rhetoric. I think fear can be fueled in the same way. We have a reaction to everything we hear and listen to. The gathering in the synagogue began to question the source of the proclamation. They find fault that Jesus could make a proclamation since He is only a carpenter's son. They do not want to hear the real Good News of a vision much greater than they were used to. Jesus furthers His stance by sharing with them examples of how His vision has been present in the past. They do not like His proof. It enrages them. They rise up and remove Him from the synagogue and out of the town. They are not in agreement with what they are hearing. It fills them with fury.

Society is struggling. It is filled with a virus of hate and fear. It is easy at times to see the fury in the energy of some gatherings. It leads us back to a simple question, what do we do when we hear something we do not like? We have options. We can shut down and close ourselves off. We can go after the source of the information and discredit it. We can gather those who agree with us and seek unity there so we are not isolated in our views. We can try to see the information as something we need to embrace and investigate. Disagreement isn't filled with fury, but disrespect finds its way to become fuel. Differences do not make one side more powerful than another, but a lack of understanding and true listening villainize the other. We are at times quick to react and quick to respond when we do not like what we hear.

The Gospel concludes with Jesus walking through them and leaving them. How did the fury dissipate? What did they see in Him? Was it that He wasn't fighting back? He is at the brow of a hill, most likely a cliff, yet He is not thrown down. What did they see that would prevent them from completing the condemnation? It won't be long before the leaders will turn Him over to be crucified. In Pilate's presence, that same demeanor will not have the same effect. He will be handed over to be crucified. It is the same Jesus, but what is the difference? Power? Position? Great stakes and greater hatred for a kingdom of the poor?

Surrender is a powerful thing. Nonviolent reactions serve as a powerful statement. Fury, hatred, and anger cannot be sustained unless they are fed. Jesus would have none of it. Something about Him was different. His kingdom was not of the world. He was not distracted about His mission. Too often distractions become what we hear, rather than hearing a simple message. Jesus offers a simple message.



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