



* **“WHEN YOU FEEL REJECTED”**

Biblical Text: Luke 4:16-24

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It's been a tough week in Kansas City and in the State of Kansas, and not just because of basketball. To be sure, the basketball results were heartbreaking. * Both KU and Kansas State left the tournament early feeling rejected and disappointed. *

But those feeling of loss pale in comparison to the devastation from Spring storms and Kansas wildfires. * The good people of Oak Grove and Smithville are reeling after tornadoes destroyed their homes, wondering how they'll recover and, *“Why us?”*

So are people in Clark and Lane counties, especially Ashland and Dighton, as well as other Kansas counties. * Now more than 700,000 acres are laid waste and homes and ranches are burned to the ground. The wildfire losses in cattle, land, homes, farms, equipment and lives disrupted are unimaginable. * Families are starting over literally from zero. Our hearts are breaking with them, as they feel lost and disconnected. *

On a national level, the poor and vulnerable wonder if they matter* to Washington, as do immigrants in our midst. * Women wonder if anyone notices their contributions in society, as some of the gains of recent decades in women's health and greater income parity seem under attack. * Feeling rejected is hard, and lonely.

It's one of the subjects we're addressing in our Lenten series, *“In the Silence.”*

And rejection is hard on a personal level, whoever you are. Governor Brownback, if he leaves for a post in Italy, * will leave Kansas feeling a failure in his hope for the KS economy and rejected by voters. Not many will feel any sympathy. **But we should.**

I know, I know. I can't believe I just said that either. * But here's the deal. Behind the office, or the political party, or the positions, with which we may and many of us certainly do differ, Governor Sam Brownback is a human being. He was born in Garnett, Ks. and was raised on a farm and in the Methodist Church. He's a graduate of both Kansas State and the University of Kansas. Most of all he is a child of God.

In our contentious political environment, we forget that we all matter to God. * The Bible teaches that Black lives matter. Women's lives matter. Refugee lives matter. Gay and straight lives matter. Young and old lives matter. Republican and Democrat lives matter. All lives matter. But acceptance of difference is rare, and rejection runs rampant. * Romans 2:11 says, *“God shows no partiality.”*¹ But we do.

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*All of us have experienced or felt rejected, or excluded in our lifetime, and it hurts. It happens at any age and for hundreds of reasons every day. *

- When we aren't chosen for a playground game or school activity.
- When despite your best efforts, you've failed to achieve your goals.
- When our friends or family fail to include us, or seem to be avoiding us.
- When we're passed over for promotion or not picked for a key job assignment.
- When someone assumes because of your age you have nothing to contribute.
- When people treat you differently because of race, body size, gender or disability.
- When you have prayed, and prayed but the prognosis is not good news.
- When we have been downsized, outsourced, or otherwise lost our job.
- When, despite your dreams for them, your children choose a different path.
- When your spouse breaks the news that they want out of your marriage.
- When we join in a conversation and someone talks over us and no one notices.
- When in hundreds of different ways, we could finish this sentence:

"When someone (fill in the blank), I felt discounted or dismissed or rejected."

*We have all felt the sting of rejection. But here's the good news: God can take our most painful moments and create something good out of them. Our feelings of rejection can be overcome by something amazing if we don't try to cope on our own. Jesus leaves us a model in our text today. So, open your Bibles to Luke 4:16.

The setting is clear in the first verses. **"When (Jesus) came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom."*²

Verse 16 tells us three important things. That Jesus was *in his home town. And he was in Church* and that it was his custom to go to Church.* So you're in good company. If being in Church was good for Jesus, it's likely good for you!

Verse 17 says: **"He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He ... found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...'"*³

His text was the powerful promise on which this series is based from Isaiah 61. *The promise of Good News for the poor, afflicted, rejected, imprisoned, and grieving and that God would * *"...give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes and the oil of gladness instead of mourning."*⁴ Jesus added that he would fulfill that promise.

Jesus then began to preach on how that promise would be fulfilled. * He would not start at home, with those at ease in Zion, or Nazareth, or Fairway, for example.

² Luke 4:16, *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Copyright © 1989, the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

³ Ibid. Luke 4:17, *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*.

⁴ Isaiah 61:3, paraphrased from the *New Revised Standard Version* and other translations by the author.

No, his ministry would not begin at home, but in Capernaum, with widows and lepers, and those most in need. He didn't say the good home folks would be left out, but that's what they assumed. And then, the opposite of all heaven, broke loose.

It began as a little grumbling. Matthew 13:54-57, says that's how it started: **"Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?" "And they took offense at him."*⁵

But soon the nice Church people at Nazareth turned into an unruly crowd. Luke 4:28-29 tells us, **"All in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and put him out of the city, so that they might throw him over the cliff."*⁶

I think it's not by accident that Jesus experienced temptation, as I said last week. I also don't think that his first sermon text from Isaiah 61 was chosen by accident. **And Jesus' experience of rejection has lessons to teach us.**

It surely is teaching us that we are not alone when we feel rejected. Jesus surely understands what we've experienced. Isaiah 53:3 says, *"He was despised and rejected... a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."*⁷

It also teaches us that good things can come out of our lowest moments, even from rejection. Psalm 118:22 and Matthew 21:42 says, *"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes."*⁸

We also can learn from what Jesus did not do. He did not ignore the pain of rejection – otherwise it would not have been included in the Bible. But he also did not react or retaliate, so common in our time. **There is a better way.**

Responding is always better than reacting. We can take time to ask God, *"What am I to do?"* and *"What is your will for me in this situation?"* and *"What would Jesus do?"*

And we can remember that God loves us in a way more important than any human experience. He says to us, as he did to Jesus at his baptism, *"You are my beloved son or daughter."* This love helps us live with the rejections that may come our way.

Last of all we can get on with the work of serving Christ every day and not dwell on our experience or feelings of rejection. That's what Jesus did. Luke 4:30 says *"He walked right through the crowd and went on his way."*

Let us pray.

⁵ Mathew 13: 54, 57, *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®, Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Unauthorized reproduction of this publication is prohibited. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

⁶ Op. Cit. Luke 4:28-29. Paraphrased from the *New Revised Standard Version* and other translations by the author.

⁷ Op Cit. Isaiah 53:3, *Revised Standard Version*.

⁸ Psalm 118:22 and Matthew 21:42. *New International Version*®, Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission.