

Matthew 13.53-4.12 | Saved by Rejection
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 Sam Ford

INTRO | JESUS' REJECTION

This is the final sermon in book 2—halfway through our verse by verse study of the book of Matthew. Having been shunned by the irreligious who loved their bacon and accused by the religious who loved their rules, it all ends with **the absolute rejection of Jesus by his hometown of Nazareth**. Born in Bethlehem, ministered from Capernaum, died in Jerusalem, Jesus spent most of his life in Nazareth. Recognized as the armpit of northern Israel, the small town of Nazareth welcomed their native son into the synagogue to teach. This stop in Nazareth is the last recorded time Jesus teaches in a synagogue. In the gospel of Luke, Nazareth was the first place he teaches. Possibly the same event, Luke chapter 4 records that Jesus went to Nazareth on the Sabbath day and stood up to read a prophecy from the book of Isaiah saying: **because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.** Jesus proceeds to roll up the scroll, hand it to attendant, sit down and declare, **"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."** Those in attendance proceed to freak out, take him to a cliff at the edge of town, and attempt to throw him off.

Our text at the end of chapter 13 is, therefore, an exclamation point on rejection. **EVERYONE REJECTED JESUS. Rejection is when an individual, or a group, denies one's affections and refuses to accept them.** Everyone has experienced the pain of being rejected. If *sinless* Jesus experienced rejection, we sinners can expect the same. Rejection can be very passive, where you are ignored or passed over. This kind of rejection is often just as painful as being actively excluded, misrepresented, or accused. Jesus was not only rejected for who he claimed to be, he was rejected for what he taught. Men accused him of being unlawful, immoral, demon-possessed, and too radical. Now, Jesus is rejected for being too ordinary.

Jesus doesn't care much about the opinions of men, but we do. All of us struggle with the fear of rejection. One reason I included the section in chapter 14 was to show that even a powerful, wealthy, and famous King like Herod Antipas fears rejection. Verse 9 implies that, though he hated John's moral admonishments, Herod did not want to kill him. But because of what he said in front of his guests, he commanded it. In order to save face, Herod killed a man. Fear of the rejection can lead a man to sin. If fear of men's approval can lead a King to kill, it can lead us to lie (or worse) so that others think better of us. **And every time we do, regardless of what we confess, we have in that moment rejected Jesus for something we find more important.**

We could probably learn a lot about how to handle our own rejection by how Jesus handles his, but we are not Jesus in this story. **We are not the rejected; we are the ones who reject.** We reject THE SAVIOR for another man-made savior that we believe will make us happier than the real one. We know that non-believers reject Jesus as savior; but there is a believer's rejection. I am convinced that the root cause of spiritual deadness in our faith is the result of a growing unbelief in the Savior in which we say believe.

CAUSES OF REJECTION

Every relationship goes through stages. **The first stage is the romance, honeymoon, super-awesome stage.** This is the stage where everything is exciting and easy. You only see the best in the person because you only want to see the best of the person. As you study the person, and every new discovery is mind-blowing. Communication is constant; every interaction is always special and never long enough. The

desire for intimacy burns and the slightest touch is exhilarating. At this stage, you will spend all kinds of time, money, and energy out of genuine desire and affection. Sacrifice for this person is easy and rewarding. **Eventually, time passes and the relationship changes.** The relationship requires a bit more work and the feelings of romance aren't as natural (not fades – first kiss). At some point, the relationship experiences disillusionment. This person who you devoted your life to disappoints you because they fall short of the expectations you had—spoken or not. Sometimes this is the result of a broken trust, a tragedy, or an offense, but more often than not, it is the result of a revelation. Who this person is doesn't match what you thought, felt, or experienced. It is at this point that a decision is made. Depending on what they choose, the relationship learns and grows OR it remains offended and slowly dies.

Astonished by Jesus

A relationship with Jesus can experience the same kind of evolution. Consider how Nazareth experiences Jesus' return home. Upon his arrival, he enters into the synagogue and proceeds to teach. **At first, the people are ASTONISHED BY JESUS (54).** His miracles are amazing. His compassion for the sick and poor is unparalleled. His judgment on the religious self-righteous is comforting. His wisdom is inspiring. His teaching is unlike anything they have ever heard! They are excited about Jesus, wondering, WHO IS THIS MAN?! Do you remember the romance you had when you first met Jesus? Do you remember how excited you were with every word? Do you remember when he surprised you? Do you remember when you looked forward to listening to him, talking with him, and telling others about Him because you wanted to?

Offended by Jesus

The Nazarenes were, if only for a moment, convinced that Jesus was something special. They begin to ask each other questions: **“Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”** The Bible says they quickly became offended.

The Pharisees and the Nazarenes were both OFFENDED BY JESUS but for different reasons. The Pharisees were also *initially* excited about Jesus. When they watched his miracles, they too wondered if this was the man born to be King. The seeds of offense were first planted when they watched him select a sinful tax collector as a disciple. They grew when he blasphemously forgave a man's sins. Their offenses were confirmed when he challenged their understanding of God's law and healed a man on the Sabbath. And their offense deepened when he called them children of the devil. They didn't like what Jesus taught. Many non-believers reject Jesus for this reason—even those that get initially excited. But when they finally listen to what Jesus taught and claimed, they are offended. Sinless Jesus offends our sinful intellect, emotion, and experience. When something doesn't make sense, feel right, or match our reality—**we reject Him.**

The Nazarenes, on the other hand, are not necessarily offended by what Jesus taught; they are offended by who they assume He is. What began as “WHO IS THIS MAN” turns to “WHO DOES THIS MAN THINK HE IS?” Even though they are momentarily impressed by His teaching, the feelings of astonishment are quickly overshadowed by the contempt of familiarity. They knew the story around His birth, knew him as a toddler, child, and teen, knew what His job was before he was “famous”, know his brothers and sisters. The people of Nazareth grew up with Jesus for 30 years. And in those 30 years they saw nothing that would make them think he was anything more than a good man, certainly not the God-man. **They reject Him because they are too familiar with Him.** They assume they know everything there is to know about Jesus. Regardless of what they might see with their own eyes, or hear with their own ears, they dismiss him

based on their assumptions or the opinions of others. **Men can know ABOUT Jesus and not KNOW Jesus.**

Has your familiarity with Jesus begun to hinder your faith? There are many hear who have known Jesus for many years, maybe even 30. The question is, how has your relationship with him changed over the years? It is certainly different than when it first began, but is it better? As the years go on, do you find yourself getting more curious about Jesus or more apathetic toward Him. Is life with Jesus becoming more surprising or more predictable to you? Is serving Jesus becoming more important or less to you? **Has your familiarity with Jesus led to a deeper intimacy with Jesus?**

SYMPTOMS OF REJECTION

The Nazarenes believe he is less than He is. In verse 57, Jesus says, **“A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.”** He is a son, a brother, and a carpenter, but He is also a prophet. Even if we do not verbally reject Jesus as Lord, we often reject him functionally. We follow him as a great example, appreciate him as a helpful counselor, or even admire him a wise teacher, but fail to remember He is King. Like the Nazarenes, we acknowledge we used to “live with him”, but our years of familiarity have hindered our faith. **How do you know you're in that place of rejection?**

1. You're no longer excited about a relationship with Jesus.
2. You're not excited about other people's relationships with Jesus; in fact you discourage them.
3. You don't invite Jesus to come with you where you go.
4. You don't want spend time listening to Jesus (Bible)
5. You don't want to spend time talking with Jesus (Prayer)
6. You don't enjoy intimacy with Jesus body (Church)
7. You don't expect to learn anything new about Jesus (not curious)
8. You never tell anyone else about your relationship with Jesus (no one know you're in a relationship)
9. You find yourself fantasizing about other saviors (other ultimate sources of meaning, joy, hope).

Having once been astonished and in love with Jesus, over time, you find yourself disillusioned because we have forgotten who He truly is. Instead of finding a seeking for a deeper intimacy, you fall into apathy. **An apathetic faith, left unchecked, leads to unbelief.** ⁵⁸ **And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.** Matthew implies that the mighty work of Jesus Christ in our life is somehow connected to our acceptance, or rejection of Christ's true identity. It's not that Jesus COULD not do works, but that he DID NOT. I wonder if we don't experience Jesus actively working in our lives because we don't really expect Him to. Or maybe we don't ask Him to. Or maybe we don't want Him to. I wonder sometimes if we simply believe Jesus is a good man with good intentions who would help if he could, but not the God-man with all authority who promises to.

SALVATION OF REJECTION

(This sermon has had at least three titles and four revisions since yesterday. Usually when sermons are that difficult, it is **because I have thought too much about what others need to be taught, and not enough about what I need to learn.**

As I struggled to end this sermon, I was consumed with fear and anxiety. Why? Ironically, it is because I don't want to feel rejected. What YOU think about begins to overshadow what Jesus thinks about me. That's what these Nazarenes are really worried about. At the heart of their refusal to worship Jesus is an effort to avoid their own rejection—like HEROD, they are saving face with each other. There are Pharisees who boldly reject JESUS with their mouths saying, I HATE YOU. **And there are Nazarenes who passively reject JESUS saying in their hearts, I DON'T NEED YOU. If these guys admit that Jesus is the GOD-man, then they have to admit that they are not GOOD men.**

When all is said and done, we put too much faith in men's rejection OF, and not enough faith in the rejection of Jesus FOR US. The sinless Son of God was rejected by everyone. He wasn't bad enough for the gentiles, or good enough for the fundamentalists, or mystical enough for the charismatics, or strong enough for the culture, or different enough for his hometown. **Jesus became worthless so that I might become worthy.** Jesus experienced total rejection FROM EVERYONE who "matters" on earth, so that I might enjoy acceptance from the only one that matters in heaven. Listen to the Prophet Isaiah 53.3-6, 10-11:

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| <p>³ He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.</p> <p>⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.</p> <p>⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us
peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.</p> <p>⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own
way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.</p> | <p>¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his
days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.</p> <p>¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and
be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my
servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.</p> |
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I am a reject who worships a reject. The cross is never too familiar and always inspiring, and we need to replay it like we replay our old wedding videos to rekindle our love. Jesus took my place for my rebellion. Jesus endured my grief. Jesus carried my sorrows. Jesus bore my affliction. Jesus carried my sin. Jesus paid my debt. Be astonished, be humbled, be inspired, and be amazed by God's love for us in the rejection of Christ.