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Luke 4:14-30  
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## Jesus Rejected in Nazareth

Texas Rangers Starting Pitcher Jacob deGrom was one of the best pitchers in the world. 318 times in his career, he threw 100mph pitches. 100mph! That is until two years ago when his elbow literally snapped requiring him to have Tommy John surgery for the second time.

But deGrom found his way back into pitching, by going a little slower, not faster. In 2025, DeGrom's fastball velocity averaged 97 mph—still plenty fast, but no longer at the top of the leaderboard.

Research has shown that the unending pursuit of speed is likely the biggest driver of arm injuries that has plagued baseball over the past decade. The best way to reverse the trend, doctors say, is for pitchers to move away from the “maximum effort” style in favor of a more measured approach that prioritizes location.

So now deGrom is intentionally dialing it down just a touch. No longer relying on power the way he once did. Now, it's about technique. Intentionality. Changing things up. Slowing it down.<sup>1</sup>

What does baseball have to do with today's scripture?

Everything. Today, we hear a story when Jesus calls his hometown congregation to slow down so that they don't miss the Spirit of God at work among them as they had in the past...and it infuriated them.

Please join me as we hear this story from Luke 4:14-30.

**14** Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit. News about him spread through the whole countryside. **15** He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

**16** Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. On the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue as he usually did. He stood up to read. **17** And the scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. Jesus unrolled it and found the right place. There it is written,

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me.

He has anointed me

to announce the good news to the poor.

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<sup>1</sup> Jared Diamond, “The Pitcher Who Came Back From the Brink—By Learning to Throw Slower,” The Wall Street Journal (5-23-25) posted on Preaching Today Website at <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2025/december/pro-pitcher-learned-to-pitch-slower-not-faster.html>

He has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners.

He has sent me so that the blind will see again.

He wants me to set free those who are treated badly.

19 And he has sent me to announce the year when he will set his people free.”  
(Isaiah 61:1,2)

20 Then Jesus rolled up the scroll. He gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were staring at him. 21 He began by saying to them, “Today this passage of Scripture is coming true as you listen.”

22 Everyone said good things about him. They were amazed at the gracious words they heard from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.

23 Jesus said, “Here is a saying you will certainly apply to me. ‘Doctor, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me this. ‘Do the things here in your hometown that we heard you did in Capernaum.’ ”

24 “What I’m about to tell you is true,” he continued. “A prophet is not accepted in his hometown. 25 I tell you for sure that there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah. And there had been no rain for three and a half years. There wasn’t enough food to eat anywhere in the land. 26 But Elijah was not sent to any of those widows. Instead, he was sent to a widow in Zarephath near Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel who had skin diseases in the days of Elisha the prophet. But not one of them was healed except Naaman the Syrian.”

28 All the people in the synagogue were very angry when he reminded them of that. 29 They got up and ran Jesus out of town. They took him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They planned to throw him off the cliff. 30 But Jesus walked right through the crowd and went on his way. [God’s people!]

Let us pray. Prayer of Illumination.

Interesting timing for this story. For today immediately after worship, the members of the congregation will vote to extend my contract as your pastor for another year or drive me out of town and throw me off Silverstar Mountain. (Just kidding.)

This story has always intrigued me. Before any major sermons. Before any miracles. Before any conflict about healing on the sabbath with the religious leaders. What could Jesus have possibly said to set people off so much so that they were ready to kill him? His own hometown?

Luke is the only one to report this story though the other gospel writers clearly describe the tensions that grew between Jesus and the religious leaders over time. But here, this story takes place immediately after Jesus’ time of temptation in the wilderness...when he was “full of the Holy Spirit” and “in the power of the Holy Spirit.” So clearly God had something important to say to his people that they did not want to hear.

Notice that Luke reports how Jesus' ministry got off to a good start. As he taught in the local synagogues around Galilee, people praised him. Even on this sabbath day, in his hometown synagogue of Nazareth, people listened to him speak, spoke well of him and were amazed at his gracious words and wisdom. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" Though he had read scriptures for them many times before, something must have changed in Jesus that captured their attention.

The presence of the Holy Spirit. How he spoke with authority.

So what was it that made them so mad?

Two things. His self-pronouncement as the Messiah. And his referring to two well known stories of their faith when Israel's leaders consistently did evil in the eyes of the Lord and God's people looked the other way.

The text that Jesus read that day in the synagogue was taken from the Prophet Isaiah. Now, I am assuming that the text was preselected and not randomly picked by Jesus. Because even today, all Jewish communities worldwide read the same portion of the Torah each week. Torah is separated into 54 segments, so that the entirety is read throughout the year. During holidays, the regular portion of Torah may be set aside for special readings in connection with that particular day.

What shocked the hearers was how Jesus focused on such a small portion of the text from Isaiah 61:18-19. Here, the Lord described what he would do to restore Israel after their time of Babylonian exile. Jesus spoke as if those words were his own.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

He has anointed me to announce the good news to the poor.

He has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners.

He has sent me so that the blind will see again.

He wants me to set free those who are treated badly.

19 And he has sent me to announce the year when he will set his people free."

In other words, he was indirectly saying, "I am He! The Messiah, who was to come."

But they just wouldn't buy it. They couldn't believe it for themselves. They watched Jesus grow up from being a toddler to a man.

Which is why Jesus countered with this saying, "Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum." They wanted the same miraculous signs as they had heard occurred elsewhere. "Seeing was believing." Jesus challenged their disbelief and lack of faith, suggesting that they were more interested in a spectacle than in recognizing the Messiah.

Sadly not much has changed today. In our American consumerist society, this same desire for spectacle has crept into the Church. We long for worship that will dazzle and entertain us, as opposed to telling us what God has to say. And if we don't get it, we'll move on to the next congregation that will.

But notice that Jesus didn't stop there. He drove home his point with two examples of where Israel missed out on God's blessing because of their hypocrisy. They were the stories of two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, from 1st and 2nd Kings.

Elijah was a prophet during the days of King Ahab. Ahab reigned over Israel and Samaria for twenty-two years and did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any other king before him. He formed an alliance between Israel and Phoenicia by marrying Queen Jezebel who brought widespread Baal worship to the northern kingdom.

Elijah called for a several year drought in the land as a direct challenge to Baal, the pagan god of fertility and rain. When it did not rain for several years, there was great famine throughout the region.<sup>2</sup>

So God sent Elijah to a starving Gentile widow in Zarephath (coastal Syria) where she shared her last bit of flour and oil with him that led to a miraculous, continuous supply of food for them both. Later, Elijah resurrected her dead son. Jesus lifted up her faith, though a pagan, as true faith over those who should have known better.

Elisha took over as Israel's prophet from Elijah and served with Joram, Ahab's son who ruled for twelve years. Joram also did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but not much as his father Ahab and mother Jezebel.

This second story took place when Naaman, a Syrian army commander [again another Gentile] had contracted leprosy.<sup>3</sup> He wanted to be healed but did not know how. A young captive Israeli girl who worked as a servant to Naaman's wife told her about Elisha and how he could heal her husband.

Naaman sent for Elisha who sent a messenger saying "Go wash yourself in the Jordan River seven times and you will be healed." At first Naaman didn't believe that it could be that easy. When he finally did, Naaman was healed and believed in the God of Israel. It's a story how pride can sometimes get in the way of simple belief.

Both stories of how God, because of the disbelief and arrogant pride of His own people, sometimes refuses to perform miraculous signs among them and instead chooses to work through those outside the faith. Which is exactly what the Apostle Paul displayed as he went to the Gentiles with the Good News of Jesus because the Jews would not believe He was the Messiah.

Can we see now why the people of Nazareth were so mad?

First, Jesus identified himself as the Messiah or God's self.

Second, he called his own people faithless.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 17:1-16

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings 5:1-27

And third, he pointed out how because of their disbelief that they would miss out on them blessing of being part of God's redemptive work in the world.

This got me thinking, what often causes us to become so mad that we miss out on being part of God's important work in our world?

What stops us from being healed?

Busyness and complacency.

If watching the news today does not make our blood boil, then I would wonder if we even have a pulse.

Israel today, like in the past, has a king that consistently does evil in the eyes of the Lord and yet we western Christians we look the other way. The same could be said here in America with our leaders. Could our level of busyness and complacency and looking the other way lead us into political, social, economic, and international exile for generations to come?

Folks, we have no margin in our lives. Margin is time or space or energy that is unscheduled. Where there is enough space to deal with all of life's interruptions. When we can slow down to the speed of Jesus which was always attentive, unhurried, intentional, and ready to meet people where they were at and with what they needed.

Author and theologian Matthew Kelly in his book, *Slowing Down to the Speed of Joy, The Simple Art of Taking Back Your Life* describes this as speed of love.

"You cannot hurry love. You can't multi-task love. Love cannot be life hacked. It can't be scheduled. It can't be achieved on a predetermined timeframe and the idea of loving someone efficiently is ludicrous.

Love cannot be rushed...

When we are moving too fast, we don't notice the little things that love notices. A hesitant smile, a discouraged heart, other people's needs, a deflated tone in voice, a longing to be held, the way a child hovers around when he wants to talk to you. There are many things you can only see when you slow down."<sup>4</sup>

Next week, we are going to hear how Jesus handled constant interruptions. It's pretty amazing. Somehow amidst the incessant demands on his time, energy, or healing power, he was able to slow down enough and meet with a woman who had been suffering for twelve years.

Jesus had enough margin in his life to be able to handle disruption. So much so that when pressed by an angry crowd that wanted to destroy him, he didn't overreach, but simply and calmly walked right through them and went on his way.

Would we?

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Kelly, *Slowing Down to the Speed of Joy, The Simple Art of Taking Back Your Life* (North Palm Beach, FL: Blue Sparrow Publishers, 2024), 38.

Throughout the Gospels, what we will note the more Jesus got busy, the more he took time away for silence and solitude...to regroup and recharge...to be with God so that he could be ready for whatever might come next.

So may we likewise slow our pitch down enough that we don't need surgery someday to correct it. May we believe Jesus is inviting us even now to be part of his special work in our county and our world, with margin. And may we believe that the Spirit of the Lord is upon us to proclaim that this is the year of the Lord's favor. Amen