



Beginning of the Ecclesiastical New Year

Today is the beginning of the Church New Year and so we are reminded of the “Year of the Lord’s favor,” which is to bring good news to the poor, proclaim the release of captives, give sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free. In Isaiah, these are signs that the Anointed One (Christ) has come bearing God’s grace. But, by referencing Elias (vv. 25-26), Jesus shows us that God’s grace benefits the pagans, not Israel! The people of Jesus’s home town wanted him to say that God was working to vindicate them and overthrow the Romans, but Jesus corrects them. God’s grace is about healing all people, including their worst enemy. The crowd was astonished that Jesus spoke about such grace for non-Judeans rather than revenge for evil-doers.

Scripture: Luke 4:16-22 (I recommend reading through verse 29)

Bottom Line: The Gospel often brings about violent reactions by demanding that we always extend grace to our enemies.

Discussion Questions

1. What parts of the gospel do you find shocking? What aspects of your life does it challenge? How does it force you to think differently about those around you?
2. Does it surprise you that Jesus is speaking about grace for everyone, even Israel’s enemies? If Jesus were preaching in modern-day America, who would he be extending grace to? How does this change your world view?
3. Jesus extending grace to those who crucified him by forgiving them. What does this tell you about how to live your life? Who do you need to forgive? What’s stopping you from doing so? How can you overcome that roadblock?
4. Why is this grace an important part of God’s Kingdom? What does this tell you about God and his nature?

Moving Forward

Everyone likes to claim that God is on their side and against their enemies—“God bless America.” But the gospel is quite shocking. The story of Elias and Elisha demonstrates that God shows mercy on Israel’s enemies, the pagans. Israel’s role was to be a light to the nations and bring God’s mercy to them. This would be like, in the time of WWII, standing in occupied France and preaching about grace for the Axis powers. This message brought about a violent reaction: the crowd tried to throw Jesus off a cliff. How does today’s gospel challenge your interests and agenda? How will you become a bearer of grace to your enemies?

Changing Your Mind

“‘Today,’ he began, ‘this scripture is fulfilled in your own hearing.’ Everyone remarked at him; they were astonished at the words coming out of his mouth – words of sheer grace.” (Luke 4:21-22 NTE)