

“Jesus is Rejected is Praised then Rejected by Hometown Folks:  
Why and how do we overcome Rejections?”

Sermon Notes by the Rev. Arnold Bush, February 3, 2013, 4<sup>th</sup> (C) Sunday after Epiphany, Church of the Epiphany, Tallassee, AL 36078

Propers: Jeremiah 1:4-10; PS 71:1-6; I Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30

Purpose: How we (human beings) as reject changes to our customs and traditions. How best to respond and overcome feelings of rejections?

I Introduction: Examples of Rejection

- A social group of friends have a party and for some reason you are not included in the invitation.
- A member of you extended family is neglecting to return you call and seems to be avoiding you.
- Your son or daughter is a career military person and is passed over for a higher for not passing the tech sergeant examination... you son or daughter feels rejected.
- You are 58 years old person who has been working with a company for 30 years and the boss has just informed you your position in the company has been replaced by a 23 year old graduate.
- You have been serving in the military for 8 years returning from wars in Iraqi and Afghanistan and you a seeking a job in Montgomery. You have not landed a job in ten interviews.
- Your grandson is 18 who has had difficulty going through high school and the tell your daughters family and you he is running away from home, do not try to contact me. The family feels rejected.
- A 17-year-old daughter is in constant conflict with her parents, so she fines a buddy and takes over with you credit card and some cash stolen from home. The disappear for a few days until a law enforcement officer calls you from New Mexico. As a parent you feel rejected.
- You have been unemployed three months, your income has dropped, creditors are calling, and everyone is expecting a payment by check. You are in a financial pinch and you feel rejected. In a men’s Bible Study Group of 15 members 4 men has been unemployed for months.
- You have been in good health, but your need for an operation to correct the problem. You have prayed and prayed but the prognosis is not good news... you are rejected as a high-risk surgical patient... you feel rejected by God.
- After being married for 15 years, then one incident after another, your spouse breaks the news that they want out of the marriage. You feel rejected.

These are some every day everyday experiences of rejection. I am sure you could finish this sentence: “When ..... (blank) did this. I felt/feel rejected.”

II A Gospel Story (LK 4) of rejection from the Hometown

Last Sunday and this Sunday we have a story of rejection in Luke 4: Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth. He had been popular in the region of Galilee healing and teaching, so he returns to the local synagogue in this village of 100-150. (See Bargil

Pizner's, With Jesus through Galilee according to the fifth Gospel) He stands up to read from Isaiah 61, which covers 5 ministries of the Jewish Messiah:

"God has anointed me to:

1. Preach the good news to poor.
2. Proclaim release to the prisoners.
3. Recover sight to the blind.
4. Let the downtrodden go free.
5. Proclaim the year of Jubilee, when the debtors are forgiven. Then Luke states they were amazed at his gracious words that came from his mouth.

III Reasons why Jesus was rejected and run off the cliff in Nazareth:

1. When hometown boy becomes successful and returns home there are some who celebrate his success, but always some who are envious and jealous. They said aren't your just Joseph's son.... We knew him growing up around here... I do not have to listen to him. Who is he some up to up, better than we are?
2. A second matter that seems to be the primary reason for the Rejection by the Hometown crowd: A prevalent attitude among the Jewish leaders and followers in the time of Jesus. Biblical scholars believe they interpreted themselves as the only recipients of God's Good News. Those in the synagogue, along with many other synagogues, believed with a strong sense of a localized God who had been guiding their history as a chosen people. Yahweh was a God that traditionally took their side and he was always against troublesome enemies. In the Jewish culture of that day, there was a strong selfish interest in nationalism. Maybe chanted like this: "God brings us prosperity and he wants to destroy all the enemies." If Jesus knew this sort of isolationism, God in on our side, God is to be blessing us and not them. Then, what stories in the OT scriptures would confront this attitude and belief about Yahweh?

According to the verses in this paragraph, Jesus chose two of the most popular prophets, Elijah and Elisha. In the Pro-Jewish crowd, Elijah goes to a non-Jewish woman from Sidon who was not part of the many Jewish widows experiencing this great famine. The listeners with some selective memory, would find this story repugnant with their believe their God over their nation. Then Jesus mentions another story about Elisha who was asked to go to a commander of an enemy army. There were many lepers all over Israel, but Elisha was sent to this one officer in the enemy's military. This would infuriate the religious leaders. Or this decade it would be like the US military sending medical supplies and food to the core people around OSAMA BENSADON (? sp) or ide Amin of Uganda a cure for Aids without sending to any Aids victims in Africa. The APPLICATION: I recall when living in Mississippi in the 1960's, when white clergy would preach about welcoming the blacks into our congregation. Or Episcopal or Methodist pastors were saying we need to open our doors to the blacks in our community. If one were reading and preaching about the welcoming of those different from us... were labeled "communists" or "outside integrationists". I recall as the new rector of St. Jude's, five of the Episcopal parishes

invited Charles Fulton, an architect graduate of Auburn and rector of the Episcopal Church in Franklin TN lead a seminar on growing Episcopal Congregations. His point was we must be welcoming to those on various economic levels, the rich, the well educated and those with not advance education. Charles said he was here to give unwanted truth of a diagnosis of we need to do to grow. In the debriefing Charles' sessions a few days later, two persons at the seminar said I did not like him. I recall often Episcopalians like to have new members who wear finer clothing and have big fat wallets, but also do not have any strong opinions how things should run in the church. We do not want their opinion on how we do things around here... for we do not want to change. In the Top bullets for growing a church:

One Research said, "If you don't Want Change, Don't Invite New People."

3. Thirdly, Jesus is taking on the role of the prophet. Prophecy is not so much foretelling or predicting the future. Prophecy is forth telling the truth for a particular circumstance. Jesus is challenging the hometown folks to cast a wider net for God Grace for all peoples. Prophecy is the action or language that corrects our immoral behavior into moral behavior. As we live out our Christian life style we certainly participate in the life of the church to bring us SATISFACTION, FULFILLMENT, CONFORT. But also the other side of this life in the Church is the prophetic. That admonition to repent; turn away from that destructive behavior. Thus, our life in the Church provides SATISFACTON BUT ALSO provides a corrective prophecy, THAT WILL SHAKE US UP. Jesus is making a correction from their belief God is only interested in those who practice the Jewish traditions, but He also bring healing and wholeness to pagans and gentiles.

Iv Here are ways we may respond to REJECTION.

I opened this sermon listing various rejections we may have experienced in our life.... And ways we will experience rejections.

- Some retaliate with indifference... They turn cold and withdraw from the persons with whom they are in conflict, been rejected.
- Some digest the rejection till it metastasizes in to a heart full of bitterness. If this rejection came in a church setting, they have a hard time forgiving the persons involved, thus they simply drop out of the church.
- Some folks have been rejected and they have digested the Failure or rejection to the point they have defined themselves with this rejection. It colors their personality. I recall a next-door neighbor who was divorced, deceived, rejected by her husband. I do not want to minimize the pain and deception she experienced but this emotional scare was constantly brought up in her daily conversation...She needed a Holy Spirit Healing.... She would almost apologize for living.

V Here is a list of some more helpful ways to respond to Rejection

1. Do not minimize the pain or rejection... share it openly...One role of a Christian Community in the Body of Christ is to listen non-judgmentally to the pain. Sometimes we have a painful rejection that we want to push it down like a large beach ball into the water... but somehow it keeps coming up. Talk

it out pray over it. Small groups and classes in the Church are to be safe places where we can share our hurts and rejections.

2. On rule of thumb is the 24-hour practice. If you are rejected, hurt by a supervisor, close friend, etc. wait 24 hours to you act on the Rejection. When I have an anxiety-provoking event, I have found this helpful. Just this week a lawyer friend of mind said he has some failures and rejections... but he mentioned the 24-hour rule as helpful.
3. In psychology 101, you may have heard about the difference between REACTION AND RESPONSE. Reaction comes minutes after the rejection with anger, name-calling, unhealthy decisions immediately, name-calling, sometimes-acute pain and confusion. RESPONSE is moving from your heart to your head. Response is taking time to ask God, "What am I to do?" "What is you Will for me in this situation.
4. Some Rejections may become a Holy Time to do an examination of your life. In doing marriage counseling for persons with a second marriage one of the most common questions is from the past experience of marriage what have you learned about yourself? Also the loss of a job, and be valley walks where God can walk beside you but a time to make some behavior changes.
5. In in a relationship with someone you know well. I have found this helpful in church planning or committee settings. If someone says something you disagree with, then one responds with three reasons why that is a good idea, and then 5 reasons why you disagree with that decision.
6. I heard this coming from a successful insurance officer: Our new recruits were asked to make a 100 telephone calls... they got a lot of rejections. He said this helped me face and learn to deal with rejections.
7. An important theological point is to experience that deep acknowledgement that God loves you. "You are my beloved daughter and Son..." This deep meaningful relationship with Jesus gives us inner strength to live with the rejections that come our way.
8. Prayer....