

1 Corinthians 13: 1–13; Luke 4: 21–30

What are you supposed to do when someone disrespects you? You know I am no fool. I was there and saw him with my own eyes. Being one of his followers and closest friends, I went with him into different towns. We were strangers and we risked everything being the outsiders. Some of us talked about what we were doing in these strange towns and decided that if we were going to be strong then we needed people who were on our side. We didn't complain when Jesus began teaching, healing, and proclaiming the good news about God to the people of northern Galilee.

Did you know I am from Nazareth? That's right! Jesus of Nazareth and I come from the same town. I remember thinking that if Jesus was going to be performing these wonderful miracles to people outside of our clan, our gang then what kind of amazing things would he do for us? That's the way it works, you take care of your own. But what are you supposed to do when someone disrespects you?

Finally the time had come; we were back on our own home turf. We went down to the center of town with Jesus. I was so excited to get to see and be a part of what Jesus was going to do for us. And for me, Jesus was probably going to make me his first in command, his right hand man!

The anticipation was killing me! Come on Jesus, do those miracles you did in Capernaum but be better for us. Treat us special! After all we raised you from a child. You owe us respect; you owe us your life. Surely you of all people will not disrespect us!

Brothers and sisters, much of the polarity that our society is experiencing has to do with this feeling of being disrespected. Tomorrow a group from this church will be sharing this message to men in the Dauphin County Prison. A group of men will come that are hungry for hope. What would we be if we gave them none of that hope which we receive ourselves from Jesus Christ? Well I guess we would be like the people from Jesus' hometown, believing that we deserve something special from God.

But I doubt that I will have to tell them anything about respect. The fact that disrespect in gangs and prisons can get a person killed. I won't have to tell them about anger. This is the kind of anger that one feels when disrespect is placed on you and how our demand for respect can even cause one to hurt another, or worse. We demand RESPECT!

And this is what moves in the scripture for us today. Jesus' statement to his hometown is received as disrespect. They respond in anger. They drive Jesus out of town, haul him up to the edge of a cliff and they are ready to throw

him off! Jesus is taken against his will by his own people, captured, pushed around and judged that he should die.

This won't be the last time this happens to the man. Jesus will, later in his life, be arrested, taken into custody, rushed through a trial, and sentenced to death. When it happens at the hands of the government the officials will succeed. They kill the Savior Jesus Christ. The one who has come to free the captives, heal the sick, and bring good news to the poor. They kill him and believe that they have the last word. I say they killed him, but how much of my own behavior and the choices I make in my life try to kill the Spirit? How often have I myself denied the message of good news to be delivered to all people, thinking that I have the last word?

I call you brothers, because we are brothers in Christ. We can say a lot of words to God, our Father, but we never get the last word. We see it with Jesus' homeboy's as they take him prisoner. We see it with the government that sends him to his crucifixion. Their behavior did not get the last word on God and our behavior and choices also does not get the last word. Jesus Christ's resurrection on Easter turns the table on death. God's forgiveness given to us free-of-charge turns the table on our guilt. God turns the table on your life!

No, you and I and the prisoners of Dauphin County are like the people of Capernaum. Jesus comes to us in the power of the Spirit. God is not about boundaries, tribes, gangs, church denominations, race or even religion. We humans make those things. God is all about restoration. Let God restore you! God deserves that respect, but He does not demand respect from you, it is your choice. Following Christ is not a guarantee for an easy life, but it means a life of purpose and promise. And God promises never to disrespect a Christ follower. There is still freedom for captives, healing for the sick, and good news to all men and women.

AMEN.