

Misunderstood. Jesus rejected at Nazareth

No one wants to give bad news. Take the imperial messengers of Persia.

A Persian messenger wanted to give victory news. He'd be treated like a hero, food, drink and women. Defeat - not so good, the messenger would be killed. You might think this consigned to history.

TV weather forecasters also give bad news. David Langford of the Associated Press revealed that TV weather forecasters were "whacked by old ladies with umbrellas, accosted by drunks in bars, pelted with snowballs and galoshes, threatened with death, and accused of trying to play God."

Taking a line from Amos (5:19), the old testament prophets had a raw deal:

"In that day you will be like a man who runs from a lion – only to meet a bear. Escaping from the bear, he leans his hand against a wall in his house – and he's bitten by a snake"

Last year was the 25th anniversary of the whistleblowing charity Protect. Whistle-blowers take great personal risk when they expose wrong doing. Whistle-blowers risk condemnation, fines, arrest and in the worst cases put their lives at risk.

Many of us have stood up against wrong doing. Whistle-blowers and standing up for justice. Perhaps stood against unfair dismissal or shady dealings. We'd recognise the fear of recriminations. Excluded, disliked, ostracized – not easy. Yet here's the people's reaction to Jesus.

V28,29 "...the people ... were furious. Jumping up, they mobbed him and forced him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They intended to push him over the cliff"

Jesus is disliked, rejected, excluded and they want to wipe him out.

Umm, I get bad news bit, but the reading from Isaiah is good news. We think of Isaiah in Advent and Christmas, it's "good news"! We have that in v 21:

"Then he began to speak to them. 'The scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!'"

Jesus had credibility and authority:

V14,15 "Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone"

V22 "Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips."

Jesus is the hero – food, drink – perhaps not the women. Instead he's rejected, ostracized and faces death.

What's going on? It doesn't make any sense.

Jesus had a reputation for speaking well, and worth listening to. Ok, he'd just said he was the Messiah and it made sense to test his claim. They made an irrational decision to wipe him off the surface of the planet. Did they think "I don't want to hear this, I don't want this in my head"? In V22 they showed disbelief and perhaps even contempt:

V22 ..."How can this be?"..."Isn't this Joseph's son?"

What happened to these locals before they spoke those words? Were they gripped by fear? Did they fear losing their status and way of life. Did they create a more comfortable image of God the saviour, and Jesus didn't fit the bill? Perhaps he was turning the tables in their minds, just as he turned the tables in the temple. Disrupting their comfortable world, challenging their "I'm alright and I don't need God" attitude.

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“Almost every sinful action ever committed can be traced back to a selfish motive. It is a trait we hate in other people but justify in ourselves.” Stephen Kendrick, The Love Dare

Gods message is an invitation, and we have a choice. Jesus says “Follow me”! It’s an invitation. A few weeks ago Chris talked about ASK - Ask, Seek Knock.

We can choose to be part of Gods plan for us, belong and be part of his family, or reject God and be a slave to materialism and individualism. Power, wealth, status look very attractive, yet a dead end. That route starves us of joy and peace.

Yet as we walk our path of following Christ, how often does the lure of sin stop us from receiving all of that personal message for us. A message of hope, joy and peace. That was the message rejected by the people in the synagogue, a holy place. We’re now the living temples, we’re the saints in Christ. How open are our hearts and minds to Jesus?

This text got me wondering if I subtly resist Jesus getting too personal?

- Do I cling onto my world and fail to seek personal change through the Holy Spirit?
- Do I resist, drag my feet and hold back from where Jesus is leading me?
- Do I really welcome God to be King of every aspect of my life, my time, my dreams, my future?

Finally, in this passage, Jesus comes across as a superhero, filled with supernatural powers. Filled with the holy spirit, people were amazed at what he said. People are in awe of him. When he was rejected and people wanted to wipe him off the planet “he passed through the crowd and went on his way”, fulfilling prophecy written 700 years before he was born. God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are unstoppable. Jesus just keeps going, keeps coming back, keeps inviting us to have a closer relationship with God. Why?

Jesus loves me, this I know,
for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong;
they are weak, but he is strong.

Refrain:

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Prayerfully

Lord we can become sophisticated in our theology and spirituality...

We can feel we have arrived and get taken aback when you get too close to something we find challenging.

Grant us we pray a willing acceptance and a pure simplicity

To live within the simple glorious truth, that Jesus loves me

And whatever truth he would reveal, love is his motive and love his goal.

May we not subtly reject his message - but in child-like faith receive the love and grace he has for us.